

ENCYCLOPEDIA OF

Human Relationships

HARRY T. REIS AND SUSAN SPRECHER, EDITORS



VOLUME 3

ENCYCLOPEDIA OF

Human Relationships

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VOLUME **1**



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Introduction

No attempt to understand behavior, in the individual case or in the collective, will be wholly successful until we understand the close relationships that form the foundation and theme of the human condition.

Ellen Berscheid and Anne Peplau (1983, p. 19)

Although lay people and scholars alike have been interested in human relationships since at least the beginning of recorded history, it is only in the past 3 decades, with the emergence of what has come to be called *Relationship Science*, that systematic attention across diverse disciplines has kindled tremendous growth in research and theory about human relationships. This work takes as its starting point the idea that relationships are fundamental to nearly all domains of human activity, from birth to death. When people participate in healthy, satisfying relationships, they live, work, and learn more effectively. When relationships are distressed or dysfunctional, people are less happy, less healthy, and less productive. Few aspects of human experience have as broad or as deep effects on our lives as relationships do.

When we refer to relationships, we mean the full gamut of human associations in which behavior is influenced by the real or imagined presence of another person with whom one has interacted in the past and expects to interact in the future. This definition includes many different types of associations—friends, lovers, spouses, roommates, teammates, parents and their children, cousins, siblings, acquaintances, neighbors, mates, coworkers, and business associates. Although each of these relationships is unique in one or another respect, they share a common core of principles and processes. Researchers strive to identify both the unique

features and the common elements, with the ultimate goal of explaining parsimoniously and accurately the nature and impact of human relationships. The types of relationships that have received the lion's share of scientific attention are those in which the members are interdependent—that is, frequently, strongly, and diversely influenced by each other—and as a consequence these receive greater coverage in this encyclopedia.

Many of the scientists who have contributed to scientific knowledge about personal relationships over the past several decades are represented as authors in this encyclopedia. They come from many disciplines. Some of the more central disciplines in Relationship Science are psychology, sociology, communication, and family studies, but scholars from anthropology, physiology, neuroscience, history, economics, and legal studies are also involved. Typically, scholars from different disciplines emphasize different aspects of relationships, come from different theoretical backgrounds, use different methods for research, and publish their work in different journals. Despite these differences, they share an interest in advancing understanding of human relationships, both in terms of how they operate and how they influence human activity. This diversity of approaches has enriched Relationship Science, although it also makes the field seem like a sprawling, modern metropolis with many communities, each with its own special character, spread around a common hub. Some leaders in this field, such as the late Harold Kelley, have asked whether the field should become its own discipline. Although the field is not at that stage, many relationship scientists from a variety of disciplines are connected through their association with the professional organization, International Association for Relationship Research (www.iarr.org), which sponsors conferences and two journals that publish scholarship on personal

relationships, *Personal Relationships* and *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*. Still, most relationship scholars retain their identification with their home disciplines, as evidenced by the fact that relationship research is published in many and diverse journals.

Why an Encyclopedia of Human Relationships?

In a review of the personal relationships field written about 10 years ago, Ellen Berscheid and Harry T. Reis described the field of interpersonal relationships as “one of the most rapidly growing areas of the social and behavioral sciences” (1998, p. 194) and as resembling a “boomtown during the gold rush days of the American west” (p. 257). In the decade or so since then, the boomtown has become, as mentioned above, a sprawling metropolis, suggesting to Michael Carmichael and Rolf Janke at Sage that the time was right for a multi-volume encyclopedia reviewing the field’s extensive set of theories, concepts, and empirical findings about human relationships. Their excitement about the project was infectious, and they easily convinced Reis to be an editor, who in turn, easily convinced Susan Sprecher to join as co-editor. Together, we chose advisory board members with special expertise that we did not have: Rosemary Blieszner, W. Andrew Collins, Patricia Noller, Terri L. Orbuch, Doug K. Snyder, and Anita L. Vangelisti. As a team, we then reached out to hundreds of authors, who also caught the fever.

The Process

Obviously, there was much work behind the scenes to make it possible for you, the reader, to now be browsing through three volumes of up-to-date information about human relationships. (And we encourage browsing!) We considered several options for selecting the list of topics to be included, settling on what might be called the Willie Sutton method. Willie Sutton, a prolific bank robber, was once asked why he robbed banks. He is reputed to have replied, “Because

that’s where the money is.” We too decided to go “where the money is”—that is, we examined leading textbooks and handbooks in the field to see “where the research and theory is.” Letter by letter, we identified the most popular and important topics, eliminating redundancies or idiosyncrasies and adding new headings where we saw gaps or new developments. Later, our superb team of advisory editors helped us refine the list. And much later, authors, too, pointed out omissions. The encyclopedia thus emphasizes those theories and topics that are most commonly studied in the field.

Once we had a near-complete list, we began the task of identifying an author for each entry. We invited accomplished researchers and scholars with expertise on the topics to write the entries. Most accepted our invitations; in fact, some volunteered to write more than one. Many involved coauthors, including their brightest students.

Beginning in October of 2007, drafts of entries began arriving. For months rarely would a day go by that we were not providing feedback on one or more entries. Most of the entries were superbly written by our authors, but in our role as editors, we typically offered suggestions for making the entries even more informative and accessible to the general reader. Fortunately, our team of advisory board members also assisted us in this formidable task. The project moved quickly, thanks to hard-working authors and advisory board members, an excellent staff and Web site at Sage, and our compatible workaholic styles. (There were more than a few “Are you still up?” e-mails.) Now, as the encyclopedia nears completion, in February of 2009, we marvel at the speed with which this project has been accomplished and the breadth of topics represented.

The Audience

In deciding to embark on this project and during the many hours of work that this enterprise took, we never lost sight of you, our audience. We knew our audience would be as diverse as the scientists in the field. We both come from nonacademic families, and we thought about readers who do not have advanced degrees, but will still find their way to these volumes because they are curious about

relationships. We wanted this work to be accessible and of interest to you. We thought about undergraduate and graduate students, who thirst for scientific knowledge about relationships and human behavior; we envisioned you scanning these volumes for ideas to pursue in a class project or thesis. We thought about our colleagues from around the world, with whom we have shared the journey of the scientific pursuit of knowledge about personal relationships. We pictured all of you pulling these volumes off a library shelf over and over again in order to read what an expert has to say about something you have been wondering about, a new idea you want to explore, or to look up further readings. We even thought about the librarians who will order this encyclopedia—perhaps it will be more than a professional tool for you. This volume is for all of you.

Organization of the Entries

Topics are listed in alphabetical order, from A (Abortion) to W (Workplace Relationships); no suitable X-Y-Z topics appeared (although we considered xenophobia, youthfulness, and zoology). Some topics are particularly central and well developed in the literature, and these receive thorough attention in more than one entry. Long entries, approximately 3,000 words in length, represent the most important and well-developed topics in the field, for which extensive and general research and theory exists. These might be considered the bedrock for current understandings of human relationships. Medium-length entries, approximately 2,000 words in length, discuss subjects that have attained significance in the field as core topics. Short entries (1,000 words) describe topics that are relatively new to the field or that are less central to understanding human relationships.

Readers wishing a more reader friendly overview to the encyclopedia, and hence to Relationship Science as a field, will find the Reader's Guide helpful. The Reader's Guide organizes the headwords into the following 18 substantive themes:

- Cognitive Processes in Relationships
- Communication Processes

- Creating and Maintaining Closeness
- The Dark Side of Relationships
- Dating, Courtship, and Marriage
- Emotion Processes in Relationships
- Family
- Friendship and Caregiving in Adulthood
- Health and the Biology of Relationships
- Methods for Studying Relationships
- Personality and Individual Differences
- Prevention and Repair of Relationship Problems
- Psychological Processes
- Sexuality
- Social Context of Relationships
- Social Relations in Childhood and Adolescence
- Theoretical Approaches to Studying Relationships
- Types of Relationships

Each entry is categorized into one or more of the above themes. In addition, each entry includes cross-references at the end, cross-references which allow the reader to easily find other entries covering related material. Readers wanting more in-depth information will also find the Further Reading list provided for each entry to be helpful.

Acknowledgments

A project of this sort does not come off without the assistance of many people. We are indebted to Michael Carmichael, whose infectious enthusiasm we could not resist, and to Rolf Janke, who made it real. Sanford Robinson, our developmental editor, solved innumerable problems and was always encouraging. Leticia Gutierrez and Laura Notton made the Sage Reference Tracking system work for us, without which this encyclopedia would have been a logistic nightmare. Kate Schroeder and three copyeditors—Robin Gold, Heather Jefferson, and Renee Willers—did their magic in turning our word-processing files into books.

Just as the theme of this encyclopedia is human relationships, so we both have benefitted throughout this project from relationships both professional and personal. As for the former,

our advisory board—Rosemary Blieszner, W. Andrew Collins, Patricia Noller, Terri L. Orbuch, Doug K. Snyder, and Anita L. Vangelisti—was a steady source of brainstorming, sound advice, and confidence as the project progressed. We could not have done it without them! As for the latter, Harry is grateful to Gus and Margot, his parents, for making relationships so compelling, and to Ellen and Lianna for their patience, support, and above all else, love. Susan wants to acknowledge the support, past and present, of Charles, Abigail (and partner Alex), Katherine, and Samuel, and of Milton and Shirley, her parents. Finally, we both are grateful for our friendships with colleagues that blend the personal

and professional. Most of them are in these volumes with us.

Harry T. Reis

Susan Sprecher

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A

ABORTION

Abortion, the medical or surgical termination of a pregnancy, is one of the oldest, most commonly practiced, and most controversial medical procedures performed in the United States. Pregnancy and abortion are intertwined with close relationships; pregnancy is of course the natural result of a sexual relationship (brief or long lasting) between a female and a male partner. The decision to deliver versus terminate a pregnancy is often based on relationship issues, and close others frequently are involved in the decision process. Support and/or conflict with close others influence women's coping and adaptation following abortion. And delivering versus terminating a pregnancy can affect close relationships. Following is a brief discussion of each of these issues.

Role of Close Relationships in the Abortion Decision

The majority of abortions are of unintended pregnancies. Approximately half of American women will face an unintended pregnancy, and nearly half of those pregnancies will be resolved through abortion. Hence, abortion cannot be separated from the precipitating event of unplanned pregnancy. The small percentage of abortions that are of planned pregnancies usually occur because of fetal anomalies or risks to the woman's health.

Relationship concerns, including the desire to avoid single parenthood, problems within an ongoing relationship, and concerns for or responsibility to others are among the most frequent reasons cited for terminating an unintended pregnancy. Motivations for abortion differ among different subgroups of women. Women at particularly high risk for unintended pregnancy and for abortion tend to be young, unmarried, poor, and women of color. The majority of women obtaining abortions already have one or more children. Adult mothers are more likely than younger women or nonmothers to cite responsibilities to other children as reasons for obtaining an abortion. In contrast, younger women and nonmothers are more likely to cite partner issues and immaturity.

The lack of a stable relationship with a male partner is a primary reason women cite for deciding to abort a pregnancy. Some women believe that it is inappropriate or too difficult emotionally or financially to raise a child without a father. Women also cite problems within an ongoing relationship as major reasons for choosing abortion, including poor quality relationships and concerns about whether the relationship would survive childbearing (or additional childrearing). Women who have unintended pregnancies and women who have abortions are disproportionately likely to have been the victims of intimate partner violence in their current or former relationships. Possible explanations for this include (a) situational and personal risk factors (e.g., poverty, substance abuse, poor coping skills) that put women at risk of unintended pregnancy and abortion also put

women at risk of entering into abusive relationships, (b) women in abusive relationships may be less able to regulate their fertility because they are subordinate to their partners, (c) women in abusive relationships who become pregnant may be more likely to abort the pregnancy rather than have children (or more children) with abusive partners, (d) unwanted pregnancy may be seen as an obstacle to leaving an ongoing abusive relationship, and (e) women in abusive relationships may be more likely to feel pressured by their partners to have an abortion. With regard to this last possibility, however, a national study revealed that less than 1 percent of women cite coercion from others as a major reason for their abortion.

Most women who obtain abortions inform their conception partner of their pregnancy, and most women report that the decision to abort was either entirely their own decision or was shared equally with their conception partner. Women in the United States are not legally required to inform or seek the consent of their conception partner. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* (1992) that requiring a woman seeking abortion to notify her husband creates an “undue burden” on her constitutional rights. Women are more likely to inform partners who they perceive as likely to support rather than to oppose their decision. Data on male partners’ influence in the abortion decision, however, is sparse. The little research that exists suggests that in deciding whether to deliver versus abort a pregnancy, male partners consider similar factors as do women, such as current family size and the ideal conditions of childrearing.

Parents also can play an important role in the abortion decision, especially for minors. In 1976 the U.S. Supreme Court decided in *Planned Parenthood of Central Missouri v. Danforth* that states may infringe on the constitutional right of minors to privacy given a “significant state interest” in doing so. By 1997, a majority of the U.S. states had enacted statutes requiring minors to either involve parents in abortion decisions (by notifying them of the abortion or by obtaining their consent) or to petition a judge for an exception (commonly referred to as judicial bypass).

The Supreme Court based their decision to constrain minors’ ability to obtain abortion on several assumptions. First, that minors are especially at risk for negative psychological responses following

abortion and that such consequences would be less of an issue if they carried a pregnancy to term; second, that minors are too immature to make a sound, well-reasoned decision without the benefit of input from an adult; and third, that parental consultation is desirable and in the best interests of the minor and her family. Scientific evidence in support of these three assumptions, however, is weak.

Critics of consent laws argue that minors who come from supportive families will consult with parents by choice and that girls who come from unsupportive, dysfunctional, or violent homes will not benefit from the forced disclosure of their pregnancy. Critics further argue that consent laws create delays in seeking care, thereby increasing the rate of later term abortions and teen parenthood. Even in the absence of parental involvement laws, a significant percent of minors do consult with at least one parent prior to making an abortion decision. A minor will be less likely to consult with parents for several reasons: She fears her parents will be hurt, unsympathetic, or even violent in response; she lives independently or already has children; she has experienced a chaotic home environment characterized by substance abuse, violence, or sexual abuse; or she suspects her parents will oppose her decision or force her into a specific undesired pregnancy resolution.

Close Relationships and Adjustment After Abortion

Close others, such as the conception partner, parents, and friends, can be both a significant source of support and a significant source of strain in coping with the stress associated with an unintended pregnancy and abortion. They can provide instrumental support, for example, by providing money to pay for the abortion or transportation to and from the clinic. They can also provide emotional support before and after the abortion.

The perceived reactions of close others are important factors in women’s postabortion adjustment. Women who perceive high levels of social support from close others are more satisfied with their abortion decision and have better mental health postabortion than women who perceive less social support from close others. Also, the more women perceive close others as supportive of their

decision, the more they believe they will be able to cope with the abortion. These positive coping appraisals, in turn, are associated with reduced postabortion distress. A longitudinal study revealed that women who had lower expectations for their ability to cope prior to their abortion also were more likely to report seeking social support from others to deal with emotions experienced in the 2 years following their abortion. Support seeking, in turn, was associated with reduced postabortion distress controlling for preabortion distress.

Perceived social conflict with close others surrounding an abortion can be a significant source of additional stress. The more women who abort perceive pressure from others to terminate (or not to terminate) a pregnancy and the more social conflict they perceive from partners, family, and/or friends around the abortion, the more likely they are to experience negative psychological reactions postabortion.

Fear of being rejected by others because of an abortion is a significant concern of many women who have an abortion. The current sociopolitical climate of the United States stigmatizes women who have abortions. One study found that approximately 50 percent of women who had an abortion felt that others would look down on them if they knew, and the more women felt stigmatized, the more they felt they needed to keep their abortion a secret from family and friends. Concealing an abortion from friends and family may provide some immediate interpersonal benefits. It may allow a woman to avoid social conflict and the disapproval of others, both of which can be detrimental to mental health. It also may preserve important relationships and social networks that could be threatened if the abortion was known.

Concealing an abortion, however, can also lead women to engage in maladaptive coping strategies, setting into motion cognitive and emotional processes that exacerbate psychological distress over time. One longitudinal study showed that the more women perceived a need to keep their abortion secret from family or friends, the more they reported trying to suppress thoughts of their abortion. Ironically, this attempt to suppress led to more intrusive thoughts of the abortion. Both suppression and intrusion, in turn, were associated with greater psychological distress 2 years postabortion, controlling for preabortion distress. Secrecy also

was associated with less disclosure of abortion-related feelings. Expressing feelings about emotion-provoking events can be a way of understanding and coming to terms with those events, as long as the others to whom one expresses are supportive. One study found that women who perceived their conception partners to be less than completely supportive were more distressed following their abortion than either women who did not inform their conception partners or women who told their partners and perceived them as completely supportive.

Impact of Abortion on Close Relationships

Very little research has examined how abortion affects close relationships. An adequate understanding of this question must consider the relative impact of abortion compared with its alternatives (motherhood or adoption). It must also take into account the nature and quality of the prepregnancy relationship. Because an unstable or unsatisfactory relationship is often a reason for abortion, rates of relationship dissolution after an abortion may reflect preexisting problems. The percentage of women expected to break up with their partner over the course of a year, irrespective of a pregnancy or abortion, also must be considered.

One prospective study compared the relationship quality of 92 women who were seeking abortion to the relationship quality of a comparison group of 92 demographically matched women who were not pregnant and did not desire a child. Both groups were in stable relationships of similar duration at the time of the first interview. Prior to the abortion, the relationships of the abortion group were of poorer quality (more conflict, less affection, less trust) than the control group. One year postabortion, however, there were no differences between the abortion and control group in relationship quality, mutual trust, satisfaction with sex life, or relationship separations. By the second interview, a similar percentage of relationships had ended in both groups (about 22 percent).

Brenda Major and Diana J. Leonard

See also Abuse and Violence in Relationships; Birth Control, Relational Aspects; Family Relationships in Adolescence; Loss; Parenthood, Transition to; Pregnancy and Relationships; Sexuality; Social Support and Health

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ABUSE AND VIOLENCE IN RELATIONSHIPS

The terms *abuse*, *violence*, and *aggression* tend to be used interchangeably, and such abuse can be physical or nonphysical, although violence usually refers only to physical abuse. The term *psychological abuse* tends to refer to abuse that is verbal or emotional, or even economic. In this entry, abuse is first discussed in terms of different behaviors, and then it is discussed in terms of Michael Johnson's typology based on both the behavior and the person who is involved in perpetrating the abuse. The focus then shifts to causes and predictors of abuse and violence, the types of relationships in which abuse and violence are most likely to occur, the consequences of partner violence for victims and for children who witness the violence,

and the ways victims tend to cope with violence. Although violence can be an issue in a number of relationships, including parent–child and sibling relationships, the focus in this article is on couple violence.

Types of Abusive Behavior

Physical abuse can range from pushing and shoving, hitting and punching, to using or threatening to use a weapon such as a knife or gun. Battering tends to involve the more extreme forms of physical abuse mentioned above, as well as beating-up the victim. Verbal abuse can involve name-calling, insults, put-downs (behaviors that most couples are likely to use from time to time during conflict), or more extreme emotional abuse that attempts to destroy the confidence and self-esteem of the victim. Statements such as “You’ll never amount to anything,” “You’d be nothing without me,” “You’re useless” fall into this category. Perpetrators may also seek to separate the victim from support groups of family and friends and may threaten extreme consequences if the victim reports the abuse. Another tactic of extreme abusers is to threaten to harm children or pets or to damage precious possessions if the victim does not comply. Some abusers use economic abuse such as denying access to money as a means of control and as a way of ensuring victims have less access to a range of resources and hence a great difficulty leaving the relationship.

Whether abuse is primarily perpetrated by men or women has been a contentious issue over more than 25 years. Some argue that men are the main perpetrators of violence in couple relationships, and women are violent only when defending themselves against male brutality. Others argue that males and females are equally violent because that is what most studies show. Michael Johnson's typology, however, has to some extent helped to clarify the issues. He argues that there are different types of abuse; his main two categories are intimate terrorism and situational couple violence.

According to Johnson, which type of violence is found depends on the type of sample being studied. Intimate terrorism is more likely to be found in clinical or refuge samples (those seeking refuge

in a shelter). This form of violence is seen as one tactic in a general pattern of control, is more likely to escalate over time and involve serious injury, occurs more frequently than situational couple violence, and is mostly perpetrated by men, although it is sometimes perpetrated by women. Intimate terrorism tends to be based on a belief in male privilege and superiority: "I am the boss in this house," "What I say goes and you'd better do it." It can involve physical attacks, coercion and threats, emotional abuse, intimidation, isolation, and economic abuse.

Some research suggests that there are two types of intimate terrorists: dependent and antisocial. The dependent group tends to be jealous and possessive and use violence to deal with fear that the partner might leave. The antisocial group is more generally violent in a range of contexts, both familial and nonfamilial, mostly in order to dominate. They are more likely than the dependent group to be involved in substance abuse and criminal behavior.

Situational couple violence, on the other hand, accounts for almost all violence in community samples, is less likely to involve severe violence or to escalate over time, generally involves both members of the couple, and is not connected to a general pattern of control. Many of the studies finding equal levels of violence by men and women are based on community samples. This type of violence often occurs as the consequence of an argument between partners.

Although both members of couples are likely to be involved in violence, because of sex differences in size and strength, women tend to be more vulnerable to injury. The important difference between intimate terrorism and situational couple violence is that intimate terrorism is part of a general pattern of control of the partner whereas situational couple violence comes out of a particular event such as an argument and can reflect poor conflict resolution skills.

Another type of violence is included in the typology: violent resistance, which is mostly perpetrated by women to defend themselves from intimate terrorists. Whether women's violence is mainly about resistance, however, is a contentious issue. Although women may try this form of resistance, they generally develop a pattern of not resisting because of fear for their lives. In extreme situations, they may

even resort to killing their violent partner. Unfortunately, most research does not distinguish between different types of violence and does not make clear which type of violence is being studied.

Couple Violence

Some writers argue that the main reason for couple violence is the patriarchal nature of society and the gendered nature of roles. They argue that male dominance at the societal level is the most important contributor to wife abuse at the personal level. Others, however, argue that although patriarchy may contribute to violence against women, there are multiple causes of violence. Violence can be a result of individual psychopathology such as psychopathy or lack of impulse control or other individual factors such as attachment insecurity or rejection sensitivity.

The communication patterns established by the couple can also increase the possibility of violence, although it is important to see such patterns as a couple issue rather than blaming the victim. In other words, violence can be seen as a product of the way couples have set up their relationships. For example, there is evidence that couples in violent relationships tend to be highly sensitive to each other's negativity. Problems with children can also lead to couple violence, especially if the perpetrator sees the partner as responsible for the problems (e.g., "She's too soft with him, that's the real problem in this family").

Abuse and violence can be predicted by relational factors and by individual characteristics of the husband and of the wife. For example, in a large study conducted in New Zealand where all families with a baby born at a particular time were recruited, violence against the wife was predicted by all three factors. Violence was most likely to occur if the partners were under 20, unmarried, or had been married only a short time before the birth; the pregnancy was unplanned; their educational level was low; and they did not attend church. Because this study involved a community sample, the violence was most likely to be situational couple violence, although some intimate terrorists were probably included.

There is also evidence that male perpetrators of violence tend to differ from other males in the following ways: They have longer periods of unemployment, have lower levels of education, have less social support, use a variety of drugs, are more severely depressed, and are more likely to have an antisocial personality and to perpetrate violence outside the family. Individuals involved in severe partner violence tend to be similar to those described above but more likely to be alcohol dependent and to score higher on criminality scales. Alcohol use is strongly related to abuse and violence, particularly if the husband is drinking heavily before marriage. If the wife also has a drinking problem, the risk of violence tends to increase.

Types of Relationships

Dating and Courtship

Abuse and violence can occur in a range of relationship types from dating relationships to marriage and lesbian relationships. Abuse and violence occur in dating relationships, and around a third of couples report violence before marriage. About one third of high school and college students report experiencing violence in their dating relationships, although some studies show lower levels of violence. Even severe violence or battering seems to begin during courtship.

Abuse and violence are more likely to occur when couples engage in verbal aggression, the male partner lacks social support, and the female partner uses negative coping strategies such as avoidance and distancing. One study of undergraduate students found 12 different risk factors for assaulting a partner. These factors included problems with anger management, jealousy, and communication; a history of neglect or sexual abuse; negative attributions about the partner; and approval of violence as an interpersonal tactic. As can be seen, some of these factors belong to individuals and some are characteristic of relationships. Violence seems to increase with the length of relationships but decrease as commitment increases, with commitment tending to promote positive relational strategies. Thus violence is less likely in long-term committed relationships.

Cohabiting or de Facto Relationships

Although it has been claimed that the marriage license is a “hitting license,” there is evidence for more violence in cohabiting, de facto, or common law relationships than in marital relationships. This finding is likely to be related to lower levels of commitment in cohabiting relationships than marital relationships. In addition, women in cohabiting relationships are more likely to be killed by an intimate partner than are those in marital relationships (e.g., 6 times more likely in Canada and 9 times more likely in the United States).

In a large Canadian study aimed at increasing understanding of women’s heightened risk of violence in common-law unions, researchers included both selection variables and relationship variables. Selection variables are those that individuals bring with them into cohabitation (such as education, employment history, and previous relationships), and relationship variables are about the relationship itself (such as jealousy, social isolation, and dominance). The researchers found significantly higher levels of violence in cohabiting than in marital relationships. In addition, despite the increase in cohabitation in the culture, selection variables were more important than relationship variables in predicting violence against women; it seems that the type of person who cohabits rather than the couple’s relationship predicts the greater likelihood of violence. These researchers note that not all potentially relevant variables were included in this study, and a more comprehensive study might find variables such as commitment and relationship satisfaction as important predictors of violence in cohabiting relationships. It is also important to note that relationship variables included in this study tended to have an impact on violence for both cohabiters and for those married.

Marriage

In the first year of marriage, almost a third of husbands and wives report at least one act of aggression by husbands, and more than a quarter of couples report multiple episodes of violence and/or severe violence. About half that number report single episodes of minor violence during that first year. Younger couples and those where at least one member belongs to a minority group are more likely to report aggressive behavior. Conflict

is also an important predictor of aggressive behavior, with husband and wife anger expression and husband problem solving being positively related to marital aggression and wife problem solving being negatively related to marital aggression. It seems likely that the problem solving by husbands referred to in this study tends to involve dominating rather than facilitative behaviors.

Couples in violent relationships have been studied in terms of their interaction patterns while discussing an issue in their marriage. Both husbands and wives in relationships involving physical aggression have been found to enact fewer positive behaviors than other couples and to respond in ways likely to increase the partner's anger. They are also likely to become involved in cycles of attack and defense. They have fewer problem-solving skills, and have difficulty discussing a marital problem without withdrawing and experiencing a sense of despair. They tend to be highly aggressive to one another and to engage in criticism, disagreement, and put-downs at a high rate and engage in lower levels of such positive behaviors as approval, smiling, and paraphrasing.

Lesbian and Gay Relationships

Studies have shown that violence in homosexual relationships occurs as frequently as in heterosexual relationships and is equally severe and that rates of psychological abuse tend to exceed rates of physical and sexual abuse. In addition, power and control tend to be major sources of conflict. One very powerful control tactic used in these relationships is threatening to "out" the partner to their family or at work. Another is to threaten a partner that they could lose their children if outed because of their sexual orientation. Problems can also be caused by their lack of support from friend, families, and society.

Coping With Partner Violence

There are basically two ways to cope with violent relationships: One is to negotiate an end to the violence, and the other is to leave the relationship. For example, in one study, 75 percent of victims were no longer in a violent relationship after 2.5 years. About 40 percent had left the relationship, and 30 percent had negotiated an end to the violence.

Of course, partners must improve their problem solving and communication skills to successfully maintain a violence-free relationship.

Concerns are frequently expressed about women who stay in abusive relationships, particularly when battering is involved. The evidence suggests, however, that about twice as many wives leave as stay in abusive relationships. Nevertheless, those who stay are a concern, particularly if trapped by partners who manipulate their personal, moral, and structural commitments to the relationship. In one study, whereas wives in distressed nonviolent relationships reported that they stayed in the relationship in the hope that it would improve, those in violent relationships tended to focus on their love for their partner.

Leaving seems to involve a two-stage process. The first stage involves victims working out whether they will be better off if they leave than if they stay, and the second involves assessing their confidence in their ability to go through with their decision. This latter decision may be particularly difficult for those whose self-esteem has been destroyed through years of physical or verbal abuse. If they have also been victims of economic abuse, or have no resources such as money or a car, leaving may be particularly difficult.

Consequences of Partner Violence

For Victims

Researchers tend to agree that the consequences of partner violence are much more serious for female than for male victims. Because men tend to be bigger and heavier than women, the chances of serious injury are much greater for women than for men. Given the heavy controlling tactics often used by perpetrators, women are also likely to suffer more serious psychological effects such as depression, anxiety, and lowered self-esteem. Some have even been treated for post-traumatic stress disorder. Men who are abused may be doubly stigmatized because of the shame involved in admitting to abuse by a woman.

For Children Who Witness Violence

Children who witness violence between their parents are affected in terms of both their behavior

and their psychological adjustment. Their behavior is likely to be more aggressive than that of other children given the strong model of violence in the family. Psychological effects include anxiety, depression, lower self-esteem, and a diminished sense of security in the family. Long-term effects include depression, lower self-esteem, and lower levels of social competence.

Intergenerational Transmission

The term *intergenerational transmission* refers to the likelihood that those who grow up in violent homes are more likely to perpetrate violence against a partner. Studies have shown that males growing up in violent homes are significantly more likely to be violent toward partners than males growing up in nonviolent homes. In addition, experiencing abuse in the home is more strongly related to becoming a victim than witnessing abuse is, and this effect tends to be stronger for females. Not surprisingly, these effects tend to be stronger in clinical than community samples, given that the violence is likely to be more severe in these samples and more likely to be perpetrated by males.

Conclusion

Couple violence is a serious problem in many societies and causes a range of physical and psychological problems in the victims. Children who witness violence are likely to have poorer psychological adjustment and are more likely to become perpetrators of violence in their own close relationships. The causes of couple violence are complex and multilevel, and although patriarchy may play a role, a range of other individual, couple, and family factors also need to be considered. Couple violence occurs in a variety of relationships including dating, courtship, cohabitation, marriage, and gay relationships, with evidence for more violence in cohabiting relationships.

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See also Abused Women Remaining in Relationships; Anger in Relationships; Batterers; Hostility; Intergenerational Transmission of Abuse

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ABUSED WOMEN REMAINING IN RELATIONSHIPS

A woman's decision to stay in or leave an abusive relationship is complex. It can be influenced by the type of abuse the woman has experienced (psychological, physical, sexual, or various combinations of these types), the characteristics of the abuse she has experienced (frequency, intensity, injuries sustained, and whether or not it is escalating or diminishing over time), the characteristics of the abuser (remorse shown, degree of alcohol involvement, amount of emotional instability, degree to which his threats are perceived as putting her in mortal danger, his level of psychopathy, and whether he is violent both inside and outside of the intimate partner relationship), and the characteristics of the victim (education level, religiosity, mental health concerns, income generating capability, responsibility for mothering children, perceived options, level of fear, the degree of hopelessness, and her sense of feeling love toward the perpetrator). Characteristics of the interpersonal relationship (prior separations, married versus cohabitating or dating) and social context in which the relationship is embedded (police involvement, access to help, external support,

cultural pressure to remain married) may also play a role in how the abuse is perceived and whether or not the woman chooses to stay in the relationship over time or to end it. Each of these aspects of the stay–leave decision is briefly discussed below. Each of these elements feeds into two central questions that are at the essence of the stay–leave decision facing abused women. According to Pamela Choice and Leanne K. Lamke in an influential 1997 article, these two questions are as follows: “Will I be better off?” and “Can I do it?”

Characteristics of the Abuse Experienced

The type of abuse experienced by the woman may differentially impact her and may affect her help-seeking behavior. It may also play a role in a woman’s decision about whether to stay in or leave an abusive relationship. Recent research indicates that acts of physical violence and psychological aggression between intimate partners are relatively common among dating, cohabitating, and married couples. Sexual violence occurs less frequently and may be the most taboo type of violence to disclose to others. Experiencing psychological abuse may, at times, impede the woman’s leaving the relationship, as it can reduce the victim’s sense of self-efficacy and confidence while increasing her feelings of self-blame. Women are less likely to leave an abusive relationship if they have been repeatedly told, and they, in turn, come to believe, that they cannot leave or will not make it without their abuser or that no one else will ever love them or care for them. In contrast, experiencing physical violence alone or in conjunction with other types of abuse has been shown to have the strongest relationship to leaving the abusive relationship, but relatively little is known about the experience of sexual violence within an ongoing intimate relationship and how this impacts remaining in the relationship over time.

Women also consider characteristics of the violence they are experiencing when they are considering whether to leave or stay in the abusive relationship. Women are more likely to leave relationships in which the violence has led to a physical injury, and although some studies have suggested that women tend to underestimate the risk of injury or death from their violent intimate partner, they rarely have been shown to overestimate the

risks associated with remaining in the relationship. Women consider aspects of the violence in their risk appraisals, and women who perceive the violence as escalating in severity and frequency have been shown to be more likely to intend to leave the abusive relationship permanently.

Characteristics of the Abuse Perpetrator

Recent research has repeatedly asserted that there are subtypes of violent perpetrators who may have substantially different characteristics. Many studies have shown that common couple violence may describe the majority of intimate relationships in which violence has occurred. Both men and women have been shown to perpetrate common couple violence. Generally, this type of violence is related to relationship distress and poor conflict management techniques. Bidirectional common couple violence is the most common pattern. The violence perpetrated in these types of relationships tends to be less severe and more episodic in nature than the violence perpetrated by other types of offenders and in other types of relationships. Perpetrators of common couple violence have typically been shown not to suffer from severe personality disturbance and severe alcohol problems; in addition, they do not usually perpetrate violence outside of their intimate relationship. Because of the lower severity and greater likelihood of mutuality, women involved in these types of violent relationships may be less likely to leave than women who are being abused by a violent man who is psychopathic or suffers from various kinds of emotional problems including depression, alcoholism, or borderline personality disorder. Consistent with this supposition, it has been shown by Karen Pape and Ileana Arias in 2000 that women’s intentions to permanently end their violent relationships increase if they perceive that their abuser is malicious, selfish, and blameworthy. On the other hand, evidence suggests that leaving an abusive relationship can be a particularly dangerous time and may be more so with malicious, controlling, emotionally volatile, or selfish perpetrators. Many abused women have to consider the reality that leaving their abusive partner may not end the abuse or even lessen it. Leaving may even end in the murder of the woman and/or her children.

Characteristics of the Abused Woman

Characteristics of the abused woman may also influence her stay–leave decision. Younger women have been shown to be more likely to leave an abusive relationship than older women. Other factors associated with the victim may include the environment in which the abused woman was raised. Specifically, approximately half of all abused women report having experienced some type of childhood abuse, with two thirds reporting having experienced feeling unloved or rejected as children. It is possible that a history of childhood abuse impacts the stay–leave decision in a number of ways. Women who grow up in abusive homes may view their partner’s abusive behavior as more normative and less pathological than women who had not previously been exposed to family violence. A childhood abuse history may also negatively impact the woman’s self-esteem and confidence in her ability to successfully leave the relationship. Experiencing child abuse has also been associated with greater levels of depression and trauma symptoms in adult women, effects which may in turn make ending a currently abusive situation more difficult or may increase the woman’s feelings of self-blame for the intimate partner abuse.

Similar psychological symptoms that are known to be consequences of experiencing current abuse may also impact the stay–leave decision. These symptoms would include greater experience of trauma-related symptoms, increased intensity and severity of depressive symptoms, and a reduced sense of self-efficacy as a consequence of experiencing the relationship abuse. Women coping with these psychological sequelae may have a more difficult time believing that they can leave, seeking external support and resources for the separation or contemplating caring for themselves or their children in the absence of the intimate relationship.

Women also report staying in abusive relationships because of their religious or social role beliefs, such as holding the belief that it is their wifely duty to stay, that women are supposed to be able to please a man or make a marriage last, or that divorce is against their religion. Abused women also report a number of fears about leaving, including the fear of embarrassment, the fear of loss (e.g., the potential relationship, financial

loss, etc.), the fear of looking and/or feeling like a failure, and the fear of retaliation on the part of their partner. Fear of financial loss may be of particular importance in the decision-making process; women who have successfully left an abusive relationship are more likely to have left an unemployed than an employed intimate partner. Abused women also report worrying a great deal over what will happen to their children should they leave. On the other side of the equation, women who experience feelings of love, commitment, or hope for change on the part of their partner may be less likely to leave their abusive relationship than women who no longer experience positive feelings even intermittently in the relationship.

Characteristics of the Interpersonal Relationship

Both structural and dynamic characteristics of the abusive relationship may impact the stay–leave decision. Financially, it may be easier to leave a dating relationship than a relationship that involves cohabiting, marriage, or shared household expenses. In addition, legal involvement is required for dissolving a marital relationship; this level of disentanglement is likely to be even more difficult when there are children involved. Many abused women weigh the costs and benefits of leaving the relationship in relation to the emotional and physical health of their children, as well as in relation to themselves. Relationships characterized by reciprocal violence may be emotionally more difficult to leave than those characterized by unidirectional violence. Women may also be abused by other women in the context of a same-sex relationship. Factors associated with leaving lesbian relationships have been understudied.

Leaving More Than Once and External Support

Deciding whether to stay or leave an abusive relationship involves the weighing of a variety of costs against a number of benefits as well as a realistic consideration of whether the woman feels capable of instigating the leaving process. This decision is more likely to be a process than a one-time event, as it is common for women to leave the same abusive

relationship more than once. In fact, research has shown that those who successfully leave are more likely to have tried leaving the relationship at least once before.

Overall, deciding to leave involves repeatedly making the decision that the benefits of leaving outweigh the costs of leaving and, simultaneously, that costs of staying outweigh the benefits of staying. Evidence suggests that the process of making this decision often begins after a particular episode of abuse has occurred. Women are more likely to stay engaged in the decision-making process if they have the perception that the abuse is escalating and their lives may be in danger. The first stage of the process involves deciding whether or not to disclose the episode of abuse to someone, and if so, to whom. Abused women who are able to secure and utilize safety and housing for their children, who have access to transportation, and who have some assurance of financial support are the most likely to attempt to leave. Social support from family, friends, and the community (e.g., police, judges, health care providers) also plays a vital and ongoing role in the decision process. Leaving an abusive relationship has been associated with successfully obtaining a restraining order against the abuser and with talking with a health care provider about the abuse. Conversely, women who seek external support and are denied it have been shown to be even more likely to remain in the abusive relationship.

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See also Abuse and Violence in Relationships; Batterers; Egalitarian Relationships

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ACCOMMODATION

Even in the best relationships, close partners do not always treat each other with care and kindness. In interdependent relationships, it is inevitable that partners will sometimes behave in a manner that is potentially destructive to the relationship. For example, a partner might be rude or insulting, may neglect to spend promised time with the other partner, or may otherwise disregard the other partner's needs. When faced with destructive partner behaviors, the other partner has a choice: to respond in kind or to accommodate. *Accommodation* refers to responding to a partner's destructive act by inhibiting the impulse to reciprocate with another destructive act and instead behave in a constructive manner. For instance, if Bill criticizes Mary's taste in music, Mary could accommodate by choosing not to criticize Bill in return and instead calmly initiate discussion of their difference of opinion or simply let the moment pass without comment. This entry explains the concept of accommodation, the factors that may motivate interdependent partners to accommodate, and how accommodation may benefit close relationships.

Caryl Rusbult and her colleagues first identified accommodation as an important part of relationship interdependence. They defined accommodation in terms of the exit-voice-loyalty-neglect (EVLN) typology of responses to dissatisfaction in relationships. According to this typology, responses to dissatisfaction vary along two dimensions: Responses are constructive or destructive to the relationship, and responses actively or passively address the problem at hand. There are four categories of response: *Exit* involves actively harming

a relationship (e.g., yelling at the partner, leaving the relationship), *voice* involves actively attempting to improve the situation (e.g., discussing the problem, seeking advice from a therapist), *loyalty* involves passively waiting for the situation to improve (e.g., turning the other cheek in the face of criticism, hoping or praying for improvement), and *neglect* involves passively letting the relationship deteriorate (e.g., avoiding discussion of problems, ignoring the partner). Thus, accommodation can be defined as responding to a partner's exit or neglect behavior with voice or loyalty.

Furthermore, Rusbult proposed that when a partner acts in a destructive manner, the individual's first impulse is to reciprocate as a means of self-protection. For example, when Bill criticizes Mary, she may feel insulted and demeaned. If Mary's response is based on her immediate self-interest, she is likely to retaliate to regain her dignity or to seek revenge. However, such retaliation would likely escalate the conflict, potentially harming the relationship. If Mary forgoes her self-interest and instead acts in a conciliatory manner, their relationship may benefit. Thus, Mary faces a dilemma: to enact a self-interested response that is potentially destructive to the relationship or to enact a personally costly, relationship-oriented constructive response. *Interdependence theory* distinguishes between the given situation and the effective situation in interdependence dilemmas such as this one. The *given situation* involves an individual's self-centered, gut-level preferences that are based on the immediate, personal outcomes that he or she may obtain from an interaction. If Mary's behavior is guided solely by the given situation, then she is likely to retaliate. However, individuals often do not act on their given preferences alone; instead, they take into consideration broader concerns, such as their long-term goals for the relationship. If Mary considers that she is committed to her relationship with Bill and wants it to endure, then retaliation—which may damage the relationship—no longer seems desirable. By considering broader issues, Mary has transformed the given situation into the *effective situation*, and it is the effective situation that directly guides her behavior. Research has provided empirical evidence that this sort of *transformation of motivation* underlies the accommodation process.

Researchers have examined several relationship-specific factors that may promote prorelationship

transformation of motivation that results in accommodation. Results indicate that the investment model variables of relationship satisfaction and investment size are positively associated with accommodative tendencies, whereas quality of alternatives to the relationship is negatively associated with accommodation. Level of commitment to the relationship repeatedly has been found to be a highly reliable predictor of accommodation—the more committed partners are to each other, the more likely they are to forgo self-interest and accommodate for the sake of the relationship. Furthermore, research suggests that commitment largely mediates the association between the other investment model variables and accommodation.

Researchers have examined several personality variables that are predictive of accommodation. For example, people who are *psychologically feminine*—that is, they fit traditional feminine sex roles—are more likely to accommodate. To the degree that individuals are able to take their partner's perspective in a situation, they are likely to accommodate. People who exhibit greater self-control are more likely to accommodate, as are those who have greater self-respect. There is mixed empirical evidence that individuals with a secure attachment style are more likely to accommodate than those with an insecure attachment style. Although most research suggests that security is an important predictor of accommodation, some research suggests that security may be unrelated to accommodative tendencies. Recently, researchers also have found mixed evidence that socially oriented values, such as collectivism (i.e., concern for the welfare of one's community), promote accommodation.

Given that accommodation has been characterized as a relationship maintenance behavior, researchers also have examined how accommodative behavior may benefit a relationship. Researchers have found repeatedly that accommodation is positively associated with general relationship health. More specifically, researchers have found that accommodation may promote trust between relationship partners. For instance, if Bill recognizes that Mary is willing to forgo self-interest, overlook his criticism, and engage in prorelationship behavior instead, then he may come to trust that she cares about him and their relationship. Furthermore, accommodation is associated with persistence in relationships; in particular, longer

lasting relationships are characterized by high, mutual levels of accommodation between partners. Thus, although accommodation involves some immediate personal cost, the payoff of long-term relationship health may be worth it.

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See also Commitment, Predictors and Outcomes; Interdependence Theory; Investment Model; Maintaining Relationships; Transformation of Motivation

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ACCOUNTS

Whoever takes the time to stop and listen to the conversations around them will come to recognize how often people describe their lives and relationships in story-like form. At the coffee shop, friends swap stories with each other about major problems with spouses, mothers-in-law, and nasty neighbors. At the lunch table, teens take turns telling stories about their most recent relationship breakups or who said what to whom at the last dance party. These accounts or stories all represent ways in which people organize views of themselves, of others, of their social networks, and of their relationships. They contain rich and detailed information about the nature and dynamics of a present

relationship and of preexisting normative beliefs and rules about what makes a relationship and how to behave appropriately in that relationship.

Sometimes others ask for these accounts, as when a friend asks how one first met one's boyfriend, girlfriend, spouse, or best friend. But other times, people spontaneously tell others a story about a specific relationship. Either way, people tell stories about their relationships because these accounts help to make sense of those connections, sometimes for their own benefit and sometimes for the benefit of those selected as their audience. This entry discusses the historical context of the concept of accounts and the usefulness of accounts-as-stories. Today, many relationship scholars are turning directly to the voices and stories of individuals for insight and information about relationship experiences.

Historical Context

Accounts as Justifications or Excuses

The concept of accounts historically had its development and central beginnings in the field of sociology. The writings of sociologists such as Harold Garfinkel, Erving Goffman, and Marvin Scott and Stanford Lyman led the early theoretical work, which was focused on understanding how people present or excuse themselves to others when their interaction or relationship is disrupted or problematic. The emphasis was on people trying to communicate or account for the negative situation or social predicament in a way that maintains the interaction or relationship. In general, this body of work examined three questions: (1) What is the content of these accounts? (2) Under what conditions (and relationships) do people present these accounts? (3) What factors influence whether an audience will accept the accounts of others? This line of research continues to elaborate and refine the various types of justifications and excuses that people communicate to others and the consequences of these specific justifications.

Accounts as Story-Like Constructions

In the field of interpersonal relationships, current views equate the concept of accounts with more common terms, stories, and narratives.

These story-like concepts emphasize first-person interpretations or explanations about why and how relationship events happen (e.g., initiation of sexuality in a relationship, pregnancy or birth of a child, divorce, financial hardship). These relationship accounts are told to others for feedback and support. In contrast to the earlier sociological concepts, this current notion of accounts-as-stories is more social psychological in nature and focus in that it embodies a wider variety of situations in which accounts are presented to others. Current work emphasizes accounts as cognitive processes by which individuals create, explain, and organize meaning about the social world.

Current viewpoints claim that accounts not only protect the self and maintain interaction but also give people a greater sense of control in their relationships, help people cope with stressful relationship events, provide a greater sense of hope and understanding for the future, and establish order and closure to their relationships. Accounts contain recollections of the events in one's relationships, including plot, story line, affect, and attributions. These accounts-as-stories are seen as fluid interpretations or meanings of relationships, meanings which are constantly being modified and updated as individuals obtain feedback from others. Current work on accounts also integrates research and theory from three general perspectives: attribution theory (causal explanations for relationship events and behaviors), ethnography (construction of meaning to make sense of relationships), and impression management theory (creation of desired impressions).

Current Themes in Research

A growing body of research indicates that there are multiple functions and beneficial consequences of relationship accounts to people's lives and relationships. Sometimes researchers ask people to account for a relationship event so that they can study these stories; other times people just spontaneously tell a story in a variety of forms (e.g., autobiography, folktales, mythology, organizational report). Regardless of whether they are solicited or spontaneous, examination of this scholarship illuminates several themes.

Coping With Stressful Events

An expanding and significant body of literature demonstrates that accounts allow individuals to cope with major stressors or traumas within their relationships. These stressful events can include a courtship that is filled with obstacles, betrayals within romantic relationships or friendships, and divorce or the termination of a relationship. Findings in this research demonstrate that when people experience a traumatic relationship event, they develop an account to understand what happened and why. This account helps individuals explain to others and to themselves why the event happened and provides a greater sense of control over what may seem otherwise incoherent and confusing. John Harvey and Terri Orbuch argue that when individuals try to understand their past through the use of accounts, they also can feel a sense of mastery over the past, a feeling which contributes to present well-being. Indeed, studies show that accounts are positively linked to the physical and mental health of individuals following a stressful relationship event. For example, research demonstrates that when sexual assault survivors engage in account making (e.g., tell their stories to friends, family, and therapists; journaling; expressing story through art or music), they are better able to cope with their trauma than survivors who repress or do not account for their experience.

One interesting finding is that relaying these accounts to others, especially a confidant who gives a positive and empathic response, plays an important role in coping with major relationship transitions and traumas, regardless of whether or not the account is wholly accurate. Once the events begin to make sense to the individual, the events can be better dealt with, even if these accounts do not mirror reality. Evidence also suggests that the interaction-social process of confiding a relationship account to others provides some degree of closure, which also may have positive consequences for well-being.

Relationship Meanings and Processes

Because accounts contain rich and detailed information about relationships, both in content and storytelling style, scholars can use these first-person interpretations to obtain information about relational beliefs or values (e.g., working models of

friendships, reasons for divorce) and about specific relational processes and concepts (e.g., commitment, marital quality, conflict, family traditions, and values). Some researchers claim that since accounts allow individuals to have a voice in the reports about their own relationships, these stories reveal distinctive information beyond what can be assessed with standard quantitative survey measures.

Many relationship scholars focus on relationship accounts as a technique to gain a better understanding of the meaning individuals find in their personal relationships and in the unfolding of relational processes over time. For example, the particular themes or issues that emerge in the account give information about how the individual thinks relationships should work (e.g., “My marriage should get better over time”) or serve as a warning signal of a relationship in trouble (e.g., jealousy, anger). Accounts also can reflect specific interactive processes and emotions. Studies show that the stories told by happy couples differ in many ways from those told by unhappy couples (e.g., happy couples typically develop their story in a much more collaborative rather than conflictive manner).

In addition, relationship accounts allow researchers to understand the self and the development of specific identities over time (past, current, and future). For example, research indicates that story-telling in families and couples helps to construct and strengthen a joint identity (e.g., family identity), which then leads to an increased sense of clarity and satisfaction for the couple and other family members. Family stories (e.g., about grandparents who survived the war and came to the United States with nothing but the clothes on their back) told and retold to other family members both construct and reflect the values and goals of a family (e.g., “This family works hard and survives hardship”).

Social Context of Account Making

Another research theme has been to examine the context within which accounts are developed and shared with others. In these studies, there is recognition that individuals construct meanings of their relationships based on the social context of that relationship and the individual. This research has focused on such questions as are there in certain periods of life (e.g., major transitions, retirement),

events, or relationship stages (e.g., initiation, termination) when the development of a relationship account is intensified, when a fuller account is presented to others, or when people are more likely to disclose their accounts to others.

One very important context that has received considerable recent attention is the cultural or group context within which accounts and relationships are embedded. Relationships are constructed and embedded in group norms and expectations, which help determine the meanings of various relationship processes, such as conflict, parenthood, or decisions regarding the division of labor. Three important group contexts for relationship accounts are race/ethnicity, gender, and social class. Research findings demonstrate that although there are similarities in the courtship and marriage stories presented by Black and White couples, there are important differences as well. For example, religion plays a stronger role in the way Black American couples, compared to White American couples, talk about their marriage. Also, at least in the early years of marriage, White Americans are more likely than Black Americans to talk about their feelings about something as a couple and to collaborate with their spouse in the story-telling process. In contrast, Black American couples are more likely to provide accounts as individuals involved in the marital relationship.

Relationship Therapy

The concept of accounts-as-stories also has played an important role in relationship therapy. Research evidence suggests that storytelling in the therapeutic environment is effective for dealing with emotional stress and reducing negative emotions. In particular, for couples who come to therapy to work on relationship issues, storytelling has been shown to be effective in reducing negative affect experienced about their relationship. These stories also help therapists and couples gain a handle on couple dynamics (e.g., how one spouse deals or speaks to the other spouse), insight which can reveal problems that need attention or encourage new ways of thinking about problems. Stories also elicit positive experiences and feelings of love, which couples may have forgotten ever existed in their relationship. In counseling, these stories strengthen the quality of the interpersonal relationship that is being worked

on or alternatively allow couples to separate in a way that facilitates future well-being and joint parenting obligations.

Terri L. Orbuch

See also Attribution Processes in Relationships; Beliefs About Relationships; Communication Processes, Verbal; Contextual Influences on Relationships; Couple Identity; Early Years of Marriage Project; Qualitative Methods in Relationship Research; Storytelling

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ACCURACY IN COMMUNICATION

Accuracy in communication encompasses how well communicators create verbal and nonverbal messages that are understood by others and how well those messages are recognized, comprehended, recalled, and interpreted. Accuracy refers to an objectively quantifiable metric by which the communication that is sent or received can be compared against some objective standard, or what is often referred to as *ground truth*. For example, if a sender expresses authentic anger,

the recipient is accurate to the extent that he or she classifies the expression as anger rather than, say, love or surprise. This entry describes those lines of research specifically conducted under the rubric of general *encoding* and *decoding* accuracy. Accuracy can be divided into expression or encoding accuracy, which concerns message production, and judgment or decoding accuracy (also sometimes referred to as sensitivity), which concerns message reception. Accuracy in sending and receiving messages depends on a variety of factors called moderating variables, which include sex or gender, personality, and individual social skills, among other moderating factors. This entry divides moderators between (a) communication and relationship variables such as presence of interaction, expression type, and communication channel and (b) individual difference variables such as gender and personality.

In some very important respects, people are accurate in their communication. When communicating with others, people make sense of situations quickly and with limited information. People interact on a daily basis with others whom they do not know very well or have just met, and they are able to converse and accomplish tasks together with ease. Additionally, people are able to anticipate how well-known others will respond and what they will say in a particular situation. Although the ability to read others varies based on a host of communication and individual difference factors, accuracy in communication and perceptions is frequent and evident in everyday interactions.

Nonetheless, in other ways, communication is very inaccurate. A common axiom in communication textbooks is that the message sent is not the message received. For example, research indicates that people tend to use their own thoughts and feelings to make sense of others' experiences, and they often overestimate the similarity between their own and others' reactions. Every textbook on communication fundamentals enumerates the source, message, channel, receiver, relationship, and context factors that affect the accuracy with which messages are exchanged. Finally, there is evidence that in ongoing relationships, people may not always strive for accuracy; inaccuracy may actually help sustain the relationship. Thus, inaccuracy must be addressed side by side with accuracy.

Encoding Accuracy

Four types of encoding accuracy can be distinguished. Two—social expressiveness and social control—refer to verbal aspects of message encoding (i.e., what people say), and two—emotional expressiveness and emotional control—refer to nonverbal aspects of message encoding (i.e., how they use body language when communicating). The expressive forms of verbal and nonverbal encoding apply to more spontaneous expressions of emotions, feelings, and mood states. Accurate encoders are ones whose verbal statements and nonverbal expressions are correctly identified by message recipients or observers. The control aspects of message encoding refer to the ability to regulate, mask, or modify verbal statements and nonverbal displays so as to maximize intentional, socially appropriate, or desired communication and to minimize unintentional, inappropriate, or undesired expressions. Accurate encoders are ones whose deliberate verbal and nonverbal expressions are correctly identified by message recipients.

Research on encoding accuracy is sparser than on decoding accuracy. Relevant veins of encoding research cover emotional expressions, deception, and moderators of encoding accuracy. Encoding research primarily examines nonverbal behavior, as compared to decoding research, which includes both verbal and nonverbal behavior.

Emotional Expression Accuracy

An emotion is accurately encoded to the extent that it is legible and readily identified by receivers or observers. Most of the work on encoding accuracy has focused on facial and vocal expressions rather than on other encoding modalities such as touch. Accuracy is a function of which emotion is being expressed. Readable facial and vocal expressions of anger, nervousness, and sadness appear to be easier to produce than complex affects like pride, sympathy, love, or jealousy. Whether an expression is posed or spontaneous, pleasant or unpleasant, or highly or moderately intense also influence accuracy.

Deception Encoding Accuracy

Deception, broadly construed, refers to messages sent with intent to mislead another. It may include not only outright lies but other forms of deceit such as equivocation, exaggeration, concealment, omission, and evasion. In the case of deception, accuracy in discerning the truth on the part of receivers means the sender has failed to accurately convey his or her intended message. Thus, inaccuracy on the part of receivers corresponds to success, or accuracy, on the part of senders.

Those who are best at fooling their targets include those who score high on the encoding dimensions of social skills (social expressivity, emotional expressivity, social control, emotional control), especially social (verbal) control and emotional (nonverbal) expressivity. Further, those who can convey an honest-appearing, credible demeanor—sometimes referred to as demeanor bias—are the most successful at evading detection and reducing accuracy of recipients.

Communication-Related Moderators of Encoding Accuracy

Perhaps the most influential factor moderating encoding accuracy is the presence of interaction itself. Research on interaction often utilizes a social relations model in which individuals interact with multiple partners so that factors related to individual differences and the impact of interacting with a particular partner can be sorted out. This research shows that accuracy does not simply result from the skills of the individual communicators. Some dyads were systematically more or less accurate than the individual skills of expressers or perceivers would predict, a finding which suggests that something happens within that specific interaction to allow communicators to more accurately assess one another.

A second plausible moderator is communication channel, or the vehicle used to convey the message, such as the voice or body or written text. Research on the relative merits of different channels for transmitting messages has focused more on which channels people rely on than on how accurate they are, but common wisdom suggests that having multiple channels with which to send

redundant and complementary information is superior to single channels. Also more beneficial is the use of interactive communication forms such as Internet chat or the telephone that permit corrective feedback. The impact of interaction and feedback on encoding accuracy is particularly evident in research on deception. Deceivers are better able to enact a more natural looking demeanor (e.g., fluent speech, appropriate content management) in interactive, dialogic situations, and this ability is especially true when an individual is interacting with a partner who displays an involved and pleasant communication style.

Individual Difference Moderators of Encoding Accuracy

Research has shown that effects of sender expressivity are reliable and large in magnitude, indicating significant individual variability. Among the specific individual variables that affect expressive accuracy are gender, age, social skills, and personality. Considerable research shows that women are more accurate than men at displaying both spontaneous and deliberate nonverbal expressions, and the differences are noticeable. This gender difference among male and female adults is not found reliably among children, suggesting that it is more attributable to social learning than to biology. Female superiority also varies by emotion and channel. Facial pleasantness, disgust, distress, fear, and anger are easier for women to produce than other basic emotions and complex affects; for men, only guilt is slightly easier to produce than other emotions. Female superiority in expressive accuracy is virtually nonexistent for vocal expressions.

Possible sources of differences among men and women in accuracy that have been proposed include evolutionary differentiation, different degrees of specialization in the brain, differences linked to power and domination of women by men, and differences in male versus female social roles. Comprehensive reviews of the research literature indicate that power and dominance explanations have less empirical support than sociocultural ones related to expectations, social norms, and roles and related affective experiences.

Other individual factors moderating encoding accuracy are social skills and personality. That is, some people have trait-like qualities that make their communication more readable than others. Emotionally expressive women and men who are good social actors are more proficient at emotional encoding. More generally, individuals who score high on social competence, expressivity, dominance, extraversion, and/or exhibitionism and low on neuroticism are more accurate in transmitting intended emotions than their less socially skilled, inexpressive, or shy counterparts.

Decoding Accuracy

Decoding accuracy addresses how well individuals recognize, comprehend, and interpret communication from others. Research on decoding accuracy, broadly construed, includes work that examines nonverbal and interpersonal sensitivity, emotional intelligence, and empathic accuracy. Overall, this research highlights the importance of decoding abilities in successfully managing interaction and developing relationships.

Emotion Identification Accuracy

Research indicates that individuals are able to recognize a variety of emotions (including happiness, fear, and surprise) quickly with relatively high levels of accuracy. Moreover, decoding emotion seems to involve automatic forms of processing, with accuracy increasing only slightly when perceivers are given time to reflect on the potential meaning of the emotion displayed.

That being said, some expressions are easier to decode than others. Primary emotions such as happiness, anger, and surprise are typically easier to recognize than blends of emotion such as contempt or shame. This tendency makes sense because blends incorporate cues from several different emotion displays and because emotions such as contempt or shame are often tied to social norms about expected behavior and appropriate emotional response. Pleasant facial expressions are typically easier for people to decode than unpleasant expressions (e.g., disgust, anger, or sadness). Skill in decoding pleasant expressions extends to

specific cues like smiling, and individuals are quite good at distinguishing between fake and genuine smiles. People are able to decode pleasant emotions at low levels of intensity while decoding accuracy for unpleasant emotions increases as the intensity of the displayed emotion increases. It is interesting that individuals are better able to decode emotions typically thought of as more socially appropriate. Much has been made of the importance of decoding accuracy as a type of survival skill, which would be particularly important with regard to negative emotional states of others; however, research suggests that people are good at recognizing the positive emotional displays that occur more regularly in interaction.

Empathic Accuracy

Decoding accuracy, however, involves more than simply recognizing or labeling the emotional expression of another. It also involves the ability to accurately take the perspective of a partner in interaction. Empathic accuracy refers to the extent to which an individual is able to accurately infer the thoughts and feelings of another. Although individuals show high levels of accuracy in some situations (especially with others they know well), inferring another's thoughts and feelings is a complex task fraught with error. Some researchers have noted the difficulty of taking another's perspective, a difficulty which is sometimes referred to as the empathy gap. This empathy gap occurs because accuracy requires that one take into account all aspect of another's perspective, including his or her emotional state. This gap seems to remain even when individuals share similar life experiences. For instance, research has shown that having similar life experiences, such as new motherhood, alcoholism, or parental divorce, did not increase empathic accuracy when assessing a partner's thoughts and feelings during interaction.

Deception Detection Accuracy

A significant body of research has addressed accuracy in detecting deception. Comprehensive studies of this demonstrate that detection accuracy averages 54 percent. This figure, which is just above the level of accuracy that would occur by

chance (50 percent) if one were to rate another's communication as either truth or lie, implies a poor rate of detection. However, other research using continuous measures reveals a greater level of sensitivity to deception. People are better able to recognize when something is amiss or suspicious than they are to identify deception *per se*.

Communication-Related Moderators of Decoding Accuracy

In interaction, individuals decode another's communication utilizing a number of different verbal and nonverbal cues as well as contextual information. Most of the research on decoding emotions has utilized posed expressions, often providing only limited nonverbal cues such as facial expressions. Such studies strip away emotional expressions of cues that communicators would typically use in making sense of an emotion display. This difference is important because natural interaction typically requires individuals to make sense of a wide range of cues and codes of information. Additionally, one thing that individuals are sensitive to is the consistency between verbal and nonverbal messages. Decoders show higher accuracy when channel consistency is present than when one channel contradicts another, such as when the words are encouraging but the voice and face show negative emotions.

As regards channels for judging emotions, individuals are more likely to accurately recognize emotions when they have access to a full range of verbal and nonverbal cues and when asked to judge emotion from a limited set of static cues. However, the reverse is true when decoding deception. Accuracy is higher (and better than chance) when judging vocal than facial expressions, and having visual cues available hampers judgmental accuracy, possibly because humans are easily misled by visual cues.

Research on empathic accuracy has shown that verbal content is a primary source of accuracy in assessing a partner's emotional state. However, highest accuracy obtains when participants have access to verbal and nonverbal cues and when participants assess both thoughts and feelings (rather than just one), possibly because perceivers utilize different types of cues for judging thoughts and

feelings. When making judgments about an interaction partner's thoughts, perceivers utilize verbal cues, but they rely more heavily on visual nonverbal cues when making judgments about feelings. Nonverbal cues are important to accuracy, but they may be most central when verbal cues are not informative or when there is discrepancy between verbal and nonverbal.

An additional influence on accuracy is the nature of the interpersonal relationship between communicators. It makes sense that individuals who know one another well would be better able to read one another, and some research supports this view. But this is not always the case. For instance, although relational partners tend to think they can accurately detect one another's deception, they typically cannot. Although relationships afford individuals the opportunity to develop sophisticated bases of knowledge from which they can draw to facilitate communication accuracy, constant accuracy in communication between relational partners may be threatening if accuracy reveals a partner's doubts or negative feelings about the relationship. When dealing with benign, nonthreatening information, accuracy should be beneficial to relationships. However, in the case of threatening relational information—such as information that a partner is attracted to someone else—inaccuracy helps to maintain stability of the relationship. This motivated inaccuracy is thought to have protective effects and may actually buffer individuals by lessening their awareness of relational threats or by limiting the impact of negative emotional contagion.

Individual Difference Moderators of Decoding Accuracy

Sociodemographic moderators of decoding accuracy include gender, age, and culture. Women are generally better at decoding than men, which may result from socialization practices but may also reflect power differences between men and women. There is some evidence that women demonstrate higher empathic accuracy than men, but a number of studies show inconsistency in men's and women's empathic accuracy. When men and women are equally motivated to infer a partner's thoughts and feelings, gender differences disappear.

Adults are typically more accurate at decoding emotion in interaction than children. This accuracy relates largely to the ability of adults to use more sophisticated perspective-taking skills in determining the meaning of messages. Interestingly, culture also plays a role in decoding emotion and nonverbal cues. For example, individuals more accurately identify emotions displayed by in-group members, possibly because cultures differ in how they conceptualize different emotions and in cultural norms of expressivity, sometimes called *display rules*. These differences shape what decoders expect when emotions are displayed.

Personality also moderates social sensitivity and accuracy. For instance, individuals who are higher in the "need to belong" are more accurate in assessing vocal and facial emotions and show greater empathic accuracy. Additionally, individuals who are more sociable, independent, and psychologically flexible tend to demonstrate greater decoding accuracy.

Work on individual differences in deception detection accuracy has proven controversial. Although some have proposed that there are individuals who are particularly gifted at detection of deception, the majority of the research concludes that there is very little variability among individuals; that is, people are uniformly poor in their detection accuracy. The occasional findings of personality differences do not hold up taken as a whole. However, individuals do differ in the extent to which they view others as truthful and credible. Factors influencing this variability in judgment warrant further examination.

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See also Communication, Nonverbal; Communication Processes, Verbal; Communication Skills; Deception and Lying; Emotional Intelligence; Empathic Accuracy and Inaccuracy; Interpersonal Sensitivity; Rapport; Social Skills, Adults; Understanding

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ACQUAINTANCE PROCESS

All sorts and varieties of relationships can emerge from the point at which two people initially become acquainted. After meeting, no two relationships follow the same course of development. Certain commonalities, however, make up what is known about the path of acquaintanceship. The *acquaintance process* describes the initial conditions at work when two strangers meet, the forces and motivations that cause one person to be

chosen as an acquaintance or interaction partner over another, and the variables that contribute to the development of relationships after meeting.

Because acquaintance is less a concrete phenomenon and more a broad set of events and variables, it can be argued that much of relationship science is concerned, directly or indirectly, with how people negotiate the acquaintance process. Understanding how pairs of strangers initially meet and develop patterns of mutual interdependence, all during the course of frequent interaction, is fundamental to understanding later relationship maturation, maintenance, and potential deterioration. The current entry has two major thrusts. First, it will review the initial conditions in place when dyads begin to traverse the acquaintance process. Second, this entry will describe how relationships develop after the acquaintance process has been set in motion.

Setting the Stage for Relationship Development

Conditions for Meeting

In order for two previously unacquainted individuals to meet, at least one of them must first pay attention to the other. Because the world is filled with millions of bits of information, people must be selective in choosing where to focus their attention. In the social world, people who appear unfamiliar and unexpected more easily grab other people's attention. This tendency is important because it induces effort to determine whether the unusual individual is a potential friend or romantic partner, whether the individual presents a threat, or whether the individual is innocuous. People also tend to pay attention to those who appear important or attractive. If a stranger at a party appears to have high status, the likelihood of noticing the person increases—a necessary prerequisite for meeting. The stranger may not become an acquaintance, but the initial condition necessary for affiliation—attention—has been met.

Initiating acquaintance may not always involve choice. There may be other reasons to interact. For example, in situations such as assigned work groups, narrow hallways, and one-on-one meetings, people must interact to accomplish their goals. Scientists label situations containing these strong forces as *closed fields*. Even speed-dating

events consist of a series of closed field interactions that require no initiation to affiliate with multiple available partners, although individuals do decide whether to continue interacting with those they meet during the event. In contrast, situations in which options are available and interaction must be initiated are known as *open fields*. Open fields are exemplified by environments like parties and nightclubs, as well as more common encounters, such as deciding whether to approach a new coworker to discuss plans for the upcoming weekend or whether to strike up a conversation with a stranger about a shared interest in the slogan on his or her t-shirt. These examples all require initiation of acquaintanceship with desirable people among a host of alternatives.

Who Likes Whom?

Attraction is defined as an evaluation of liking for another person, coupled with a tendency to approach the person. Attraction principles apply to all kinds of relationships, romantic and non-romantic. A common assumption is that in open fields, people notice and seek out those whom they find attractive in some way. There is ample evidence to support the idea. Research has identified a number of factors that can cause one person to stand out from others and foster attraction between two people.

The Nature of the Open Field

Physical distance is an important factor in open field settings. All other things being equal, people are more likely to be attracted to others who are within reasonable physical proximity. Thus, those who share dorm hallways, sit in the same row of a classroom, share neighboring offices, or live next door are more likely to become friends than those who do not share proximal space. For example, in one study, police cadets in training were asked to name their best friend in the class. Cadets who sat close were more likely to be best friends than cadets who sat far away. Proximity contributes to attraction by providing individuals with repeated opportunities to engage in enjoyable interactions, which are rewarding and motivate future interactions.

Even if the physical distance between two people is great, the ease with which a person can

be reached represents another form of proximity. Advances in social technology affect the probability of interaction with or attraction to others who are not physically nearby. Cell phones, social networking Web sites (e.g., *MySpace*, *Facebook*), Internet communication (e.g., *Skype*, videoconferencing), and massive online multiplayer environments (e.g., *World of Warcraft*, *Second Life*) are all examples of social technologies that increase the ease with which strangers can meet and develop a relationship.

The Nature of the Self and the Acquaintance

Another set of variables that influence attraction concern the association between an individual's qualities and those of the person being considered for interaction. In general, people tend to like those who seem familiar to them. Familiarity may occur simply from mere exposure. For example, when students in a lecture class were asked to rate the attractiveness of a woman who had sat inauspiciously in the class 0, 5, 10, or 15 times, none of the students reported knowing the woman was in the class. Regardless, the greater the number of classes she had attended, the more attractive she was rated by students in the class.

The degree to which another person is similar to oneself is also an important determinant of attraction. People tend to like those who have similar attitudes and values. One reason why similarity is a strong predictor of attraction is that similar people are more likely to confirm one's beliefs about the world. Belief confirmation improves self-esteem and helps people make sense of the world. Furthermore, knowing that another person is similar to oneself increases the odds that the other person will reciprocate liking, further fueling mutual attraction. An important exception to the similarity-attraction principle is that when individuals expect to be liked by another, similarity matters less than if such an expectation is not already in place upon first meeting.

Finally, physical attractiveness predicts attraction. Those who are deemed beautiful by society are more appealing interaction partners than those deemed less physically attractive, especially, but not exclusively, in potential dating contexts. Romantic relationships tend to be composed of partners of roughly equal attractiveness. This so-called

matching hypothesis is explained as follows: In the process of acquiring mates, highly attractive people tend to be sought out by other highly attractive people whereas less attractive people tend to be avoided by them. The result is that the most attractive people end up with similar others, and less attractive people settle for each other. Another reason that the matching hypothesis works is that society has standards that dictate who is acceptable to whom, and one's field of eligibles tends to be composed of people of comparable beauty.

Other Motives for Acquaintanceship

Although attraction is a powerful predictor of interaction, there are other motives that help to determine when and with whom interaction occurs. Sometimes people affiliate with others to reap the benefits of being liked without actually liking the person back. This phenomenon is labeled *ingratiation*. Ingratiation often occurs when there is a status difference between two people. Associating with superior others confers a competitive advantage to the ingratiation in competitive situations. For example, employees may attempt to ingratiate themselves with a boss to get a promotion, earn praise, or try to stand out from other employees. However, it is not necessary for the employee to like the boss in return. A potential risk of ingratiation is that other people, including the one to whom the ingratiation is being directed, may look down on the tactic.

Another motive for interaction is the desire to gain information and operate effectively in the world. This approach, called *uncertainty reduction*, indicates that individuals pursue interaction with others under two conditions. When highly emotional, people seek out others to evaluate the appropriateness of their feelings, particularly others who may face the same stimulus (e.g., an illness). This sort of social comparison helps people understand their feelings, fulfilling the primary motive, but it also fosters affiliation and strengthens bonds between people. Second, in established relationships, attitude dissimilarity may be problematic because partners often need to make joint decisions and cooperate. Thus, all other things being equal, disagreement with a close partner can make it harder to successfully accomplish various tasks and goals.

Sometimes people are motivated to not interact with desirable and attractive others. Fear of rejection—fear that one's liking for another person will not be reciprocated—is a common motive for avoiding interaction with an attractive or high status acquaintance. When fear of rejection is high, people may not pursue relationships with those they find to be the most attractive; instead, they lower their standards for a potential mate. When initiating relationships, people with a strong fear of rejection tend to feel vulnerable and behave in a more guarded manner, which often inhibits relationship development. Low self-esteem, social anxiety, and shyness are associated with fear of rejection, and people with chronic fears of rejection have difficulty initiating and maintaining relationships.

Relationship Development

Not all dyads, even if mutually attracted, will continue from first encounters through a process of acquaintanceship. Nevertheless, without attraction, it is unlikely that interaction will persist when there are desirable and available alternatives, at least in open fields. For this reason, scientists have designated attraction the gatekeeper to relationship development. Once the gates are open, however, different processes guide people who were once strangers down the path of acquaintanceship and, potentially, acquaintances down the path to friendship or intimacy. The principles of relationship development are important second steps in the acquaintance process.

Self-Disclosure

Few relationships develop without both parties learning progressively more about each other. Though some of what is learned can be obtained through observation, what others choose to reveal is especially important for relationship development. *Self-disclosure*, the process of revealing personal information to others, has received a great deal of research attention. Although theories diverge in just how important self-disclosure is to relationship development, almost all theories agree that it is important.

For example, social penetration theory suggests that increasing levels of self-disclosure are the hallmark of relationship development. As two people

become increasingly close, they reveal more and more aspects of themselves, and the amount and depth of information that they divulge on any one aspect also increases. According to the theory, closeness will not increase without associated increases in self-disclosure. Furthermore, knowing the depth and breadth of two people's self-disclosures will indicate roughly how deep into the acquaintance process they are. Self-disclosure and closeness are tightly interwoven.

Other theories, such as the interpersonal process theory of intimacy, acknowledge self-disclosure but differentiate *emotional disclosure*, self-disclosure that reveals emotional content, from *factual disclosure*, which tends to be more informational in nature. Emotional disclosure tends to foster relationship development to a greater degree than factual disclosure. More important, though, is *perceived responsiveness* to emotional self-disclosure. Perceived responsiveness is defined as the feeling that when one's needs are expressed, the listener communicates understanding, support, and care. For example, one friend Tracy may reveal her innermost secrets to the other friend Kari, but if Kari does not respond appropriately, by communicating understanding, validation, and care, then Tracy is likely to feel vulnerable and exposed. Relationship development is likely to be stunted as Tracy shifts her focus from the relationship back onto herself. Therefore, self-disclosure per se does not build relationships, but rather the quality of the interaction that takes place around the disclosure is central to relationship development.

Despite differences between theories in the role of self-disclosure in relationship development, one set of consistent findings is the association between self-disclosure and liking. First, people tend to disclose to those they like. Second, people who self-disclose tend to be liked better than those who do not. Third, people tend to like those they disclose to. These principles hold true for both men and women during the acquaintance process, though some sex differences appear consistent. For example, women tend to self-disclose more than men on average. And in same-sex dyads or groups, men tend to disclose more factual information while women tend to disclose more emotional content. Self-disclosure is important for relationship development, but it is also related to liking and preferences for same- or opposite-sex

affiliation, which is a useful predictor of attraction early in the acquaintance process.

Trust

As closeness increases and the personal value placed on a relationship increases, vulnerability increases. Individuals who are close share private details with each other, rely on each other to meet their needs, and often put the good of the relationship ahead of personal goals. Although such closeness may certainly be satisfying, it is also associated with the potential to be hurt or exploited by one's partner. Trust is a process intended to protect against the vulnerability that arises during relationship development. One important theory of trust conceptualizes it as (a) the increased ability to predict a partner's behaviors, (b) the increased likelihood of judging a partner as dependable in addition to predictable, and (c) faith that a partner's dependability will persist through difficulty. Such experiences give individuals confidence that a partner will be responsive to their needs and will not take advantage of the growing interdependence in the relationship.

Trust is thought to be relationship-specific more than a personal trait and is usually mutual. In other words, although trust is directed toward the person in a relationship, the trust is about the relationship. Caring about another, feeling committed, and relationship longevity are positively associated with greater trust. In a large sample of individuals involved in a romantic relationship, those in new relationships reported the least amount of trust, followed by exclusive dating partners, engaged or cohabiting couples, and finally newlyweds and married intimates. Thus, experiences that strengthen the relational bond also confirm the partner's trustworthiness.

Adoption of Communal Norms

Norms governing equality in relationships differ as a function of a relationship's progress through the acquaintance process. Between strangers, acquaintances, neighbors, and casual friends, it is implicitly assumed that favors be returned quickly and be of equal value to the original favor. Between closer friends, romantic partners, and family members, however, returning a favor of equal value is not a pressing concern because it is implicitly assumed

that both parties are equally concerned with each other's welfare. The former sets of rules are called *exchange norms*; the latter, *communal norms*.

Generally, people of lesser acquaintance follow exchange norms. As relationships develop, people begin to follow communal norms. People tend to follow these rules without deliberate thought, but they can become keenly aware when a communal or exchange rule has been violated. Asking a girlfriend in the morning for the 20 dollars that was loaned last night would violate a communal norm and is likely to be perceived as rude. Alternatively, adopting communal norms too early in a relationship (such as not repaying a loan from one's neighbor quickly enough) is usually equally inappropriate. Generally, people are skilled at detecting those who violate rules of exchange.

Sometimes usage of exchange and communal norms can be manipulated to stunt or accelerate relationship development. Adopting communal norms early in the acquaintance process can signal a desire to increase closeness. In one experiment, college men paid more attention to an attractive woman's needs during a laboratory task when she was labeled as single and new to campus than did men who interacted with the same woman when she was labeled as married and living off-campus. In both cases, the woman was a stranger, but communal norms were adopted when the possibility of a future relationship was apparent.

Conclusion

The acquaintance process is vital to the formation and development of all varieties of interpersonal relationships, from acquaintances to close friends to romantic partners. These processes occur across the various domains of human lives and activities, as well as across the life span, allowing individuals to distinguish between others with whom a deeper relationship is desired from those failing to pique one's interest. Acquaintance processes highlight rewarding interaction partners who may help satisfy an individual's goals, thus motivating effort to further the relationship. Without the steps outlined here, human relationships would be nothing more than momentary, often trivial interactions between two people currently occupying the same space.

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See also Attraction, Sexual; Developing Relationships; Familiarity Principal of Attraction; First Impressions; Friendship Formation and Development; Initiation of Relationships; Interdependence Theory; Interpersonal Process Model of Intimacy; Liking; Self-Disclosure; Similarity Principle of Attraction; Social Exchange Theory; Social Penetration Theory; Stage Theories of Relationship Development

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ADOLESCENCE, ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS IN

Romantic relationships during adolescence, as in other life periods, are mutually acknowledged ongoing voluntary interactions. Compared to other relationships with peers, romantic ones typically have a distinctive intensity, commonly marked by expressions of affection and current or anticipated sexual behavior. This definition applies to same-gender, as well as mixed-gender, dyadic relationships. The term *romantic experiences* refers to a larger category of activities and cognitions that do not involve direct experiences with a romantic partner but that are relevant to individual and social development during adolescence. This category includes fantasies and one-sided attractions or crushes, as well as interactions with potential romantic partners or brief romantic encounters (e.g., hooking up).

Developmental changes in romantic experiences occur during the adolescent years (commonly, ages 12–18) and extend well into the 20s (now commonly called emerging adulthood). These normative patterns, however, mask considerable variability. Although most studies have been conducted in industrialized societies, most typically in North America, romantic experiences during adolescence are determined largely by the cultural context. Same-gender romantic experiences, though rarely studied before adulthood, clearly overlap with those of heterosexual youth but also involve somewhat different interpersonal processes and contextual factors.

Although conceptualizations of adolescent romantic relationships have been remarkably consistent across existing studies, no standard operational definitions exist, nor has the broader domain of romantic experiences been well specified. Researchers typically have asked participants if they have a romantic relationship, and the participants decide on the basis of their own definition. A brief description is sometimes provided (e.g., “When you like a guy [or girl] and he [or she] likes you back”) for clarification. Researchers often also specify a minimum duration (e.g., at least a month long) in an effort to narrow the criteria. Differences in definition affect estimates of

the frequency and duration of romantic relationships and perhaps even the findings that are obtained.

The sections that follow outline common features of adolescent romantic experiences and research findings regarding changes in romantic experiences and behaviors from ages 12 to 18.

Incidence and Significance of Romantic Relationships for Adolescents

Romantic experiences are hallmarks of adolescent development. More than half of U.S. adolescents report having had a special romantic relationship in the past 18 months. High school students commonly report more frequent interactions with romantic partners than with parents, siblings, or friends. Not surprisingly, researchers have found that adolescents’ romantic experiences are associated with many aspects of their personal development: forming a personal identity, adjusting to changes in familial relationships, furthering harmonious relations with peers, succeeding (or not) in school, looking ahead to future careers, and developing sexuality (regardless of the extent of sexual activity). Contrary to widespread skepticism, romantic experiences also appear to be linked to qualities of romantic relationships in later life.

Four key questions frame this essay: (1) What pathway do most individuals follow in the development of their romantic experiences and behaviors? (2) What are the common features of adolescent romantic experiences? (3) What markers of individual differences in romantic experiences have been documented? (4) What is the impact of other relationships (e.g., with parents or friends) on adolescent romantic experiences?

The Developmental Course of Adolescent Romantic Experiences

Romantic experiences and relationships change substantially over the course of development, yet there is no single pattern of romantic development. In most industrialized societies, adolescents vary as to when they develop romantic interests, begin to date, or establish a romantic relationship. Some youth may have relatively few or intermittent

romantic experiences, whereas others may be seeing someone or have a romantic relationship most of the time. Typically, in early adolescence romantic relationships are relatively short-lived, but some long-term relationships may occur early on.

Features of Romantic Relationships

A fundamental challenge is identifying the relevant dimensions of variation in adolescent romantic experiences. One comprehensive approach delineates five features of romantic experiences. Romantic involvement or activity refers to whether or not a person dates, when she or he began dating, the duration of relationships, and the frequency and consistency of dating and relationships. Partner identity is concerned with the characteristics of the person with whom an adolescent has a romantic experience, such as in dating. The content of the relationship refers to what the dyad does and does not do together. Relationship quality pertains to the relative degree of positive, supportive, beneficent experiences as compared to the negative, potentially detrimental ones. Cognitive and emotional correlates include perceptions, attributions, and representations of oneself, the partner, and the relationship and emotions and moods elicited by and in romantic encounters or relationships. Attending simultaneously to several or all of these components of individual and dyadic functioning permits researchers to identify potentially significant variations in romantic experiences.

Romantic Relationships Activity

For adolescents in Western cultures, becoming involved in romantic relationships commonly occurs through a predictable series of phases first described by Australian sociologist Dexter Dunphy. Adolescents first commonly participate in cliques of four to six same-gender friends (stage one). In phase two, male and female same-gender cliques begin to interact with each other. In phase three, a mixed-gender crowd emerges and the higher status members of the earlier cliques begin to date each other and form mixed-gender cliques. In phase four, the mixed-gender peer crowd is fully developed, and several mixed-gender cliques have emerged as more individuals begin to date. As crowd members pair off, they form a new crowd of couples.

The experiences of most heterosexual adolescents generally correspond to these developmental models. Before adolescence, most interactions occur with peers of the same gender, and most friendship pairs are of the same gender. The percentage of adolescents who report having a romantic relationship increases across adolescence; popular adolescents generally date more frequently than other adolescents. For example, in a national survey, 36 percent of 13 year olds, 53 percent of 15 year olds, and 70 percent of 17 year olds report having had a “special” romantic relationship in the last 18 months. The proportions are even higher with more inclusive definitions of romantic relationships (e.g., dating, spending time with or going out with someone for a month or longer).

Less is known about the developmental course of gay, lesbian, and bisexual romantic experiences. Approximately 93 percent of sexual minority adolescent boys and 85 percent of sexual minority girls report having had some same-gender activity. Most sexual minority adolescent males were first sexually rather than emotionally attracted to a male, whereas sexual minority adolescent females were evenly divided between first having had an emotional attraction or a sexual attraction to another female. Males most commonly had had same-gender sexual experiences with a friend, whereas girls’ same-gender experiences were with a romantic partner. The average age of the first self-reported serious same-gender relationship is 18 years.

Sexual identity and the gender of the person one is attracted to can be quite fluid and can change over time, especially for women. Approximately 42 percent of girls and 79 percent of boys have reported some sexual activity with a member of the other gender, and the majority of sexual minority youth report dating members of the other gender. Thus, estimates of the prevalence of homosexuality can range from 1 to 21 percent depending upon the definition. Such variability underscores the idea that no simple dichotomy exists between heterosexuality and homosexuality.

Relationship Content, Quality, and Cognitions

The meaning of romantic relationships changes from early to late adolescence. For early adolescents having a boyfriend or girlfriend confers social

status and facilitates fitting in. Middle adolescents most commonly cite companionship as an advantage. Late adolescents and young adults more often emphasize the prospect for a special connection with the partner, compatibility, closeness, and mutual caring and support. Reports about falling in love experiences change developmentally; older adolescents and emerging adults tend to report having first fallen in love at a later age than younger adolescents, implying a redefining of prior experiences.

Other-gender peers are the most common source of positive emotions for heterosexual youth. Positive emotions are especially likely to occur when socializing on weekend nights with a romantic partner or several other-gender peers. Over the course of adolescence, the amount of time spent with other-gender peers and romantic partners in particular increases.

As romantic experiences become more common, physical and relational aggression by romantic partners also increases. Sexual harassment of both same-gender and other-gender peers increases over early adolescence as well, and these higher levels persist in middle adolescence. Sexual victimization is also relatively common throughout much of adolescence, with estimates for girls ranging from 14 percent to 43 percent.

Individual Differences in Romantic Experiences

Partner Characteristics

Like adults, adolescents report that they would like partners who are intelligent, interpersonally skillful, and physically appealing. Girls tend to have slightly older partners, whereas boys tend to have similar aged partners. Dating partners are usually similar in race, ethnicity, and other demographic characteristics, as well as in attractiveness, adjustment, and peer network characteristics. Aside from these findings, little is known about the impact of the partner on adolescent relationships and on their development significance.

Impact of Current and Past Relationships

Romantic relationships do not occur in isolation. Individual differences in romantic relationship experiences typically are embedded in each

partner's current close relationships and history of relationships.

Relationships With Parents

Parent-adolescent relationships contribute to behavioral, cognitive, and emotional patterns that have been linked to later behavior with romantic partners. Secure working models of parents are linked to subsequent capacity for romantic intimacy, whereas avoidant styles are linked to less positive romantic relationships in early adulthood. Nurturing, involved parenting in adolescence is predictive of warmth, support, and low hostility toward romantic partners in early adulthood. Similarly, the degree of flexible control, cohesion, and respect for privacy experienced in families is related positively to intimacy in late adolescent romantic relationships, with especially strong links emerging for women. Parent-adolescent conflict resolution is also associated with later conflict resolution with romantic partners.

In contrast, unskilled parenting and aversive family communications are associated with later aggression toward romantic partners. Similarly, the degree of negative emotionality in parent-adolescent dyads is correlated with negative emotionality and poor quality interactions with romantic partners in early adulthood. In fact, parenting style in adolescence contributed more substantially to the quality of early adult romantic relationships than did either sibling relationships or the models provided by parents' own marriage. Family stress and family separation are also risk factors for early romantic involvement, which in turn is associated with poor adjustment. The quality of these apparently compensatory early involvements, however, is typically poorer than that of romantic relationships for youth with more beneficent family histories.

A growing number of studies now implicate familial experiences in infancy and childhood in the romantic experiences in adolescence and adulthood. The qualities of early parent-child relationships are significantly associated with the stability and quality of adolescent and young adult romantic relationships. Closeness to parents in childhood is even a forerunner of long-term effects on relationship satisfaction in adulthood and marital stability. Longitudinal studies are now examining

both the nature of these associations across time and the processes of continuity and change that account for them.

Peer Affiliations and Friendships

Relationships with peers are also correlated with the characteristics of the romantic relationships formed in adolescence. Having a large number of other-gender friends and being liked by many of one's peers in adolescence is correlated with current and future dating patterns. General social competence with peers is associated with romantic relationship activity in early and middle adolescence and romantic relationship quality in early adulthood.

Friendships are especially implicated in the development of romantic relationships, perhaps because of the resemblance between the two types of close relationships. Friendships and romantic relationships are both voluntary, and relationships with friends function both as prototypes of interactions compatible with romantic relationships and as testing grounds for experiencing and managing emotions in the context of voluntary close relationships. Friends also serve as models and sources of social support for initiating and pursuing romantic relationships and also for weathering periods of difficulty in them, thus potentially contributing to variations in the qualities of later romantic relationships. As an example, adolescent males' hostile talk about women with friends is predictive of later aggression toward female partners.

Relatively little is known about the similarities and differences in the characteristics of friendships and heterosexual romantic relationships. In early and middle adolescence, same-gender friendships are perceived to be more supportive and intimate than heterosexual romantic partners. Perceptions of the frequency of conflict are similar, although observed rates of conflict in interactions are greater in heterosexual romantic relationships. Observed affective responsiveness and dyadic positivity are also less in romantic relationships.

Relatively little is known about the links between sexual minorities' peer relationships and romantic relationships. Those who have had more romantic relationships worry more about losing friends, although the size of the network is not predictive of the number of romantic relationships.

Social Networks

Contrary to common stereotypes of cross-purposes between parents and peers, the peer and family domains are often similar in nature, and family and peer influences often act in concert with one another. For example, a stable, harmonious family life reduces the risk of affiliation with deviant peers and both reduce the risk of choosing deviant romantic partners. Family and peer influences also may moderate each other. Parental support is associated with a reduction in criminality for those without a romantic partner, but the support of a partner is the more important factor for those with a romantic partner.

Compared to childhood relationships, the diminished distance and greater intimacy in adolescents' peer relationships may both satisfy affiliative needs and contribute to socialization for relations among equals. Intimacy with parents provides nurturance and support but may be less important than friendships for socialization to roles and expectations in late adolescence and early adulthood. Little is known about the joint contributions of relationships or the impact of the combination of parent, peer, and romantic relationships on adolescent development and adjustment.

Person Characteristics

Surprisingly, few studies have focused on the role of individual characteristics in adolescent romantic experiences. The few available findings imply that, as with adults, the nature and quality of romantic experiences are correlated with partners' self-esteem, self-confidence, and physical attractiveness. Social competence is related positively to dating and romantic experience, whereas alcohol and drug use, poor academic performance, externalizing and internalizing symptoms, poor emotional health and low job competence are associated with negative experiences. Causality is unclear, however, because these cross-sectional correlations plausibly could reflect either the effects of romantic experience on adjustment or the converse. For example, dating or romantic experience in late childhood and early adolescence is predictive of subsequent misconduct and poor academic performance, which in turn are associated with a risk of being involved in romantic relationships with negative qualities. Similarly, romantic activity

is linked to depression, especially for adolescents engaging in casual sex or with a history of unresponsive relationships; these latter conditions may also place a young person at risk for negative romantic experiences.

The multifaceted nature of romantic experiences discussed earlier implies that spurious correlates are likely. For example, romantic breakups are one of the strongest predictors of depression, suicide attempts, and suicide completions; thus, experiencing a breakup, rather than having been in a romantic relationship, may account for the correlation between romantic experience and depression. In one of the few studies to examine multiple dimensions simultaneously, psychosocial adjustment was related distinctively to romantic experience, to overinvolvement (an indicator of activity), and to the quality of romantic relationships.

Future Directions

Research on adolescent romantic relationships potentially broadens understanding of the significance of close relationships in the development of individual well-being and social competence. Many questions remain unanswered. For instance, although adolescents' reports of the quality of their relationships with different romantic partners are moderately consistent, it is unclear how much carryover occurs from one adolescent romantic relationship to the next or how much having a new partner may lead to a different experience. Similarly, despite fragmentary evidence that romantic experiences are strongly influenced by cultural and community factors, more extensive and systematic research is needed on the nature of contextual influences and the corresponding effects on adolescents and their subsequent relationships. Attention to the varied dimensions of romantic experience will provide a more complete picture of these experiences in the panoply of personal and social influences on development from childhood to adulthood.

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See also Dating, First Date; Family Relationships in Adolescence; Friendships, Cross-Sex; Friendships in Adolescence; Rejection Sensitivity

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ADOPTION

The definition of the term *adoption* appears straightforward: the legal transfer of parental rights and responsibilities from those who biologically created a child to other adults who rear the child. But the legal definition does not capture the complex human relationships that are formed and influenced by adoption when two families—who

often do not know one another—are forever joined through the child. Further, adoption is not an event, but a process. Throughout life, all parties—the original family, the adoptive parents, and the person who is adopted—must accommodate the meaning of adoption into their identities and their relationships. Further, adoption resonates beyond these parties—for example, to the partner or spouse of the adopted person, to the grandparents both original and adoptive, to the children born to those adopted. As adoption pioneer Kenneth Watson has noted, adoption is a profound experience that encompasses universal human themes of love, loss, abandonment, sexuality, parenthood, kinship, and identity. Adoption raises questions about nature and nurture, about biological connection and belonging, and about the meaning of family. Thus adoption has not only legal but also social and psychological dimensions. This entry considers such dimensions, briefly reviewing theory, research, and the history of adoption.

Adoption: Theory and Empirical Examination

Although much has been proposed about the impact of adoption on identity and relationships, both theoretical explication and empirical testing is limited. What is known is that well-designed studies consistently find that families formed through adoption are successful—with high levels of satisfaction reported by adopted persons and by those who adopt them. For example, several studies have found that adopted children (especially those adopted following maltreatment or otherwise compromised early lives) have more behavior problems, especially in adolescence, but others have not found large differences. The common theme in studies of families formed through adoption is that children fare well and that families are cohesive. Researchers know much less about the long-term impact on birth or first families.

Despite positive outcomes, theory predicts that adopted persons face additional challenges to positive identity formation. In psychoanalytic theory, relationships in adoption are seen as holding risk for psychopathology. Freud posited the concept of family romance—the fantasy-based disavowal of one's parents as real parents allowing for safe expression of anger or of ambivalence

toward the all-powerful parents. The romance enables children to separate and develop the psychological independence necessary for healthy adulthood. But this fantasy is problematic for adopted youth who must come to an understanding of why they have been separated from their original families—a separation that may be interpreted as rejection.

Developmental psychology, especially Erik Erikson's model of human development, holds that identity development and consolidation is a normative developmental step. Identity confusion may result from the lack of information about important aspects of self and history. Such informational lack is common in many adoptions.

Loss and grief theory (Bowlby) informs adoption theory as well. The breach of attachment and the lack of resolution of loss are held to complicate relationships. The loss for the birthmother has been particularly complex due to the stigma and secrecy surrounding adoption historically. For those adopting, the loss of the imagined or desired child that may occur when parents adopt rather than procreate is another complication, particularly when due to infertility. For adopted persons, particularly those with no connection to their original families, loss may be retrospective—realized and understood at relatively late developmental stages. Loss theory holds all are constrained by the ambiguity of loss and the dearth of social mechanisms that acknowledge and support grieving this type of loss. Unresolved loss can interfere with positive adoptive adjustment as well as impair the birthmother's capacity for psychologically healthy relationships.

The social reality that adoption differs from forming a family through birth also informs adoption theory. David Kirk's theory of adoption acceptance of difference versus rejection of difference predicts that more positive adjustment in the adoptive family results from both open and comfortable communication about adoption, and parental acceptance that forming a family through adoption is different. Denial of difference, exacerbated by the historic practice of matching (i.e., placing children with adoptive parents who resemble them physically, temperamentally, and intellectually) and by secrecy, inhibits family examination of important differences. David Brodzinsky has expanded the concept to include insistence on

difference, wherein difficulties in family relationships or child behaviors or abilities are seen as due to the otherness of the child. In his model there is a curvilinear relationship between levels of acknowledgment of difference with the most positive outcomes resulting from acceptance and less positive outcomes with both denial of and insistence on difference. Empirical examination of the Kirk and Brodzinsky view has been conflicting, with some studies finding that families where adoption is rarely discussed (identified as denial families) functioning well. The key element appears to be the overall comfort level of the family.

Another thread of adoption theory relates to search and reunion. In much of the 20th century, the need to search for one's original family or even for information about them was seen as pathological at worst or indicative of a bad adoption experience at best. More recently, the adoption movement and an emergent understanding of loss has led to a beginning shift in view—that retrieving information is a logical and perhaps necessary step to wholeness, and the relationships with birth family members may also contribute to psychological health.

It is important to note that theories used to examine adoption generally flow from the assumption that a family formed by birth is not only normative but preferred. Although most children are reared by at least one of their original parents, it is important to note there are a range of functional, nurturing family types in the contemporary United States. Theory related to adoption needs to be appraised for its assumptions of the superiority of the natalist family form, as well as in the context of modern family life and adoption practice.

Adoption History and Its Implications for Relationships

Although informal adoption (caring for children who are orphaned or otherwise without parental care) is as old as humankind, formal adoption is a relatively new invention. Legal regulation of adoption began in the United States in the 19th century. However, it was not until 1917 that the first law required investigation of child and family circumstances and the suitability of prospective adoptive parents and that adoption records be

confidential. By the 1950s, almost all states required investigation of adoptive parents' fitness, a period of supervision after placement, and the permanent sealing of records. In the post-World War II period, as more children became available for adoption and more couples had the means to adopt, matching children to families became common. Placing infants with parents who resembled them physically or even were thought to have similar intellect or capacity was the goal. Such practice further masked adoption. Simultaneously, mothers placing children were encouraged to hide their pregnancy, often disappearing to maternity homes while family members invented stories for their absence. The permanent sealing of adoption records and the reissuing of birth certificates with the adoptive parents' names further reinforced the social beliefs that illegitimacy was a stain to be concealed. That adopted children did not need information about their origins, that adoptive parents would fully replace a child's original family, and that a birthmother should move on with her life without further thoughts of the lost child were widely held beliefs of this period.

The numbers of adoptions of infants in the United States peaked in 1970 when over 170,000 adoptions were finalized. Shifting social mores in the 1960s and '70s coupled with greater access to birth control and the legalization of abortion led to dramatic declines in infants placed for adoption. Although the numbers of domestic infants declined, adoption of children from other countries and across race and ethnicity increased.

Both after World War II and particularly after the Korean conflict, the plight of children who were often the children of servicemen or who were otherwise vulnerable became public, and these children began to be adopted by American couples. In the 1970s, growing social awareness of the needs of older children and of children of color languishing in the child welfare system led to a movement to find adoptive homes for these previously labeled unadoptable children. Today adoption of infants is increasingly rare, although intercountry adoption is rising. Adoption from foster care is now the largest category of adoptive children. Statistics on infant adoption are not compiled in a central database. The Donaldson Adoption Institute estimates that about 135,000 nonstepparent adoptions occur annually. About

10,000 are adoptions of infants surrendered by birthparents, 26 percent are international adoptions, and the majority, 59 percent, are of children adopted from the foster care system.

Secrecy and Adoption

Beginning in the 1970s, challenges to secrecy in adoption and to permanent separation began and gained momentum. Fueled in part by organizations of adopted persons and of mothers whose children had been placed for adoption, the movement first revealed the pain suffered by many whose original connections were severed and later pushed for reform to make adoption more open, more informed, and less necessary. A range of works describing the profound loss and psychological distress felt by adopted persons and the shame and struggle of surrendering mothers accompanied the movement. For example, Betty Jean Lifton's *Lost and Found* presented adoption as a complex and life-altering process for the adopted. *The Other Mother* brought voice to the pain felt by many birthmothers and the need to protect the rights of vulnerable pregnant women and for openness after adoption. At the same time others, particularly some birthmothers, saw secrecy as protecting desired privacy. Despite some recent legislative changes in a small number of states, birth records remain sealed for most adopted persons, and original parents do not have a right to information about their children's adoption.

Adoption Types

Adoption From Foster Care

Children adopted from the child welfare system differ from the stereotypical adopted child (i.e., an infant whose parents choose to relinquish the child because they are unable to care for the child). Data from the U.S. Children's Bureau indicates they are older (mean age of 6.7, median 5.6) and have experienced maltreatment in their original homes and sometimes in the child welfare system as well. Most of these children are adopted by those who know them—either foster families who have been serving as substitute parents (the case for 60 percent) or by kin (25 percent). A small percent of children (15 percent) are adopted by matched

families, those who were not part of the foster system, but became so for express purpose of adopting. Further, most children adopted from foster care have experienced maltreatment.

Because it is the first goal of the child welfare system to reunite children with their parents, most children in foster care have regular visits with their parents, siblings, and sometimes other relatives. Thus, children adopted from foster care are likely to have memory of and a relationship with their first families.

A growing percent of children adopted from foster care are adopted by parents of a different race or ethnicity. Thus, such adoptions are conspicuous—it is clear to the outside world that this family was created by adoption. Those adopted across race and ethnicity have additional challenges to identity development beyond those of other adopted persons.

Children adopted from foster care have memory, know history or at least part of it, and have to fold maltreatment or parental incapacity into self-understanding. Their adopting parents may know original family and must manage the reality of harm by first family with the need to help the child overcome these difficulties and develop a positive sense of self.

International Adoption

By definition, adoption of children from other countries is transcultural adoption. The child joins a family who typically has language, customs, and experiences different from his or her own. In many cases, these are also transracial adoptions. Whether transcultural or transracial, international adoptions are often conspicuous. That is, the family is visibly identified as a family formed through adoption in the community, in schools, and in social situations.

Those adopted across national boundaries have additional challenges. Initially the loss of culture, language, and all that is familiar, as well as separation from attachment figures may lead to a profound experience of loss. As the child ages, identity development must include interweaving being adopted, having origins in another country, and often being of a different race or culture from one's parents. Finally, search and possible reunion is made more complex by differences in culture and

language, geographic distance, and continuing policies in some sending countries of retrieving and keeping little information or failing to make information about original family available.

Domestic Infant Adoption

The significant majority of infant adoptions are to two-parent families who face obstacles to conception. The significant majority of adoptions of infants in contemporary America are open to some degree. Current American adoption practice allows for and often promotes some type of ongoing communication between the parents who created the child and the adopting family in most cases. This openness may be direct and continuing (e.g., Sarah's first mommy is invited to and attends Sarah's birthday party, visits often, and is a part of family life, and Sarah knows her mother's parents, her cousins, etc.). It may, however, be limited to periodic letters and pictures exchanged through the agency or broker arranging the adoption. Whatever the level of openness, in modern infant adoption most birthmothers choose the family they wish to raise their child and most meet the prospective parents and many continue some type of relationship, whether regular or episodic. Further, in contemporary American adoption, most birthmothers are not young teens (who comprise only about 25 percent of those surrendering). Birthfathers continue to be largely absent from the process.

Stepparent Adoption and Family Adoption

A final adoption type is when a child is adopted by the spouse or partner of a biological parent with whom they live. Most typical is the adoption of a child by stepfathers whose social and psychological parenthood is codified through legal adoption. Like all adoptions, stepparent adoption involves the restructuring of family definitions and the loss of formal relationship with a parent.

Conclusion

The increasing social acceptance of adoption and public discussion rather than secrecy about this method of family formation likely will reduce the complexity which may face all members of the adoption triad. In addition, emergent understanding

of the legitimacy and value of an array of family types, coupled with on-going research assessing the impact of adoption and theory that does not assume the superiority of families formed through birth can lead to a more complex understanding of adoption.

Jeanne Howard

See also Attachment Theory; Families, Definitions and Typologies; Families, Public Policy Issues and; Foster Care, Relationships in; Privacy

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ADULT ATTACHMENT, INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES

John Bowlby, the originator of Attachment Theory, proposed that humans have a biologically

based inclination to form strong emotional bonds with others, called attachment bonds. From infancy through adulthood, these close attachment relationships provide a sense of emotional security, and being without or losing these relationships leaves people distressed and lonely. Adults, therefore, are highly motivated to form and maintain close relationships with romantic partners, close friends, and family members. However, adults differ in their capacity to maintain satisfying relationships and in their characteristic strategies for regulating feelings of security within their relationships. These differences stem, at least in part, from their experiences in childhood attachment relationships, which become internalized in expectations about close relationships and characteristic emotional and behavioral patterns within close relationships. This entry reviews research about individual differences in adult attachment and the implications of these differences for personal and social adjustment.

How Do Researchers Think About Individual Differences in Adult Attachment?

Infants and young children differ in the quality of their attachments with their adult caregivers. Cindy Hazan and Phillip Shaver proposed that distinct patterns of attachment may also characterize how adults function in their adult love relationships. They conceptualized romantic love as an attachment process and developed a measure to identify adult analogues of the original three infant attachment patterns: secure, avoidant, and ambivalent. Adults were asked to choose which of three brief paragraphs describing each style best captured their experiences in romantic relationships. *Secure* adults were characterized by high trust and comfort with closeness and mutual dependence in love relationships. *Avoidant* adults were characterized by discomfort with closeness and difficulty in trusting and depending on love partners. *Anxious-ambivalent* (also referred to as *preoccupied*) adults were characterized by a strong desire for closeness coupled with anxiety about rejection and abandonment. This simple classification was related to people's beliefs, expectations, and experiences in romantic relationships, as well as their childhood experiences with parents.

Hazan and Shaver's initial application of Attachment Theory to adult relationships proved remarkably fruitful, laying the foundation for hundreds of research studies. As well as replicating and extending the original research, researchers proposed various revisions and refinements to Hazan and Shaver's original conceptualization of adult attachment styles. Notably, Kim Bartholomew proposed that two distinct forms of avoidance could be identified in adulthood—a fearful style characterized by avoidance driven by fear of rejection and loss (similar to the original avoidant style) and a dismissing style characterized by defensive self-reliance and independence (similar to the dismissing pattern identified by the Adult Attachment Interview). In addition, researchers quickly realized that people do not fall neatly into one of three or four attachment categories. Rather, most people differ in the degree to which their experiences and expectations fit each attachment style. For instance, two individuals may be predominately secure, but one may have secondary avoidant tendencies and the other, secondary preoccupied tendencies, resulting in quite different presentations. Some researchers have further suggested that the very notion of distinct attachment styles or types is suspect.

It is now generally accepted that variation in adult attachment is best understood in terms of two continuous dimensions, *anxiety* and *avoidance*. Anxiety refers to the tendency to experience anxiety over rejection, separation, and abandonment; individuals high in anxiety are hypersensitive to anxiety-related threats, whereas those low in anxiety have trust in their attachment figures and are less prone to perceive threats. Avoidance refers to the behavioral strategy used to deal with attachment-related anxiety; individuals high in avoidance maintain distance and seek to deal with distress on their own, whereas those low in avoidance approach others for support to help regulate anxiety. See Figure 1 for a diagram of how four distinct attachment styles—secure, preoccupied (anxious-ambivalent), fearful avoidant, and dismissing avoidant—can be conceptualized as regions in the space defined by the anxiety and avoidance dimensions. This model of adult attachment emphasizes the dynamic operation of the attachment system. Thus, secure attachment is defined in terms of a relatively low threshold for activation of attachment anxiety and a tendency to approach

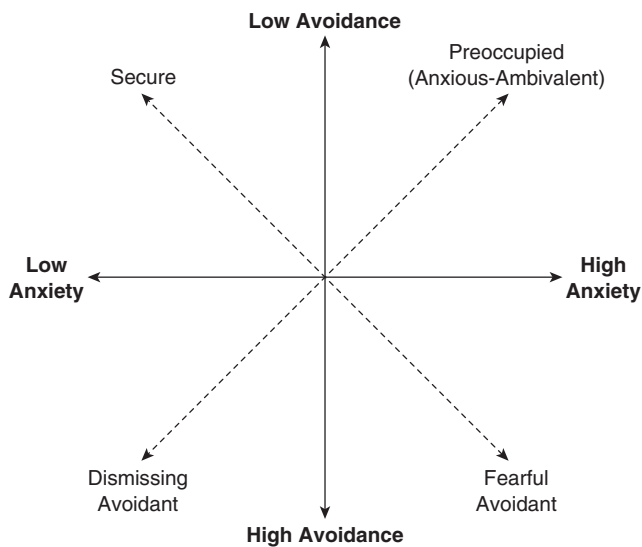


Figure 1 Diagram of the Two-Dimensional Space Defined by Attachment Anxiety and Avoidance

attachment figures for support when anxiety is triggered.

Assessment of Adult Attachment

As thinking about adult attachment developed, researchers developed a number of new approaches of assessing adult attachment style. These methods of assessment vary widely in format (e.g., self-report versus interview-based assessment), specificity (e.g., focus on adult relationship in general or a specific relationship), and in the conceptualization of attachment (e.g., distinct styles or dimensions). However, the measures share the goal of moving beyond a simple self-categorization of attachment styles to provide a more fine grained analysis of variability in adult attachment. Most of these measures consist of multiple items summed together to provide a rating of each attachment style or of the dimensions underlying the styles. Currently, the most widely used measure of adult attachment is the Experiences in Close Relationships (ECR) Scale developed by Kelly Brennan and her colleagues. This multi-item measure of the attachment dimensions of anxiety and avoidance assesses where individuals fall within the two-dimensional space pictured in Figure 1. The ECR

can be worded to apply to various classes of relationships—close relationships in general, romantic relationships in general, or a particular relationship—making it useful for a wide range of research applications.

Implications of Individual Differences in Adult Attachment

Coping and Individual Adjustment

The self-confidence and trust in close others associated with secure attachment promotes effective coping. Secure individuals are able to realistically appraise threatening situations and to respond flexibly, including approaching close others for support when needed. In contrast, individuals with high attachment anxiety tend to be hypersensitive to threats and to focus and ruminate on those threats, a behavior that interferes with adaptive coping. The avoidance dimension of adult attachment predicts how individuals respond when they experience stress or anxiety. Those low on avoidance are comfortable turning to others for support, whereas those high on avoidance emphasize self-reliance and rely on defensive denial or suppression of distress. Although this strategy of distancing appears to work quite effectively for the minor stresses of daily life, it is less likely to be effective for coping with major stresses, such as directly experiencing (and surviving) the September 11, 2001, attacks on the World Trade Center. As would be expected given the links between attachment and coping, adult attachment is related to various indices of individual health and well-being. Insecure attachment, and especially high attachment anxiety, is associated with experiences of depression, anxiety, conduct problems, substance abuse, physical health, and even posttraumatic symptoms among those exposed to traumatic events.

Perceptions of the Self and Others

Consistent with the proposition that secure attachment derives from a history of feeling valued and accepted within close relationships, security is strongly associated with high self-esteem and with realistic and coherent self-perceptions.

Also consistent with a history of supportive relationships, secure attachment is associated with positive perceptions of interaction partners. Secure individuals (those low in anxiety and avoidance), relative to less secure individuals, tend to trust in others' supportiveness and good intentions and to interpret ambiguous or negative behaviors by others in more understanding and benign ways. In contrast, anxious attachment is associated with a more vulnerable sense of self-worth, and both anxiety and avoidance are related to negative perceptions and expectations of others. These views of interaction partners also extend to views of others in general, including strangers and members of outgroups. For instance, Mario Mikulincer and Phillip Shaver have found that Israeli Jewish students high in attachment security show less hostile attitudes toward people who do not belong to their own group, such as homosexuals, Russian immigrants, and Israeli Arabs.

General Interpersonal Functioning

Adult attachment styles are reflected in people's goals and habitual ways of interacting in their social relationships. Whereas attachment security is characterized by the capacity to maintain a comfortable balance of closeness and independence in relationships, both high anxiety and high avoidance compromise smooth interpersonal functioning, especially within close relationships. Individuals high on anxiety strongly desire closeness and acceptance in their close relationships, but their hypersensitivity to rejection and abandonment interfere with meeting this goal. Especially when they are also low on attachment avoidance (falling in the preoccupied space in Figure 1), anxious individuals tend to be intrusive and demanding in their relationships. Unfortunately, these excessive demands for intimacy and reassurance tend to alienate and push away relationship partners, the opposite effect to what is desired. In contrast, those high in avoidance seek to maintain a comfortable level of distance in their relationships, presumably as a way to defend against the dangers of rejection and loss. This stance results in difficulties in getting close to and depending on others, including low expressiveness and low disclosure within relationships.

Functioning in Romantic Relationships

Adult attachment is associated with interpersonal functioning in a broad range of domains, including daily interactions with friends and acquaintances. However, following from Hazan and Shaver's initial focus on love relationships, the majority of research attention has been given to the implications of attachment for experiences in intimate couple relationships. A large body of research documents that secure attachment is associated with greater satisfaction and better adjustment in both dating and marital relationships. These associations do not merely reflect positive perceptions associated with security. The partners of secure individuals also report greater satisfaction, and a few studies indicate that security predicts relationship adjustment and breakups over periods of a few years.

Considerable research has explored the processes through which adult attachment styles may impact relationship functioning. Attachment styles have been found to be associated with almost every aspect of romantic relationships: initiation, maintenance, and ending of relationships; communication in relationships; the quality of caregiving partners provide for each other; and even the quality of sexual relations. In fact, Hazan and Shaver argue that attachment can serve as a framework for understanding and integrating the large body of theory and research on close relationships. Particular research attention has been given to attributions within relationships and communication and conflict. Consistent with findings that security is associated with positive perceptions of others, secure people tend to hold more positive views of their romantic partners and to interpret their partners' actions, even ambiguous or negative actions, in a more positive and understanding light. These attributions then impact on how people feel and act in their intimate relationships. For instance, secure people are more inclined to forgive a romantic partner for having done something hurtful, whereas insecure people tend to respond to transgressions by partners with greater hostility and less forgiveness.

Communication is central to many aspects of couple relationships: expressing affection and appreciation, expressing the need for support and providing partner support, and dealing with the

inevitable conflicts of interest and hurt feelings that arise in close relationships. Across domains, secure attachment provides a foundation for comfortable and open communication. High avoidance, in contrast, is associated with a more distant communication style, including difficulty in expressing affection and providing sensitive support to partners. Although anxiety is associated with high engagement in couple interactions, the high anxiety and negative attributions of the highly anxious interfere with constructive and sensitive communication.

The communication patterns linked with attachment styles are highlighted in conflict situations. Secure partners are able to maintain a more positive, constructive, and accommodating approach in conflict discussions, helping to keep conflicts from escalating and remaining unresolved. Both forms of insecurity (high anxiety and high avoidance) are associated with less effective management of couple conflict, but most striking is the link between anxious attachment and destructive approaches to dealing with conflict. Highly anxious people, fuelled by insecurities and negative partner attributions, are especially likely to strike out aggressively in conflict discussion, thereby escalating conflict. Moreover, there is some initial research evidence that couples comprised of partners with incompatible insecure styles—one partner high in anxiety and the other high in avoidance—may be at particular risk for developing dysfunctional and even abusive communication patterns.

Do Adults Really Have a General Attachment Style?

Hazan and Shaver originally conceptualized adult attachment in terms of a general style across romantic relationships. Some subsequent researchers broadened this focus to include all adult close relationships, under the assumption that nonromantic relationships also function as attachment relationships. Other researchers have narrowed the focus to look at the quality of attachment within a specific adult relationship. Research suggests that at best there are moderate associations between people's reported security across their adult close relationships (e.g., across

their relationships with a romantic partner, best friend, and sibling). Based on the erroneous assumption that a style requires consistency across all close relationships, this finding has sometimes been interpreted as evidence that there is no general attachment style. However, findings that general attachment styles are predictive of functioning in a broad array of domains and are moderately consistent over time indicate the validity of the concept of a general style because an attachment style simply summarizes an individual's emotional and behavioral tendencies in close relationships.

Attachment security differs to some extent across relationships because experiences in any given relationship are a function of what people bring to the relationship, what their partner brings, and how the two interact at a particular point in the relationship. For instance, if a woman high in anxiety is paired with a partner who is distant and unsupportive, her partner's behavior will reinforce her feelings of not being valued and supported, enhancing her anxiety in this relationship. (At the same time, her attempts to seek closeness may reinforce her partner's preference for distance!) But if the same woman is paired with a consistently supportive partner, over time she may come to trust that her partner cares for her and to feel less anxious in that relationship. Similarly, when attachment is considered at the level of a specific relationship, the relationship-specific style reflects a general tendency in that relationship. Attachment security shifts within relationships across context and over time. Even the most secure individual will become less secure within a relationship that is on the way to dissolution. Some new research by Mario Mikulincer and Shaver further indicates that attachment security can be temporarily enhanced by simple priming procedures in a laboratory, highlighting the dynamic nature of adult attachment processes.

In summary, individual differences in adult attachment can be thought about in a number of ways, from a general style to tendencies in a given relationship to attachment strategies in a specific context. Each of these approaches can be useful. For instance, if researchers seek to understand why some people are chronically lonely or are unable to maintain satisfying close relationships, it may be

most helpful to think about how their general attachment style is impacting on their interpersonal adjustment. But if researchers are interested in understanding problematic communication patterns within couples' relationships, it may be most useful to consider how both partners' attachment styles interact within that relationship. Recent research is further extending the notion of attachment styles to understanding the therapeutic process, leader–follower relationships, and even group processes. It is remarkable that the basic dynamics of adult attachment, captured in a quite simple model of responsiveness to threat (anxiety) and tendency to avoid or approach close others for support (avoidance), can be applied so widely and so productively.

Kim Bartholomew

See also Adult Attachment Interview; Attachment Theory; Attachment Typologies, Childhood; Sexuality and Attachment; Strange Situation

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ADULT ATTACHMENT INTERVIEW

The Adult Attachment Interview (AAI) is an interview and coding system developed by Mary Main and colleagues that yields a classification of an adult's current state of mind with respect to attachment. The following entry presents a description of the AAI, its coding, and basic research findings.

John Bowlby hypothesized that individuals develop an “internal working model” or cognitive representation of the functioning and significance of close relationships that guides behaviors, thoughts, and feelings in those relationships. The AAI was developed to assess the security of an adult's general or overarching working model of attachment, not to assess the security or quality of attachment to any particular person. The use of a narrative to assess adult attachment is based on the idea that attachment-related cognitive processes vary as attachment behavioral patterns do in infants and children, and these processes are reflected in the language of older individuals. The AAI is not published; it requires skillful interviewing and intensively trained coders.

The AAI has 18 autobiographical questions, starting with family background, an overview of the relationship with parents or parental figures in childhood and a request for five adjectives describing the relationship with each parent. The individual is asked for a specific experience that illustrates each adjective. The interview asks about ordinary childhood experiences in which the attachment system is activated (e.g., upset, injury, illness), as well as experiences of loss and abuse. The individual is asked how the childhood attachment experiences have influenced their adult personalities and about hopes for their children.

The AAI is audiotaped and transcribed verbatim for scoring. Scoring is based on (a) the coder's assessment of attachment experiences with parents, (b) the language used in the interview, and

(c) the ability to give an integrated, believable account of experiences.

Experience scales are used to rate the degree to which each parent demonstrated loving behavior; demanded premature independence in the child (rejection); engaged in involving, role-reversing behavior; pressed the child to achieve; and/or neglected the child. The experiences are inferred by the coder and are not necessarily accurate autobiographical information.

Several scales assess states of mind, with the coherence of transcript score being the strongest correlate of overall security. High coherence means that the narrative demonstrates consistency, clarity, and cooperative collaboration with the interview process. Scales associated with insecurity include idealization, insistence on lack of recall, active anger, derogation, fear of loss, and passivity of speech. Two scales identify unresolved or disorganized states of mind associated with experiences of loss and/or abuse.

AAI Classifications

Using the rating scales, the coder assigns a major classification of secure-autonomous, insecure-dismissing, insecure-preoccupied, or rarely, “cannot classify.” The determination of an unresolved classification is also made.

Individuals classified as secure-autonomous value attachment relationships and view attachment-related experiences as influential in development. They are coherent in that broad descriptions of parental behavior (e.g., loving, caring) are supported by specific memories of loving, caring behaviors. They are open and cooperative regardless of how difficult the material is to discuss. A balanced view of experience is often apparent in the empathic discussion of imperfections of the self and parents, warmth, humor, and/or other attempts to understand behavior. These individuals are able to identify both positive and negative effects of experience on their adult personalities and do not identify with or support negative parental behavior.

Insecure Classifications

These classifications represent normal variations in attachment patterns in the general population.

However, research suggests that AAI insecurity is a risk factor for problems in close relationships, impaired adaptation to stress, and for some forms of psychopathology.

Insecure classifications are associated with incoherent accounts such that broad assessments of relationships with parents are not matched by specific descriptions of parental behavior. Adults classified as insecure-dismissing seem uncomfortable with the interview, deny the impact of attachment relationships on personality development, and have difficulty recalling specific events. They often idealize their experiences, stating they had normal or typically loving parents yet giving specific descriptions of parental rejection. Other features include an emphasis on strength and independence; little to no expression of need, sadness, or distress; sarcasm; and/or sometimes an emphasis on material aspects of the relationship.

Adults classified as insecure-preoccupied show angry preoccupation regarding parents, confusion or oscillation about past experiences, or appear overwhelmed by frightening experiences. They give reports of nonloving, involving, even role-reversing parenting in which they needed to be alert to parental needs. The descriptions are typically marked by active anger or passivity and jargon and are not balanced—that is, either overtly or implicitly, they blame themselves or others for various experiences.

In a few instances, most commonly in high-risk samples, there is an atypical combination of insecure scale scores. Such interviews are markedly incoherent. In such cases, a classification of insecure—cannot classify is given with the best fitting major classification.

Individuals may be classified as unresolved in addition to one of the major classifications. Unresolved adults report attachment-related traumas of loss and/or abuse and show confusion and disorganization in the discussion of those topics.

Studies With the AAI

Over half of adults in samples from the general population, including samples from the United States, Europe, and Israel, are classified as secure, and about 20 percent receive an unresolved classification in addition to a major classification. In

contrast, about 10 percent of adults in clinical and at-risk samples are classified secure. Men and women are equally likely to be classified as secure.

AAI classifications rarely change over time; studies have shown that 80 to 90 percent of individuals keep the same classification for up to 13 years. The secure classification is the most stable such that an individual classified as secure is very unlikely to be reclassified as insecure at a later time.

AAI security is not associated with memory, the desire to give socially acceptable responses, or a person's general way of speaking. There are significant associations between coherence and day-to-day functioning, suggesting that attachment representations serve a function regarding adaptation and coping with stress. Adults classified as secure are more likely to have children classified as secure and to have been secure children, although important life experiences that change caregiving (e.g., serious parental illness, serious illness in the child, death of a caregiver) certainly can lead to change in attachment status between infancy and adulthood. Adults classified as secure are observed to have more effective, sensitive, and responsive attachment and problem-solving behaviors with their adult romantic partners and children.

The AAI addresses each of the legs of the attachment control system: behavior, cognition, and emotional appraisal and regulation. It presents rich data about recollections of attachment experiences and behaviors and is a well-validated measure of adult attachment with respect to the core aspects of Attachment Theory.

Judith A. Crowell

See also Adult Attachment, Individual Differences; Attachment Theory; Attachment Typologies, Childhood; Life-Span Development and Relationships; Security in Relationships; Strange Situation

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ADULTHOOD, SIBLING RELATIONSHIPS IN

This entry describes relationships among adult brothers and sisters. It explains the bases for those relationships in terms of the many ways siblings can be connected to one another and why these sibling relationships are studied. Then the entry identifies the important qualities of the relationship and some of the factors that influence these qualities. Because there are good review articles available, the emphasis here is on new ways of thinking about siblings and current research results concerning influences on what adult siblings feel about and do for one another.

Structural Bases for Sibling Relationships

The study of sibling relationships has taken a back seat to other relationships within families, particularly those between spouses and those between parents and children. However, siblings are a pervasive influence in the life of most adults. Many adults have grown up with one or more siblings. Almost 90 percent of adults in the United States have at least one sibling, according to the 1994 General Social Survey. Sibling relationships result from birth, adoption, marriage, or cohabitation of parents; the terminology varies accordingly. Full siblings have the same mother and father by birth or adoption. Half-siblings have only one parent in common, whereas stepsiblings have no parents in common but are considered siblings because their

parents are married to each other. Quasi-siblings have parents who are cohabiting. A sibling may also be informally adopted as is the case of fictive siblings among people who consider themselves to be like brothers or sisters with one another. Finally, additional siblings may be obtained through marriage of one's brother or one's sister as is the case with a brother-in-law and sister-in-law.

Various aspects of the relationship have important implications for the meaning siblings have for each other. In terms of longevity, sibling relationships can span the entire life course, but sometimes they can be temporary (e.g., if a parent's remarriage ends and ties with stepsiblings are not maintained) or relatively recent (e.g., acquiring half- or stepsiblings in adulthood). In general, active relations between full siblings continue throughout adulthood, both because the parents encourage the relationship and because many people feel attached to their siblings and want to be in contact with them.

Whether or not it is long-lived, the sibling relationship is not one of choice but rather depends on parental actions. Whereas this condition has the disadvantage of not being chosen by another (except in the case of fictive siblings) and therefore not necessarily desired, it has the great advantage of providing ready-made social partners. Regardless of how siblings are acquired, the rules about how adult siblings should feel and behave toward one another are unclear or ambiguous.

In American and European societies (as opposed to agricultural societies), whether one feels bonded to one's sibling is up to the individual. At the same time, it is expected that siblings should be involved in one another's lives; they should feel a sense of commitment toward one another. These potentially conflicting expectations may generate feelings of ambivalence. However, most adults feel close to their sibling(s) and consider relationships with their siblings as very important.

Whether siblings are expected to be altruistic to one another when it comes to giving and receiving help differs when compared to other relatives. According to the concept of kin altruism, a favor to a relative does not necessarily have to be returned, as opposed to reciprocal altruism where relationship partners expect reciprocity over time. Siblings are both kin and peers, and therefore,

although obliged to help, they may insist on reciprocity. In fact, people are more likely to exchange practical support with a sibling than with a friend (but less than with parents and adult children). As a result, most adults feel sure their siblings would be there for them if needed, which provides a sense of security and a social safety net.

Importance of Research on Adult Sibling Relationships

Focusing on sibling relationships not only reveals how siblings support one another, it also opens the door to other neglected relationships within the (extended) family. For instance, investigating sibling relationships leads to adults' broader social networks because siblings are links to other relationships, such as nephews, nieces, great nephews and nieces, uncles, aunts, great aunts and uncles, and cousins of various degrees, as well as to the network ties of these relatives. Also, attending to sibling relationships opens researchers to other neglected aspects of adult life. For instance, many adults are not legally married, and they do not have living children or living parents. Thus, when adult sibling relationships are the focus of scholarly interest, adults who inhabit a wide variety of family forms emerge, such as single-parent family, single-person households, domestic partnership with same-sex partner, domestic partnership with opposite-sex partner, traditional nuclear family, divorced family, and stepfamily.

Qualities of Adult Sibling Relationships

Sibling relationships are rated on specific emotional qualities such as closeness, conflict, separateness, indifference, and ambivalence. The emotional content of the relationship is described in terms of its intensity (strength) and its valence (positive and negative direction). The emphasis is on feelings, such as closeness (affectual solidarity), and behaviors toward siblings, such as socializing with one's brother(s) and sister(s) (associational solidarity) and giving and receiving instrumental help and assistance (functional solidarity), as well as the frequencies of those behaviors. Sometimes qualities and behaviors are grouped into types of sibling relationships, such as intimate, congenial,

loyal, apathetic, and hostile. Various influences on the relationship have been studied, such as how closely siblings live to each other (proximity) and frequency of contact with one another.

Influences on Sibling Relationships

What makes some siblings more congenial than others? What makes some siblings more caring and more likely to help and accept help from sibling(s)? Several factors influence the quality of the sibling relationship, such as the sibling constellation, the size of the family, parental influences, the type of family (e.g., stepfamily), and influences from sources outside the family.

Influences of Sibling Constellation

The sibling constellation (sibship) itself may influence the relationship between or among adult siblings. The smallest sibship, also known as a dyadic sibling relationship, contains two siblings. Constellation influences can be gender related (sister–sister, sister–brother, and brother–brother in the case of sibling pairs), related to the total number of living siblings, age spacing between the siblings, birth order (position of each brother and sister relative to the others), zygosity of the sibship (number of identical and fraternal twins), and genetic relatedness (full siblings, half siblings, and stepsiblings). The most important constellation influences follow.

Gender patterns. The influence of gender has been studied the most. Dyads with sisters (sister–sister or sister–brother) seem to be emotionally closer than those of brothers, but some researchers find that same-gender sibling pairs (brother–brother, sister–sister) are closer than cross-gender sibling pairs. One reason for this difference is that men and women tend to express intimacy differently so that men express their affection toward brothers more indirectly than do sisters toward siblings of either gender. Men's and women's sibling affection, therefore, cannot be compared by using the same yardstick. Gender influences are also seen in parent care situations. For instance, sisters tend to consult with and organize sibling participation, whereas brothers act alone, directly in response to the parent's perceived needs.

Family size. Whether siblings seek comfort from one another (or function as attachment figures) is related to zygosity. Twin pairs and nontwin pairs do so in young adulthood but twins are more likely to do so. The same factors contribute to becoming attachment figures among twins and nontwin sibling pairs, namely, having spent time together as children and having shared interests, personal lives and/or similar professional lives as adults. Further, larger families have a positive influence on siblings because those families offer many opportunities for forming positive sibling relationships since there are more siblings present. Thus, brothers and sisters in larger sibships usually have greater affection, contact, and support.

Parental influences. Negative relationships with parents affect the adult sibling relationship, sometimes in positive ways. For instance, when they have poor relationships with their parents, siblings compensate for parents' lack of support. Treating their children differently is considered poor parenting, and the children's relationships with one another tend to suffer due to jealousy, rivalry, and a sense of entitlement. In fact, early differential treatment (parental favoritism) has a negative outcome for adult children. Both young adults and middle-aged adults who are treated differently are more jealous of their siblings than are those who perceive their parents' treatment to have been equal. The quality of the adult sibling relationship diminishes with both increasing favoritism and disfavoritism.

Another source of parental influence on siblings is the death of one or both parents. The effect during adulthood is varied; it draws some siblings closer together, whereas other siblings become more distant from one another. Sometimes parental death may remove the linkage between adult brothers and sisters altogether.

Family type. Nontraditional family forms may influence sibling relationships. Adults in stepfamilies tend to feel closer to their full siblings than to their half- and stepsiblings. However, it is not yet known whether this finding is a result of preference for genetically closer kin, preference for a (full) sibling who is close in age, propinquity (whether the siblings lived in the same household while growing up), parental favoritism, or a combination of those conditions.

Nonfamily Influences

Recently, scholars have expanded their research focus to nonfamilial influences on adult sibling relationships, such as urban versus rural environments; level of educational attainment; the influence of ethnicity, education, and immigrant status on geographic proximity; and changes throughout the life course. This systematic investigation of myriad factors influencing sibling relationships has led to some promising research outcomes. For instance, a focus on rural siblings reveals that they tend to remain an active presence in the kinship networks of elderly women. Even though some siblings die, the frequency of contact with surviving siblings remains the same, suggesting that other siblings probably fill the voids left by deceased siblings.

Ethnicity, educational level, and gender influence changes over time in how often siblings interact and how far they live from each other. For instance, women and Latinos increase contact with their siblings during the life course, whereas individuals with higher levels of educational attainment and recent immigrants are more likely to increase their geographic distance from their siblings. However, African Americans and people from large families tend to stay geographically close to their siblings.

In the 1980s, sibling research was still in its infancy. Since then, scholarly interest has grown in leaps and bounds. No doubt the Baby Boomer generation (composed of those born between 1946 and 1964)—with the largest sibships of the 20th century, which shifted family landscapes, and expanded life expectancy—have helped to usher in this overdue acknowledgment of one of the most fundamental human relationships.

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See also Aunts and Uncles, Relationships With; Family Relationships in Late Adulthood; Family Relationships in Middle Adulthood; Family Relationships in Young Adulthood; Kin Relationships; Reciprocity, Norm of; Stepfamilies

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ADVICE, SELF-HELP, AND MEDIA ADVICE ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS

Given the value of relationships for personal happiness, the well-being of families, and the cohesion of groups and societies, it is perhaps not strange that various popular media such as television talk

shows, fashion magazines, and self-help experts have made big business of telling people what is needed to reach relationship nirvana. Likewise, it is understandable that the public targeted by these media is hungry for information and opinion—for great power can be gained from information that truly facilitates relationship success. However, this can only be the case if self-help and media advice is based on valid evidence. This entry briefly explores the nature and quality of self-help advice available to consumers of mass media.

Although rigorous analysis of the content of self-help and media advice about relationships is lacking, much can be learned from anecdotally exploring the messages portrayed in prototypic media outlets. Indeed, a survey of television talk show and self-help-focused programming, popular magazines, and self-help literature reveal both some interesting common trends and distinct differences. It is clear that advice in popular media is dominated first by a focus on romantic relationships and second by child–parent relationships. For these reasons this entry focuses on these forms.

Most media advice regarding romantic relationships overestimates differences between men and women, with pervasive stereotypes of men as autonomous and withdrawing from intimacy and women as anxious and emotional. Although gender differences do occur and need to be considered, research has demonstrated that gender differences tend to be fairly small in comparison to differences attributable to the stage of the relationship (e.g., attraction, initiation, long-term), to interpersonal processes (e.g., communication and attribution styles), and to other individual traits (e.g., personality differences, emotional intelligence, beliefs and attitudes, attachment styles). Yet a common thread across much popular advice is the clear impression that men and women approach romantic relationships from extremely different viewpoints. The problem with this assumption is that, although there are gender differences in research that studies averages across groups of men or women, it is fallacious to give practical advice on this basis about how to relate to any one particular individual man or woman. Although there is some truth to stereotypes about men and women's relationship behaviors, the likelihood is great that any particular individual will differ substantially from the stereotype.

Titles of commonly found self-help literature such as *How to Get a Guy by Thinking Like One*, *How to Talk to Women*, and *Why Men Never Remember and Women Never Forget* emphasize the notion of differences between the sexes and leave the impression that there are correct ways to understand the different motives of men versus women. Furthermore, the image of a battle between the sexes is conjured up with titles such as *101 Lies Men Tell Women* and *7 Things He'll Never Tell You*. Media targeting men seem to perpetuate stereotypes of women as sex objects and gold-diggers who are needy and vulnerable, whereas media targeting women perpetuate stereotypes of men as sex-crazed, deceitful, and emotionally closed and immature. This notion that people are usually calculating and disingenuous in romantic relationships, especially men, seems particularly prevalent. Advice is often given on how to “beat” the opposite gender by preempting their motives. Some self-help literature goes as far as to propagate the idea that the only way to “stay ahead” in relationships is to learn how to read into what your partner really wants or to interpret what it means when he or she behaves a certain way. Even such potentially dangerous ideas as “women really mean yes when they say no” and women can “change their men” are sometimes embraced in self-help media. The pervasive stereotype in popular media is that men are not emotionally developed enough to deal forthrightly with relationships and hence need to be guided and coached by women. Relationship research however indicates that the practice of such misguided advice will most likely be problematic.

Ironically, by perpetuating these and similar stereotypes, much popular self-help advice emphasizes ideas that may do more harm than good. Relationship research suggests that ideas such as “men and women differ greatly in their personalities and relationship needs,” “either people are meant for each other or they are not,” and “if you love me you'll understand what I need without me telling you” are not only contra-indicated as predictors of successful relationship functioning and individual happiness but are also typically endorsed by distressed couples who seek therapeutic intervention. Even more ironic, what is often lacking in media advice is the basic notion of honesty and open communication without preconceived motives about reading too much into partners' behavior.

Although much self-help and media advice about relationships is inconsistent with or over-generalizes findings from relationship research, there is television programming and literature that focuses less on stereotypes about gender differences and more on processes involved in relationship formation and maintenance. This literature seems more in-line with general scientific findings, outlining processes that occur in relationships at various stages across the life span and focusing on practical solutions for various problems when they occur (e.g., how to deal with lack of time in a busy world; what to consider before marriage or parenthood). Likewise, some talk-show television programs advise couples to seek professional counseling to resolve issues stemming from differences in communication style, problems with self-esteem, or lack of trust. Even these forms of self-help, however, occasionally propagate stereotyped norms of relationships. The advice seems to ignore the plurality of sexual and relationship orientations as well as the complex nature of most modern-day families.

In contrast to advice about romantic relationships, self-help and media advice regarding relationships between parents and children generally seem more in-line with developmental research. In particular, much self-help literature describes the development of the mother–infant bond and the maintenance of healthy bonding throughout childhood. Such literature tends to be sound in its practical advice. However, some reality television programs overdramatize the troubles of monster children with suggestions for draconian tough-love Super-Nanny tactics for parents to emulate.

In conclusion, rigorous content analyses of media depictions of relationships are needed. Little is known about the effects of self-help and media advice on the consumer. Ironically, if the anecdotal observations presented here are correct, then one might expect the cultivation of or reinforcement of themes found in self-help advice to be more harmful than helpful.

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See also Beliefs About Relationships; Gender Stereotypes; Media Depictions of Relationships; Media Influences on Relationships; Sex Differences in Relationships

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AFFECTION AND AFFECTIONATE BEHAVIOR

Love and affection are often regarded as fundamental human needs. The expression of affection is vital to both the development and maintenance of personal relationships. Although affection and affectionate communication (also called affectionate expression) are related experiences, they are not synonymous terms. Affection is an internal psychological state of positive, often intimate regard for another. Thus, affection is a positive feeling or emotional disposition toward another that does not necessarily include the expression of these feelings. Affectionate communication is defined as an individual's enactment or expression of feelings of closeness, care, and fondness for another. Thus, affectionate communication is the enactment of behaviors (e.g., hugging, kissing, saying "I love you") that portray or enact feelings of affection. However, the expression of affection is separate from feelings of affection, as it is possible to feel affection without expressing affection and to express affection without feeling it. Often times in initial romantic relationships one might not express strong feelings of affection verbally (i.e., "I love you") for fear of scaring the other person away. Conversely, partners in a strained marriage might say the words "I love you" without truly feeling affection for one another.

This entry distinguishes affectionate communication from other related experiences, discusses the factors that affectionate communication is related to, and explores the benefits of affectionate communication for both relational and physical health.

Conceptualization and Measurement

Affection is thought to be distinct from other positive relational experiences such as intimacy. Affection is characterized by a sense of liking, positive feelings, and high regard for another. Intimacy, in contrast, involves a sense of interdependence between people who rely on each other to fulfill needs. Another key difference between the concepts is that affection is an individual level variable and intimacy is a relational variable. Although conceptually different, affection and intimacy are often interrelated as high levels of affection, and the expression of those feelings can often lead to increases in intimacy in the relationship and vice versa. Furthermore, some statements and behaviors can communicate both intimacy and affection concurrently.

Affection can be expressed in a number of different ways. Researchers have claimed that affectionate expressions can be grouped into three distinct subdimensions: *verbal*, *nonverbal*, and *support* affection.

Verbal affection includes the use of language (spoken or written) to convey affectionate feelings for another. Some of these messages express the sender's feelings for the receiver, such as "I like you" or "I love you." Other messages can help form or affirm the current status of the relationship, such as "You're my best friend" or "I care about you more than any person in my life." Others affirm future hopes for the relationship, such as "I hope we will be together forever." Finally, other statements express the value of the relationship by stressing how the sender would feel without it, such as "I would be so sad if I couldn't see you." Verbal affection is unique from other forms of affectionate behaviors because of the use of language. Often, people use verbal forms of affection (rather than nonverbal forms) when they wish to be clear and reduce the chance of misinterpretation.

Nonverbal affection includes behaviors, not including language, that express affectionate feelings. Nonverbal displays of affection can vary in nature and interpretation. Nonverbal displays of affection are thought to be under less conscious control and thus are assumed to more accurately reflect the emotional state of the sender than verbal cues. Common nonverbal expressions of affection

can include, but are not limited to, facial behaviors (e.g., smiling, winking, and eye contact), touch (e.g., kissing, hugging, and holding hands), vocalic behaviors (e.g., heightened pitch and baby talk), and shared physical proximity. Compared to verbal affection, understanding nonverbal affection is more complex and difficult because the meaning is often more ambiguous than that of verbal statements.

Finally, support affection includes behaviors that provide social, psychological, emotional, or instrumental support. These behaviors convey affection indirectly through some provision of assistance and/or by fulfilling needs. Example of support affection could include providing a sympathetic ear to a friend going through a hard time with a relational partner, taking care of yard work for a friend who is a single parent, or offering money to a brother who just lost his job. One difficulty with support affection is sometimes these behaviors have no affectionate connotations. Thus, the recipient (or a third-party onlooker) may overlook or not understand that these behaviors are meant to express affection. For example, a husband may fill the gas tank and wash his wife's car because she has been particularly busy lately. However, the wife might not recognize this instrumental display of support because of its indirect nature. Consequently, certain forms of support affection can be easily overlooked.

The dimensions of verbal, nonverbal, and support affection can vary greatly in their intensity. Verbal statements such as "I like you" and "I'm in love with you" are similar in that they both convey feelings of positive regard and care for another; however, they vary greatly in the degree of affectionate feelings they express. Similarly, a kiss can range from a nonintense peck on the cheek to a prolonged open-mouthed kiss. Finally, support affection can vary in the intensity of the help that is given. For example, giving a friend a ride to work when his or her car breaks down is less intense than giving him or her \$1,000 to help get his car fixed. One study examined the intensity of verbal and nonverbal displays of affection. The verbal statement "I love you" and the nonverbal behavior of a kiss on the lips were considered to be the most intense behaviors, whereas the verbal statement "I admire you" and the nonverbal behavior of shaking hands were considered to be the least intense affectionate behaviors.

Although affectionate communication is a physical or behavioral event, it is often measured using self-report methods, as some affectionate behaviors are difficult to observe. Typical methods for measuring affectionate behavior often ask people to rate their own or others' amount of affectionate behaviors. For example, people might rate how often they say "I love you," give a hug to a particular loved one, or engage in support behaviors such as helping with problems or giving praise.

Affectionate communication has also been measured as a trait-level variable for both affection given and affection received. Trait affection-given measures the extent to which one is, by nature, an affectionate person ("Anyone who knows me well would say that I'm pretty affectionate"), whereas trait affection-received measures a person's tendencies to receive affectionate expressions from others ("People are always telling me that they like me, love me, or care about me").

Influences on Affectionate Communication

Individual, relational, and contextual factors, such as biological sex, sex composition of the relationship, gender, relationship type, relationship stage, and even the public or private setting, have been found to influence how affection is expressed.

Numerous studies have examined the influence of biological sex on affectionate communication, and nearly all have found that women are more verbally and nonverbally affectionate than men. However, researchers have found that men are less affectionate than women in same-sex relationships, but no difference appears in opposite-sex relationships. Furthermore, it appears that in male-male relationships support affection is more commonly expressed than verbal or nonverbal forms of affection.

Some studies have examined the extent to which gender influences affectionate expressions. Gender refers to a person's psychological sex-role orientation (masculine and feminine) rather than to his or her biological sex. In father-son relationships, sons' femininity was positively associated with their expression of nonverbal and supportive affection, and fathers' femininity was positively related to the expression of supportive affection.

This same study found that sons' masculinity was also positively related to their expression of nonverbal affection, and fathers' masculinity was positively related to their expression of verbal, nonverbal, and supportive affection. The relationship between masculinity and affection was unexpected, as one would not necessarily expect that masculine qualities (such as aggression and competitiveness) would be positively related to affectionate behaviors. However, three other studies have replicated links between masculinity and affectionate communication (some using a different measure of gender) in other relationships such as cross-sex adult platonic relationship and sibling relationships. Consequently, it appears that the relationship between masculinity and affectionate communication is not an artifact of the measurements or the relationship being studied. Unfortunately, no satisfactory explanation exists for this relationship between affectionate communication and masculinity.

Relationship type also appears to influence the amount and type of affectionate communication. In relationships with parents, people were most likely to communicate affection through support affection, less likely to communicate affection through verbal channels, and finally, least likely to communicate affection through nonverbal behavior. In addition, women reported being more affectionate, in all three affectionate types, with their parents than men do.

Studies examining father-son relationships that compared differences between biological and nonbiological sons (adopted and stepchildren) found that fathers reported expressing more nonverbal and support affection to biological sons and adoptive sons than with stepsons. However, in this regard, biological and adoptive sons did not differ from each other.

Differences in affectionate expression are also seen during the different stages of relationships. In the initial stages of romantic relationships, affectionate expressions often serve as critical incidents (e.g., first kiss, saying "I love you" for the first time) by which relational growth is gauged. Conversely, in established relationships, the lack of affectionate behavior is often used (and understood) as an indication of relationship de-escalation and deterioration. Consequently, changes in affectionate behavior often serve as turning points by

which relational development or deterioration can be judged.

Finally, contextual characteristics, such as a public or private setting, can influence the amount and type of affection expressed. Baby talk was used more often in private settings to express affection to friends than in public. However, other research has shown that with friends and siblings affectionate behaviors were judged to be more appropriate in a public setting than in a private one. These differences can be understood by the risk factors associated with expressing affection. Sometimes expressing affection in public may be more risky than expressing it in private, whereas in other cases the opposite might be true. For example, someone might be more likely to express romantic affection to a friend in a private setting than in a public setting because it cannot be seen and heard by others.

Benefits of Expressing and Receiving Affection

The benefits of receiving affection have been well documented. Receiving affection contributes to overall mental health, physical well-being, self-esteem, and life satisfaction. Other studies have shown that affection is inversely associated with depression and loneliness. In social relationships, affection is related to a range of relational benefits, including closeness, love, and relational satisfaction in marriages, parent-child relationships, and friendships.

In examining affection as a trait variable, those who were highly affectionate communicators were more self-assured, more comfortable with closeness and intimacy, were happier and in better mental health, and were less stressed and depressed than low-affection communicators. In spite of these findings, it is difficult to determine if the positive effects of expressing affection are different than the effects of receiving affection. One study found that after controlling for affection received, expressing affection was associated with increased happiness and self-esteem, higher relational satisfaction, decreased fear of intimacy, and decreased risk of depression.

Expressing affection also appears to have important physical benefits. Expressing affection

has been related to lower resting heart rate, blood pressure, and other physiological measures. Expressing affection through writing helps reduce the stress response by accelerating the recovery of the stress hormone cortisol to baseline levels. Furthermore, affectionate writing (e.g., writing about how much one cares and loves another) has been found to reduce total cholesterol in two separate trials. Thus, research indicates that the benefits of expressing affection are separate and distinct from the benefits of receiving affection.

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See also Adult Attachment, Individual Differences; Attachment Theory; Communication, Nonverbal; Intimacy; Love, Companionate and Passionate; Social Support, Nature of

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AFFILIATION

This entry reviews theory and research on affiliation, which is the broad class of behaviors that humans and other animals use to initiate and maintain pair bonds, kin relations, resource-trading alliances, friendships, and other kinds of relationships. Like their hominid ancestors, humans are deeply social and have benefitted from affiliation as a means of fulfilling a variety of needs. The motivation to affiliate is shaped by both personal characteristics and features of situations. An interaction partner's personality traits can make affiliation difficult, and social exclusion is a pervasive feature of social living. Under some circumstances, social exclusion can increase affiliation; under others, it can lead to poor judgment and antisocial behavior.

The Origins of Human Affiliation

Within the environments of human and hominid predecessors, social living made it much easier for these ancestors to fulfill their most basic needs. Natural selection has thus favored social tendencies among humans, and today people possess affiliative adaptations that evolved tens of thousands of years ago. Human affiliation varies by kind and degree, and different cultures often provide different norms about how people should affiliate, but extensive affiliation in one form or another is typical among all human populations.

Because not all large primates affiliate extensively with each other (e.g., chimpanzees, bonobos, and gorillas are more social than orangutans), it is worth considering why group living was advantageous to these ancestors. After all, affiliative living certainly has its risks, as cases of divorce, domestic violence, and gang warfare remind us. These risks, however, are heavily outweighed by the benefits of affiliation. Hominids living in groups had a much easier time protecting themselves from predators, hunting large mammals, and finding valued resources than they would have had they lived primarily in solitude. Group living also allowed some hominids to easily communicate with and learn from each other so that the "secrets" of adapting to particular environments could be quickly learned. Perhaps most importantly, group living

typically made hominid reproduction easier and more successful because mates were nearby and the group provided greater protection to offspring. These and other benefits help explain why most of the large primates have met the challenges of their environments by clustering into groups. Only in very few environments (such as the orangutan's) is minimal affiliation an adaptive way of living.

Selective Affiliation

Social as they are, however, humans are not indiscriminate in their affiliative tendencies. All human beings prefer to affiliate with some types of people more than others. Donald Brown, an anthropologist who has compiled an extensive list of pancultural human characteristics, has noted that in all cultures people prefer ingroup members over outgroup members. Bias favoring ingroup members takes on different forms in different lands, but all normal humans generally prefer people of their own kind (e.g., people of similar heritage, opinion, or purpose) over people from other groups. There are certainly some exceptions to this tendency (e.g., attraction to the opposite sex, nondiscriminatory employment recruiting), but preferring people who are "us" over people who are "them" seems to be a basic characteristic of human nature.

One reason humans prefer people of their own kind over others is that to remain safe, animals in general must be cautious around unfamiliar objects. An animal that patiently observes a peculiar intruder before deciding whether or not to approach the intruder significantly diminishes the risk of getting injured or killed. And because in some environments other people are the most dangerous objects present, it is sometimes prudent to regard people from an outgroup with suspicion.

But humans consider much more than group membership when choosing their interaction partners. Other people widely vary in their characteristics (e.g., some are more attractive, generous, or conscientious than others), and people seem to take these characteristics into account as they initiate and manage their relationships. Precisely which characteristics are preferred in an interaction partner often depends on the context because a given characteristic (such as empathy) might be much more important in some kinds of relationships

(such as in friendship) than others (such as in a work relationship).

One important characteristic that people seem to value in all kinds of relationships is trustworthiness. According to the sociofunctional perspective, trustworthiness is the most valued of all characteristics because humans depend on each other to meet their needs and often exchange valued resources in an asynchronous way (e.g., Catherine shares her knowledge with Steven today with the expectation that Steven will reciprocate some time in the future). A person who does not seem trustworthy should therefore be avoided because such a person may be a drain on others' resources. Consistent with this perspective, numerous studies suggest that trustworthiness is one of the most, if not the most, prized characteristics of an ideal interaction partner. These studies have been conducted primarily in North America, but because human living everywhere is characterized by resource exchanges, it is highly likely that trustworthy interaction partners are strongly preferred in all cultures.

The Motive to Affiliate

Many behavioral scientists have studied affiliation as a human motive. Although the desire to affiliate with others is part of human nature, there are of course some people who are more highly motivated to participate in social interactions than others. Henry Murray, a personality psychologist who studied this difference among people, noted that people with a high need for affiliation tend to be friendly, outgoing, cooperative, and eager to join groups. People with a low need for affiliation tend to be less friendly, more reserved, and aloof. Although it is tempting to think of a high need for affiliation as a personal asset, there may be some costs to having a high rather than low need for affiliation. People with a high need for affiliation tend to be conforming, whether others around them are behaving wisely or not. And under some circumstances, people with a high need for affiliation may have difficulty disengaging from social interaction in order to get tasks done.

In more recent work on individual differences in affiliation motivation, researchers have become interested in the different ways people strive to affiliate. In this line of research, it is recognized

that people with a high need for affiliation may differ from one another because they have different reasons for wanting to interact with others or different ways of interacting. Some people may have a strong need for affiliation because they find social activities intrinsically satisfying. People like this tend to enjoy parties, socializing with friends, and similar activities simply because they experience pleasurable feelings in these situations. Other people, however, may have a strong affiliation motivation because they like to get attention and impress people, because they want support from others during difficult times, or because they like to compare themselves to others and learn from the comparison. People with a strong affiliation motivation may also be differentiated on whether they are primarily motivated to experience intimacy (i.e., close interaction with others) or power (i.e., dominating, influential behavior toward others). Thus, depending on other aspects of a person's personality, affiliation motivation can express itself in a variety of ways.

Affiliation and Belonging

The need to belong (a fundamental desire to experience close and lasting relationships with others) differs from the need for affiliation because the need to belong is a universal human need rather than a component of personality. Because it is a basic need, when people succeed in fulfilling their need to belong, they experience a higher quality of life. Numerous studies demonstrate that people who maintain at least a minimum quantity of enduring, healthy relationships experience less emotional distress, cope better with adversity, and have fewer health problems.

However, not all affiliative behavior allows people to fulfill their need to belong. Merely living and working in a crowded city, for example, may not protect a person from feeling lonely. Brief, superficial interactions tend to be ineffective in building strong relationships with others, and as a consequence, such behavior may leave a person's need to belong unsatisfied. The full positive consequences of affiliating with others can only be achieved when people affiliate with others in a way that builds and strengthens relationships that are meaningful and lasting.

Although the need to belong (which is present in all people) differs from the need for affiliation (which varies in nature and strength between people), a person's need for affiliation may influence the degree to which his or her need to belong is fulfilled. For example, many people with a high need for affiliation may have an easier time fulfilling their need to belong because the formation and maintenance of strong relationships requires affiliation. It might be reasonable to expect, therefore, that people with a higher need for affiliation would be happier than people with a lower need for affiliation, and in fact, research studies confirm that sociable people tend to be happier.

Personality Influences on Affiliative Behavior

Research on the need for affiliation provides an important reminder of the fact that personality plays a significant role in affiliative behavior. The personality trait that most people know as extraversion, for example, can affect a wide variety of affiliative behaviors. Extraversion is characterized not only by gregariousness but also by interpersonal warmth, assertiveness, a high activity level, and a tendency to seek excitement. Extraverts also experience greater happiness than introverts do, due in part, perhaps, to the fact that their sociability and warmth make it easier for them to fulfill their need to belong. Numerous studies suggest that people's relative level of extraversion or introversion endures across the life span and is substantially influenced by genes. Life experiences probably also shape people's level of extraversion to some degree, but in general, most adults today are about as extraverted as they were 10 years ago.

Another personality trait that has a substantial impact on affiliative behaviors is agreeableness. Like extraversion, agreeableness is also genetically influenced and relatively stable over the life span. It is characterized by altruistic tendencies, modesty, empathy, compliance with others' wishes, and straightforwardness (or sincerity). Agreeable people also tend to be highly trustworthy, which (for reasons explained earlier) should make them much more likable to those around them. In general, highly agreeable people have tendencies similar to those that many people would describe as the characteristics of an ideal friend.

Just as high levels of extraversion and agreeableness may facilitate affiliation, other heritable personality attributes may inhibit affiliation in long-term relationships. For instance, both schizoid personality disorder and schizotypal personality disorder are characterized by a lack of interest in social activity. Other personality disorders (which do not necessarily involve a lack of interest in affiliation) are characterized by difficult behaviors that harm long-term relationships. People with antisocial personality disorder, for example, tend to be nonconforming, reckless, nonempathic, and deceitful. Those with narcissistic personality disorder tend to have an inflated sense of personal entitlement, show little empathy toward others, and act arrogantly. People with borderline personality disorder tend to have highly unstable beliefs about their relationships (e.g., "I love you" this morning, but "I hate you" this afternoon) as well as unstable moods and intense worries about abandonment. These disorders do not constitute the full list of all personal attributes that can be detrimental to human relationships. But they do emphasize that people's personalities, which are often difficult to change, have a substantial impact on affiliative behaviors and relationship quality.

Sex Differences in Affiliative Behavior

Researchers have consistently observed certain sex differences in affiliative behavior. These differences are not large (i.e., the difference between the average man and the average woman is small compared to the differences among people within each sex), but the differences have emerged consistently in many studies performed in a variety of cultures. On personality tests, women score higher than men on enjoyment of social interaction. Women also tend to score higher on all components of agreeableness, which suggests that people might find the average woman a little easier to get along with than the average man. On the other hand, men tend to score higher in assertiveness and dominance, which suggests that in many circumstances men may be quicker to initiate interactions with people and to direct groups.

Because personality tests often depend on people describing themselves, it is common to wonder whether gender differences in personality test scores

might merely reflect differences in self-concept rather than in differences in personality. After all, girls are often expected to be gregarious and kind, and boys are often expected to be directive and self-confident, and these expectations may affect how people view themselves more than they affect actual behavior. However, there are several reasons to believe that the gender differences that emerge in test scores are true personality differences and not just differences in how men and women describe themselves. First, as mentioned above, the gender differences described have emerged in many different cultures. This similarity is important because cultures have varying expectations about how men and women are supposed to act. Countries vary in their emphasis on gender equality, for example, but surprisingly, more egalitarian countries tend not to produce smaller gender differences on personality tests than less egalitarian countries. In addition, some of the gender differences described above have been observed in the behavior of very young children who have had little time to learn (and perhaps little interest in learning) how their culture expects them to act. Current research thus suggests that the differences that have been observed in men's and women's personality test scores reflect genuine differences in behavior.

Another interesting way in which men and women's affiliative tendencies differ is in their preferences to affiliate with different sized groups. Specifically, a variety of studies suggest that among children as well as among young adults, females generally prefer to affiliate in dyads (i.e., one-on-one), whereas males generally prefer to affiliate in larger groups. These studies are consistent with evidence that young boys tend to have larger social networks than young girls. One reasonable explanation for these sex differences is that females are somewhat more oriented toward intimate affiliation, whereas males are somewhat more oriented toward exercising power (which can be more substantially enhanced in larger groups). Research with adults generally supports this perspective, although it also suggests that there are some situations in which these sex differences do not hold.

Situational Influences on Affiliative Behavior

Personality and gender are not the only influences on affiliative tendencies. People experience highs

and lows in their desire to affiliate, and these fluctuations are often determined by the situations in which people find themselves. For example, people are more motivated to affiliate with others when they are stressed or afraid. This effect can emerge even when stressed people are around complete strangers, such as in a hospital waiting room.

Another event that seems to amplify the motivation to affiliate is social exclusion. Experiments have shown that when people feel ostracized, rejected, or worried about living a lonely life, they often exhibit stronger affiliative tendencies. This increased desire to affiliate may be expressed by acting in highly conforming ways, by expressing a greater interest in making new friends, by seeking out current friends, or by behaving in positive ways toward potential interaction partners. However, people seem to be strategic in their affiliative behaviors following social exclusion. They do not typically try to affiliate with the people who initially rejected them, and they do not try to affiliate with others if they doubt that others will like them. Instead, rejected people seem to desire affiliation only with people who might have a reasonable chance of accepting them.

Negative Consequences of Disaffiliation

Recently, behavioral scientists have begun to examine some of the negative consequences of social exclusion or disaffiliation. One neuroscience experiment has shown that when people are prevented from affiliating with their peers during a simulated ball-tossing game, they experience greater neural activity in the anterior cingulate cortex and the right ventral prefrontal cortex, brain regions that typically become activated when people experience pain. Other experiments have shown that peer rejection can cause a decrease in self-esteem, a decrease in reasoning ability, an increase in aggression, and even an increase in unwise risk taking. In many circumstances, then, disaffiliation can cause maladaptive and antisocial behavior. But as previously noted, a more positive way that people can cope with rejection is to seek affiliation with others who might be more accepting.

Paul Rose

See also Affiliation in Nonhuman Animals; Agreeableness; Belonging, Need for; Exchange Processes; Interpersonal Attraction; Ostracism; Personality Traits, Effects on Relationships; Rejection; Sex Differences in Relationships

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AFFILIATION IN NONHUMAN ANIMALS

Humans are not the only species to form affiliative relationships. Affiliative behavior similar to

what is seen in human beings is common throughout nonhuman animals from primates through invertebrates. However, since researchers cannot obtain verbal reports from other species, they must use a variety of behavioral and physiological assays to infer affiliative relationships. Furthermore, the diversity of relationships in other species allows researchers to understand more fully the variety of affiliative relationships available to human beings and can provide specific suggestions for why certain relationships occur. This entry provides a review of current research on affiliative behavior in nonhuman animals.

Measuring Affiliation in Other Species

A common measure of affiliation is simply time spent together. If two organisms have a choice of several potential companions and consistently select particular individuals for association, this hints at some affiliative relationship. More specific behavioral measures can include frequency or duration of direct physical contact, such as huddling or grooming behavior (i.e., when one individual combs through the feathers or hair of another using its beak, claws, mouth, or fingers). Nonconceptive sex or mounting behavior may also indicate affiliation. Animals with close social affiliations may mark the relationship through shared songs or calls, as is seen in many birds; through learning the partner's signature whistle, as in dolphins; or converging on a mutual variation of a call type, as seen in bats and some nonhuman primates.

Separation and reunion tests provide information on the emotional component of affiliation. Increased vocalizations or increased agitation when separated from a specific individual and increased affiliative behavior (compared to baseline) following a reunion can index the strength of a relationship. Comparing the reaction of an animal placed in a novel environment with or without its partner illustrates the potential stress-reducing effect of an affiliative relationship. Exposing a young individual to a fear-inducing stimulus and noting the social response can indicate the preferred partner of the young.

Several physiological markers can measure affiliation. Grooming behavior in talapoin monkeys has been shown to increase levels of naturally

occurring opiates secreted within the brain. Touching, grooming, and sexual interactions can lead to increased levels of oxytocin, a peptide hormone previously thought to be involved only in uterine contractions and nursing but is now known to be an important hormone in adult pair-bonding for socially monogamous animals (such as prairie voles, small monogamous rodents) and for parent-offspring relationships. Glucocorticoids (cortisol and corticosterone) secreted from the adrenal gland are associated with both physical and psychological stress, and affiliative relationships can modulate these hormones. Pair-bonded monkeys display much lower agitation and cortisol levels when they are with their partner in a novel environment, and hearing recordings of the vocalizations of partners can reduce the physiological response.

Varieties of Affiliative Experience

Affiliation patterns vary as a function of the social structure and kinship structure of different species. The affiliative relationships that are of greatest value are those that will lead to the greatest reproductive success, which can be measured both by the number of offspring of an individual that survive to reproduce and through the number of relatives that are reproductively successful. Thus, affiliation with close kin should lead to higher reproductive output either for the individual and/or any close relatives. Kinship structure varies in different species. In some species, such as most Old World monkeys (baboons, macaques) and many other mammals, males migrate and females remain in the natal group, meaning that there will be female kin in the group. In other species, such as chimpanzees and many New World monkeys, males stay in the natal group and females leave, creating a high potential for male kin relationships. In some cases, related males migrate together, as in lions, so that a lion pride typically has several closely related females and several closely related males.

Affiliative relationships may also emerge between unrelated individuals when there is mutual benefit in the relationship. An obvious example is the shared interests of mothers and fathers in infant survival. However, coalitions of unrelated

animals may lead to increased success for both. For example, dolphin males are rarely successful alone in mating with a female. However, two or more males will form a coalition, and through this coalition, they will be more successful. Each male's chance of conceiving an offspring rises from 0 to 50 percent as a result of forming a relationship with another male.

Species also differ in parental care patterns. In some species, females may mate with many males, and a male with low certainty of paternity should gain little from extensive involvement in infant care. In this case, parenting is done by the mother alone or is shared with her female kin. In contrast, males in species that form pair bonds and maintain social monogamy have a greater certainty of paternity, and these males are often active participants in infant care.

Parent-offspring affiliation. A mother-infant bond is generally perceived as the most basic of affiliative relationships. In species where females are the primary caregivers, this is expected. However, infants may also develop relationships with other related female caregivers in species where female relatives stay together. Of greater interest are the species where the primary caretaker is the father or the father and older siblings. In the titi monkey, a small pair-bonded species from South America, fathers are the main caretakers, although mothers must provide food through nursing. When infants are given a choice between the mother and the father, they choose to associate with the father. Curiously, mothers choose to associate with fathers rather than with their infants. In cooperatively breeding species where individuals in addition to the father assist in parental care, a juvenile, when frightened, runs to the individual that had carried it the most when it was an infant, never to its mother. Thus, affiliative patterns between parents and offspring vary with the type of parenting system.

Heterosexual affiliation. Although close heterosexual relationships are considered common for humans and are very common among birds, close heterosexual affiliations are relatively rare among mammals, and they are generally confined to species with some form of social monogamy and biparental care. Comparative studies on closely

related rodent species have shown major differences in heterosexual affiliation as a function of the social system. In monogamous prairie voles, a long-term affiliative relationship forms that is mediated by increased levels of oxytocin in females and by arginine vasopressin (another small peptide hormone) in males. The closely related montane voles are polygamous, do not form pair bonds, and are minimally affected by manipulations of oxytocin or vasopressin. California mice are also monogamous, and males are involved in infant care and defense of the mate and show high levels of vasopressin compared to polygamous white-footed mice where males do no parental care and do not form long-term relationships.

Separation and reunion studies have demonstrated increased behavioral agitation and stress hormones in pair-bonded monkeys, and these primates also cooperatively defend the relationship with aggression toward same-sex intruders. Although mates actively cooperate in defense against intruders, when individuals are tested alone, they may respond positively to a stranger of the opposite sex. In common marmosets, a socially monogamous monkey, single males and paired males without offspring, showed an interest in odors from novel, ovulating females and displayed an increase in blood testosterone within 30 minutes of the first exposure to the female's odor. In contrast, males with infants (fathers) were not interested in the scents and displayed no changes in testosterone, suggesting that affiliative relationships with a mate may increase when both care for infants.

Within-sex affiliation. Kinship relationships can predict the nature of within-sex affiliation. Thus in species where males disperse and females remain in the natal group, there is evidence of close associations between female kin. Females within a matriline interact more with each other than with females from other matriline. They will assist each other in caring for infants, and if one member of the matriline is attacked, other sisters are likely to retaliate to other members of the attacker's matriline. In these species, sisterhood is powerful. In species where females disperse and males remain in the natal group, males are more likely to be related to each other and to show affiliative behavior. The woolly spider monkey, or muriqui, from Brazil is one of these patrilocal species and is

noteworthy for showing no evidence of aggression or dominance behavior within the group. When a female is in estrous, males line up to wait their turn to mate, and when aroused or anxious, males engage in group hugs with lots of vocalization. Thus, males, at least in some species, can form close affiliations.

Strong affiliative relationships are not unique to humans, and the diversity of affiliative relationships among nonhuman species and the ability to study developmental and physiological aspects of relationships under carefully controlled conditions make nonhuman animals important models for understanding human affiliative relationships.

Charles T. Snowdon

See also Affiliation; Biological Systems for Courtship, Mating, Reproduction, and Parenting; Hormones Related to Relationships; Kin Relationships; Parent–Child Relationships; Sibling Relationships; Social Neuroscience; Social Support, Nature of

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AFFINITY SEEKING

There is a long history of research looking at what makes people find others socially attractive—what makes people like each other. For many years, most predictors of attraction or affinity were static variables such as attitude similarity, proximity, and appearance. Thus, in Donn Byrne's work, people were given the presumed attitudes of a target person and then asked to indicate how attractive they found the target. In research on propinquity, scholars examined how closely people

lived or worked with one another and then correlated those distances to attraction.

The affinity-seeking construct, developed by Robert Bell and John Daly, offered a more integrative, active approach to this body of literature. Early research on the construct had two primary themes. The first was a presumption that people engage in specific, active, and planned behaviors to get others to like them. So the construct suggested that people seeking affinity with others would, for example, intentionally find and suggest things they had in common with others, would physically move closer to people they were attracted to, and would actively change their physical appearance to make themselves more attractive. The second theme involved cataloging the primary strategies people use when actively seeking affinity. To do that required a conceptual model that highlighted four components of affinity-seeking: (1) antecedent factors (such as the goals involved in seeking affinity—to persuade, to generate liking), (2) constraints (variables that might affect affinity-seeking attempts such as personality, social skills, and context), (3) affinity moves (specific affinity-seeking strategies), and (4) responses (reactions of the target such as ignoring and/or rejecting the attempt).

The bulk of the academic work done on the construct focuses on the third component—specific affinity moves people make when attempting to generate positive interpersonal reactions. Bell and Daly discovered 25 different strategies that fell into seven clusters: (1) control and visibility (e.g., being interesting and dynamic), (2) trust (e.g., demonstrating openness and trustworthiness), (3) politeness (e.g., letting the other have control over the conversation, following conversational norms), (4) concern and caring (e.g., supporting the other's sense of who he or she is, acting attentive and listening), (5) other-involvement (e.g., incorporating the other into the exchange, nonverbal immediacy), (6) self-involvement (e.g., showing a sense of closeness with the other, including oneself in the conversation), and (7) commonalities (e.g., emphasizing similarities with target, assuming equality). A cluster analysis of the 25 strategies found they fell along three continua: (1) active-passive (being dynamic vs. listening), (2) aggressive–nonaggressive (manipulating attractiveness vs. supportiveness), and (3) self-other orientation (taking control versus including other).

The affinity-seeking construct spawned a number of lines of research including work on affinity-maintenance in married couples, affinity-seeking skills (conceived of as an individual difference), and the correlates of affinity-seeking.

Affinity Maintenance

Robert Bell, John Daly, and Maria Cristina Gonzalez introduced the notion of affinity-maintenance strategies: ways married couples actively and intentionally maintain positive feelings for one another. In their research, they identified 28 common strategies including most of the original Bell and Daly strategies and six new affinity-maintenance strategies: faithfulness, honesty, physical affection, verbal affection, self-improvement, and third-party relations. All of the 28 strategies were correlated with marital quality, and women felt they engaged in most of the strategies more frequently than men.

Research on affinity-maintenance strategies was adopted by scholars and later renamed and reconceptualized as relational maintenance behaviors. In addition to examining affinity maintenance in marriage, researchers have studied the affinity-seeking strategies of stepparents. Scholars also have suggested that people test others' affinity. For instance, William Douglas described tests such as networking, approaching, withdrawing, confronting, sustaining, hazing, and diminishing oneself.

Affinity-Seeking Skills and Correlates

A number of researchers have conceptualized affinity-seeking as an individual difference, arguing that people vary in their ability to actively get others to like them. Not surprisingly, people who report, or are seen by others as, being better at affinity-seeking are more positively regarded than their counterparts who are not as skilled at affinity-seeking. Children's satisfaction with their stepparents is positively correlated with their perceptions that their stepparents use more active affinity strategies. This association between affinity moves and satisfaction is also true in classrooms where students prefer and respond more positively to teachers who enact more and use a

greater variety of affinity strategies. Students also report being more motivated to study for teachers who engage in more affinity-seeking. Similarly, in the workplace, subordinates experience greater job satisfaction when their supervisors are viewed as engaging in more affinity-seeking. Further, individuals who report using a wider variety of strategies are better liked than those who habitually use a limited number. Falling into the habit of using only a few strategies not only makes people boring but also limits their communicative effectiveness.

In terms of correlates, affinity-seeking is positively and significantly associated with extraversion, assertiveness, and interaction involvement and inversely and significantly related to communication apprehension, verbal aggressiveness, loneliness, and neuroticism. At a more granular level, the associations between the use of individuals' tendency to employ particular strategies and various personality variables is often complex (e.g., assertiveness is positively related with active moves such as dynamism and negatively associated with passive moves such as conceding control). The use of specific strategies also varies by stage of the relationship, age, target, and gender (e.g., women report using listening, physical attraction, sensitivity, and elicitation of others' disclosure more than men, while men report more frequently using assuming control and presenting an interesting self).

John A. Daly

See also Communication, Gender Differences in; Initiation of Relationships; Interpersonal Attraction; Similarity Principle of Attraction

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AFFIRMATION

The concept of affirmation describes a process by which people develop into the person they want to become (termed the *ideal self*) with the assistance of close relationship partners. Researchers who study affirmation assume that who a person is currently and who a person would like to become do not merge automatically and in isolation from others. Rather, identities are shaped by interaction with intimate partners. This entry describes two important manifestations of affirmation. The first, the so-called Michelangelo phenomenon, describes how relationship partners assist in self-development. The second form, developed out of a tradition of self-affirmation theory, describes how implied assistance from relationships, through largely mental, unconscious processes, assists in healthy self-development.

Michelangelo Phenomenon

The term *Michelangelo phenomenon* was coined by Caryl Rusbult and her colleagues to describe the process by which close relationship partners help sculpt the self into one's ideal form—the person whom one aspires to be. Two important subprocesses are included. *Perceptual affirmation* describes the degree to which close partners see in oneself a preferred ideal form. In research studies, perceptual

affirmation is measured by endorsement of self-report items such as, “My partner thinks I have the traits and dispositions that I believe are most desirable.” *Behavioral affirmation* describes the degree to which the other behaves toward the self in a manner that facilitates personal progress toward the aspired-to ideal self. This form of affirmation is measured by endorsement of items such as, “My partner helps me become what I ideally want to be—he/she elicits the best in me.” In this tradition, affirmation resembles a self-fulfilling prophecy—when the behavior of close others is aligned with one’s aspirations and personal goals, partner beliefs can become reality and people can progress toward their ideal selves.

One of the ways that perceptual and behavioral affirmation facilitates progress toward one’s ideals is by selecting appropriate situations in which the ideal self can flourish. Because the lives of close partners tend to be mutually intertwined, close relationships influence the situations in which one enters. For example, if a close partner understands one’s desire to be more assertive and if the partner perceives in oneself the possibility of being more assertive, his or her supportive influence may help one enter into situations that provide opportunities to be assertive. Over time, as these situations recur, beliefs, expectations, and skills are bolstered, and actual assertiveness may develop. Perceptual and behavioral affirmation has been shown to increase self-esteem, life satisfaction, and emotional well-being of the developing person, likely because of the partner’s support in moving the actual self toward the ideal self. Consequently, movement toward the ideal self also increases relationship satisfaction between the sculptor and the sculpted.

The opposite can also occur—when close others fail to provide affirmation, or see and behave toward the self differently than one’s ideals—the worst might be brought out. For example, if the partner’s ideal for oneself does not match one’s own ideal, his or her behavior might induce self-development that is antithetical to one’s aspirations. Because affirmation operates in the manner of a self-fulfilling prophecy, one’s incorrect perception and behavior influences situation selection, and consequently, one might not be presented with situations in which assertiveness can be developed. This might also occur when close partners misinterpret one’s goals

and aspirations and instead focus on a secondary or tangential goal (e.g., by focusing on one’s pleasant compromise after a failed negotiation rather than on how one could have utilized assertiveness). Second, partners might also fail to provide support for one’s goals either by ignoring them or, in the worst case, undermining them. In both cases, these failures to affirm are associated with impaired personal development as well as with negative affect and decreased relationship satisfaction between the sculptor and the sculpted.

Close Relationships and Self-Affirmation

A second body of research discusses how close relationships provide affirmation but unlike the Michelangelo phenomenon, without tangible assistance from partners. Research in this area stems from the tradition of self-affirmation research, which proposes that when self-esteem is threatened, people are motivated to restore positive self-worth. This can be done by reminding oneself of an area of personal identity not currently under attack, compensating for the potential threat and thereby maintaining self-esteem. Self-affirmation does not work by simply reminding oneself of one’s overall goodness in a general way; rather, specific areas of identity unrelated to the present threat are unconsciously drawn upon to remind oneself of other positive qualities, thereby restoring feelings of self-worth.

Because close relationships constitute an important component of most people’s identity, relationships may provide self-affirmation during self-esteem dips. Thus, even though relationship partners may not be physically present to provide affirmation, their mental presence may suffice to maintain self-esteem. In one study, being reminded of close, positive relationships changed the way that people interpreted feedback about a failed intelligence test. When people wrote about a close, positive relationship, they were more open to details about their poor performance, presumably to improve their future performance. Research participants who were not reminded of their close, positive relationship appraised the feedback as a reminder of their inadequacies and were less open to potentially useful feedback. More generally, because partner-affirmation helps people construe

challenging situations (e.g., failure) as opportunities for potential growth rather than as threats to be avoided, affirmation tends to foster self-improvement in the form of reduced defensiveness, openness to challenge and failure, increased compassion and altruism, and positive emotionality.

Partner affirmation may also buffer the negative effects of illness. Partner affirmation is associated with reduced self-reported stress, increased coping efficacy, and reduced physiologically measured stress. A sample of patients with breast cancer who were given a self-affirmation writing task showed fewer physical symptoms at a 3-month follow-up appointment. The single most written about topic was close relationships.

Conclusion

Personal movement toward one's ideal self transpires gradually and with affirmation from close relationships. The two forms of affirmation described in this entry, the Michelangelo phenomenon and partner affirmation, illustrate two different ways close partners facilitate personal growth. Although the two processes differ, both show how partners may help promote self-worth and personal development.

Peter A. Caprariello

See also Attachment Theory; Communal Relationships; Expectations About Relationships; Intimacy; Responsiveness; Self-Concept and Relationships; Self-Regulation in Relationships; Understanding; Validation in Relationships

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AFRICAN-AMERICAN FAMILIES

The recent increase in immigration to the United States of peoples of African descent (i.e., Africans, Caribbean Blacks) has led to a greater percentage of individuals who are labeled Black Americans. There are many similarities among these groups, but their historical relationships and immigration patterns to the United States differ greatly. The focus of this entry is on native-born African Americans whose U.S. history dates back to the 17th century.

In the past, African-American families were presented as a homogeneous group. Current scholars, however, have cautioned that these families are diverse and complex and that there is no one type of African-American family. African-American families, much like other American families, are diverse in educational attainment, income levels, job status, family configurations (single parent, two parent, grandparent, multigenerational), geographic residence (urban, suburban, rural), and political views. Regardless of educational, social, and economic achievements, African-American families have minority status in the United States. This minority status has been associated with segregation and discrimination often resulting in African-American families facing extraordinary social and economic challenges (e.g., housing and employment discrimination).

African Americans, however, share unique qualities and strengths (e.g., family loyalty, racial pride). These qualities and strengths are not exclusive to African-American families, but they have been critical for successful adaptation and resiliency—including the ability to recover from setbacks—in the face of social and economic challenges. This entry will discuss a few of these strengths found among many African-American families that lead to positive outcomes for African Americans, such as a sense of family stability, effective coping strategies, and successful outcomes for children (e.g., high self-esteem).

Extended Family Support Networks

As with other American families, the family configuration of the majority of African-American families is the nuclear model of parent or parents and children. However, extended family living patterns are common among African-American families (e.g., grandmother, mother, and child living together in the same household). One reason for the extended household is economic necessity. Divorced or single parents, widows, and the elderly often find themselves faced with financial challenges due to lower income status. Moving in with family members helps to relieve some of the financial burden by sharing expenses.

Other reasons for extended households are family obligation and family devoutness. These are expectations of helping family members who may need assistance and feeling a sense of family loyalty to help take care of members, particularly caring for older family members who may have participated in caring for the younger generations. Cultural norms in the African-American community support and sanction these types of diverse family configurations.

Extended family households also have reciprocal psychological, social, and economic benefits between family members. Psychologically, the intergenerational relationships provide family members with a sense of belonging, attachment, and protection. Socially, diverse family configurations also permit members to share and exchange role responsibilities, such as providing childcare for working parents or elder care for the older adults in the household. The adaptability and flexibility of roles also provide households members with financial, emotional, and practical support such as food, clothing, information, and advice. These types of support allow parents to pursue and maintain employment and to avoid expensive childcare cost and allow younger members to attain higher educational status. It is also helpful that African-American men and women deemphasize strict gender roles and are more willing to share household tasks and responsibilities as needed. Older family members also provide emotional and financial support, serve as confidants, and provide childcare. They often possess valuable knowledge, skills, and insight to share with the younger generations. This exchanging and sharing of roles and

responsibilities is important for sustaining family closeness and for improving self-esteem and self-confidence of members. In all, extended families provide African-American families a functional, mutually beneficial network from which to give and receive care, shelter, support, and protection.

Strong Work Ethic

A strong work ethic is another identified strength that is present among many African-American families. Historically, the types of jobs that were available to African Americans have often been low-skilled, low-paying, transient positions (e.g., laborers, domestic workers). Yet even in the face of structural disadvantages such as discrimination and unequal access to the labor market, African Americans have long histories of labor force participation.

Unfortunately, on average, African Americans earn only 65 percent of what other Americans earn with similar education and employment positions. Further, when African Americans start at the same income levels in the same jobs, their rate of promotion and pay raises are lower than other employees. Despite labor discrimination at many levels, African-American families are found in low-income, middle-income, and high-income social classes.

This strong work ethic is found in both African-American men and women. Current labor force trends show that more women of all ethnicities are entering the workforce. Regardless of marital status, African-American mothers have the highest labor force participation of mothers of any other racial or ethnic group. In fact, historically, African-American women's employment has been vital to the economic survival of the African-American family. Too often, African-American men have been portrayed as inadequate providers, but studies show that when discriminatory obstacles and barriers are removed and they are allowed fair access to traditional economic opportunities and resources such as education and jobs, then African-American men are able to successfully fulfill the provider role for their families. Contrary to popular perceptions portrayed in the media, the majority of African-American parents are hard-working individuals taking care of the economic, health, and material needs of their children.

Racial Socialization

Racial socialization is another strength found among African-American families. Socialization is when children are taught to become independent, competent adults and to understand the norms and values of their larger society. This is an important task for all parents. Racial socialization, however, is a distinct strategy for African-American parents because it prepares African-American children for a society that devalues their racial minority status. The racial socialization process can include communication about racial pride that emphasizes the importance of African-American history and accomplishments. The socialization messages also can focus on the challenges associated with racial discrimination and prejudice. Racial socialization serves to enhance children's sense of group identity (e.g., a "we" mentality) and helps develop self-esteem and self-pride in themselves and in their culture.

Racial socialization can be rewarding because a positive group identity helps protect children from the harmful psychological consequences of discrimination, insults, negative messages, and attitudes about their race. For example, children who have not had at least some racial socialization might internalize and believe any negative media images or messages they encounter about their race and suffer psychological distress and/or low self-esteem. Children whose parents practice racial socialization usually achieve high academic status and display proficient social skills. Socializing children to African-American history and culture in addition to mainstream American culture provides children with the adaptive strategies necessary to successfully participate in both dominant and minority communities.

Edna Brown

See also Caregiving Across the Life Span; Economic Pressures, Effects on Relationships; Extended Families; Family Functioning; Family Relationships in Childhood; Fictive Kinship; Kin Relationships; Single-Parent Families; Social Support, Nature of

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AGE AT FIRST MARRIAGE

Social scientists view marriage as a social institution that is influenced by cultural and economic factors. The influence of societal changes on the institution of marriage is illustrated by the variations in age at first marriage in the United States over the course of the 20th century. According to U.S. Census Bureau data, in 1900 the median age at first marriage was 21.6 years for women and 25.9 years for men. Age at first marriage declined through the first part of the 20th century until reaching the youngest ages in 1950s. In 1950, the median age at first marriage was 20.3 for women and 22.8 for men. The 1950s was characterized by unprecedented economic growth; by the mid-1950s, the percentage of the population that had a middle-class income level almost doubled compared to the 1920s. Such economic prosperity meant that people married and had children at earlier ages. Compared to earlier decades, more people married, had more children, and were less likely to divorce.

These changes in marriage were relatively short-lived. Since the 1950s, age at marriage for both women and men has steadily increased; in 2003, only 50 percent of women were married by the age of 25, and 50 percent of men married by the age of 27. Results from a recent General Social Survey indicate that most people believe that marriage should occur after completion of education, obtaining a full-time job, and reaching financial independence. In general, people indicate that 25 years old is the right time to marry, while those who are college educated assert that 27 is the ideal age.

The increasing age at first marriage in the United States is also consistent with changes in other countries. Young adults marry at later ages in more industrialized and urban societies compared to less industrialized and more rural societies, although age at first marriage is also increasing in less industrialized and more rural areas of the world. The average age at first marriage in Japan is 28 years for women. In contrast, many women in sub-Saharan Africa marry before the age of 20. Also consistent across cultures, men marry at older ages than women and are commonly several years older than their wives. Although gender roles are changing in the United States and other industrialized nations, men are still expected to demonstrate that they are able to support a family before they marry. These social norms are likely to contribute to the older age at first marriage for men. Additionally, some researchers speculate that men prefer young brides because younger women are more fertile.

A significant portion of couples in the United States are homogeneous with respect to age; in other words, couples are comprised of partners similar in age. According to 2000 Census Bureau data, 31.8 percent of married couples had an age difference of 1 year or less. Couples involving a slightly older husband are more common than couples comprised of an older wife. In 2000, 12.3 percent of married women were 2 or more years older than their husbands; in contrast, 36.3 percent of married couples in 2000 were comprised of a husband 2 to 5 years older than the wife. This pattern is even more pronounced when looking at larger disparities of the age of marital partners. In 2000, 19.6 percent of couples were comprised of a husband 6 or more years older than the wife, while only 3.3 percent of married couples were comprised of a woman 6 or more years older than the husband. Women in their second marriages are more likely to have an older husband than women in their first marriage.

The different settings people meet their potential spouses can affect age differences in marital partners. When people find their mates while in school, they are more likely to be close in age. Alternatively, when people marry a coworker or someone they met through their job, there is greater potential for the spouse to be significantly older or younger.

Societal and Economic Factors Associated With the Delay in Marriage

Several societal and economic changes are associated with the increasing likelihood that people will delay getting married. One of the most obvious changes is increased education. Marriage has traditionally been viewed as an adult rite of passage. Since marriage is relatively long-term and married couples are expected to set up their own households and not live with parents, being married while going to school is difficult. As more people are going to school for longer periods, people are delaying marriage. In particular, women are more likely to go to college now than in the past. A second societal change associated with the increased age at marriage is women's workforce participation. Women (and particularly married women) are more likely to be employed than in the past. Wives' employment is no longer viewed as a way for families to afford luxuries such as vacations but as an economic necessity. Furthermore, higher divorce rates increase the likelihood that many women will be supporting themselves and their children. Thus, women are increasingly likely to postpone marriage in order to establish their careers first. Additionally, changing gender roles mean that many couples no longer follow traditional patterns of husbands as the family providers while wives carry the primary responsibility for managing the home and family. Women with higher levels of education are actually more likely to marry in comparison to women with less educational attainment; studies indicate that men increasingly prefer women who have the same educational attainment as themselves or who have more education.

Two other societal factors related to later age at marriage are increasing rates of premarital sex and cohabitation. Recent studies indicate that the majority of adolescents engage in sexual intercourse before the age of 20. As sex before marriage is increasingly accepted, particularly in the context of a committed relationship, individuals are postponing marriage. Additionally, less restrictive attitudes toward nonmarital sex and cohabitation are associated with a greater likelihood that young adults will live with someone before marriage; roughly one half of young adults will cohabit before getting married. Young adults are cohabiting at around the

same age as people tended to marry in previous decades; for many people, cohabitation rather than marriage before age 24 is common.

Individual Factors Associated With Age at First Marriage

In addition to the societal and economic changes associated with the later timing of marriage, several individual characteristics are related to timing of marriage. People who are very religious are more likely to marry at earlier ages, in part, because they are more likely to hold strong pro-family values. Individuals with higher levels of education and income marry at older ages in order to establish their careers first. An increasing portion of people with lower levels of income and education are forgoing marriage completely. Research indicates that although people with less education and income are just as likely to desire marriage as those who are more affluent, they do not believe they have the resources necessary to marry. Individuals who live in the South and in rural areas tend to marry at early ages because they are more likely to hold profamily values. Family background is also related to age at marriage. People who grew up in intact biological or adoptive parent families are more likely to marry at earlier ages compared to those parents divorced, separated, or who were never married. The reason for this difference is also because of attitudes toward marriage; individuals whose parents did not marry or did not remain married have less favorable attitudes toward marriage.

Race and ethnicity are also related to the timing of marriage. Hispanics marry at earlier ages and are more likely to marry compared to Whites. One reason Hispanics marry at earlier ages is the culture of familism, which supports the creation and maintenance of family ties; studies indicate that Hispanics place a higher value on marriage compared to non-Latino Whites. Foreign-born Hispanics are more likely to marry and marry at earlier ages compared to Hispanics who were born in the United States. In contrast, African Americans tend to marry at older ages and are less likely to marry compared to Whites. Again, researchers speculate that much of the difference is due to African Americans' more favorable attitudes toward alternative family forms.

Age at Marriage and Risk of Divorce

The association between age at marriage and risk of divorce has been consistently documented in the literature on close relationships and marriage. People who marry in their teens are twice as likely to end their marriages compared to those who married after the age of 22. Some people speculate that the link between marrying at a young age and divorce may be due to lower levels of education and/or premarital pregnancy. However, even when researchers take these factors into account, the link between age at marriage and divorce persists. Scholars have cited two main reasons for this relationship. The first reason is poor role performance; those who marry young may not have the maturity and/or relationship skills to fulfill the role of a marriage partner. People who marry at young ages may find that their spouses and marriages do not meet their expectations. One study found that individuals who married before the age of 20 were more likely to report that their spouse was not faithful, tended to be domineering, and refused to talk about problems. People who married early were also more likely to indicate that jealousy was a problem in their marriage.

The second factor that might account for the link between early age at marriage and risk of divorce is the availability of alternative partners. Scholars report that both wives and husbands are more likely to divorce when alternative partners are readily available. Since people are more likely to divorce during the first few years of marriage, people who marry at young ages still have ample opportunity to find another marriage partner. Research on the timing of divorce indicates that couples who end a longer marriage (15 years or more) are significantly more dissatisfied with their relationship compared to couples who divorce in the first 7 years of marriage. This indicates that people in their first few years of marriage and who marry young may be less tolerant of problems with their relationships or partners.

Summary

The societal and economic factors related to the increasing age at marriage are not likely to change in the near future. College attendance and women's

workforce participation are likely to stay at current rates. Additionally, people may be more accepting of premarital sex and unmarried cohabitation in the future. Thus, the age at first marriage is likely to remain at current levels or to increase. One possibility is that marriage may no longer be considered necessary for maintaining a long-term relationship or for starting a family. Demographers note that societal acceptance of cohabitation occurs in stages. At the first stage, cohabitation is uncommon; in the second stage, it is viewed as preparation for marriage; in the third stage, it is an acceptable alternative to marriage; in the fourth stage, cohabitation is indistinguishable from marriage. The United States is transitioning from the second to the third stage. Sweden is currently in the fourth stage. The majority of first births in Sweden occur to couples who are not married and are cohabitating. Regardless of whether the United States follows the path of Sweden, age at first marriage is not likely to decrease any time soon.

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See also Cohabitation; Dating and Courtship in Midlife and Later Life; Dating Relationships in Adolescence and Young Adulthood; Marketplace Approaches to Courtship, Love, and Sex; Marriage, Transition to; Mate Selection; Singlehood

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AGGRESSIVE COMMUNICATION

Conflict is inevitable in human relationships. Whether conflict results in anger, hurt feelings, or satisfaction largely depends on the way individuals communicate. Understanding the role that aggressive communication traits and predispositions play

in conflict can provide valuable insight into communication behaviors people exhibit when disagreement exists. Predispositions toward aggressive communication have been found to explain much of a person's message-sending and message-receiving behavior. Aggressive communication involves one person applying verbal force to another, typically with a high level of arousal. Individuals engaged in aggressive communication often adopt "attack" and "defend" modes of thinking and behavior. These behaviors are essential for successfully resolving a conflict, though they can be employed destructively as well as constructively. This entry defines aggressive communication, distinguishes constructive from destructive symbolic aggressive communication, describes four aggressive communication traits, and explores consequences of constructive and destructive aggressive communication in relationships.

Symbolic Aggressive Communication

The first distinction made in categorizing aggression is physical versus symbolic. Aggression can take both physical and symbolic forms. Physical aggression involves the aggressor's forceful use of his or her body (roughly handling or striking objects or others). Symbolic aggression involves the aggressor's forceful use of his or her communication (words, gestures, facial expressions, vocal tone, etc.). It is this latter set of behaviors with which aggressive communication is concerned.

Symbolic aggression can be divided into two types: constructive and destructive. Aggressive communication is composed of not one but several traits including assertiveness, argumentativeness, hostility, and verbal aggressiveness. Each of these traits interact with environmental factors to produce message behavior.

Constructive Aggressive Communication

Assertiveness is considered a constructive trait because it involves verbal and nonverbal symbols to exert control, obtain justified rewards, and to stand up for one's rights. Individuals who are assertive use symbols aggressively, but they do so in socially acceptable ways. One facet of assertiveness is *argumentativeness*, defined as a stable trait

that predisposes individuals involved in a conflict to defend positions on controversial issues and to verbally attack the positions of others. Argumentativeness is considered a subset of assertiveness as all arguing is assertive communication, but not all assertiveness involves arguing.

Individuals differ in their level of trait argumentativeness and can be classified into three groups: high, low, and moderate. A person high in argumentativeness enjoys arguing and will eagerly and readily use arguments to attack others' positions and defend their own positions on issues. Highly argumentative individuals view arguing as an intellectual challenge and as an exciting competitive situation that allows them to display to others how communicatively skillful they are. Highly argumentative individuals also hold positive beliefs about arguing.

People low in argumentativeness feel uncomfortable about arguing before, during, and after the event that calls for argument. They lack the motivation, desire, and skill to argue across most situations and generally avoid talking about controversial issues because it makes them uncomfortable. Those low in argumentativeness hold negative beliefs about arguing. Individuals can also be moderate in argumentativeness. There are three types of moderate argumentative individuals: Conflicted-feelings moderates are highly emotional when it comes to arguing; they feel compelled to argue because of their level of competitiveness, yet they are also highly anxious about arguing because of their fear of failure. Apathetic moderate argumentatives are low in emotion when it comes to arguing, yet they feel little to no anxiety about engaging in an argument. Neutral moderate argumentatives will argue only when they see some good coming out of it and feel that they have a good chance of winning.

Destructive Aggressive Communication

There are two destructive forms of symbolic aggressive communication: hostility and verbal aggressiveness. Hostility is exhibited in interpersonal communication when people use messages to express irritability, negativity, resentment, and suspicion. Irritable communicators have quick tempers, show little patience, are moody, and

appear exasperated when things go wrong for them. Negative communicators express a great deal of pessimism, display little cooperative effort, and are often antagonistic toward authority, rules, and social conventions. Resentment is expressed through jealousy and brooding about perceived slights, either real or imagined. Suspicion is communicated by distrust of others.

Verbal aggressiveness is defined as the tendency to attack the self-concept of individuals instead of or in addition to their positions on topics of communication. These attacks most commonly take the form of character attacks (e.g., "You're a liar and a cheater!"), competence attacks (e.g., "You can't do anything right," or "You're a lousy lover"), teasing, ridicule, profanity, maledictions (i.e., wishing someone harm, as when one says to someone "Drop dead"), background attacks, physical appearance attacks (e.g., "Your nose looks like a pig's nose"), threats, and nonverbal "verbal" behaviors (e.g., raising the middle finger in the "up yours" gesture, sticking out the tongue, rolling the eyes).

The essential difference between argumentativeness and verbal aggressiveness is in the locus of the attack. In argumentativeness the attack is on the adversary's position on the controversial issue; in verbal aggressiveness, the attack is on the adversary's self-concept. For example, one spouse suggests vacationing in Florida in February. The other disagrees, stating, "The weather is too cold and variable in Florida during February." This constitutes an example of an argumentative response. Stating, "You're so stupid for wanting to go to Florida in February—the weather sucks!" would constitute a verbally aggressive response and one that is potentially destructive to the relationship. Verbally aggressive behavior is more common in exchanges where the consequences are very meaningful to those involved.

Causes of Verbal Aggressiveness

Several reasons have been offered for the development of the verbal aggressiveness trait: psychopathology (repressed hostility or neuroticism), disdain for the other person, social learning of aggression, and argumentative skill deficiency (i.e., not possessing the skill and ability to generate constructive

arguments during a conflict). Communication scholars have suggested a fifth cause of verbal aggressiveness: the inherited trait explanation. This explanation suggests that verbal aggressiveness is an expression of temperament. That is, people are born with a set of biologically determined temperaments that are relatively consistent throughout their lives of which verbal aggressiveness is one.

An important study found that individuals high in verbal aggressiveness view competence attacks, character attacks, maledictions, nonverbal emblems (i.e., gestures that take the place of words), ridicule, and threats as less hurtful than those who are low in verbal aggressiveness. Individuals high in verbal aggressiveness reported several reasons for being verbally aggressive: trying to appear tough, experiencing rational discussions that degenerate into verbal fights, wanting to be mean to the other person, and wanting to express disdain for the other. In another study, it was observed that highly verbally aggressive individuals often perceive that their verbal aggression is justified.

Measurement of Aggressive Communication

Like other communication and personality traits, argumentativeness and verbal aggressiveness are measured with paper-and-pencil self-report questionnaire instruments. Scores on the Argumentativeness and the Verbal Aggressiveness Scales help individuals understand how they compare with the norms established for each scale.

The Argumentativeness Scale measures trait argumentativeness, the predisposition to engage in argument that is embedded in personality. In conflict situations, individuals respond based on competing approach and avoidance motivations for engaging in argument. These motivations are based on both personality (trait) and situational (state) factors. Based on this assumption of coexisting motivations to engage in argument, approach and avoidance subscales were designed to measure both dimensions. Thus, general trait argumentativeness (ARGgt) equals the predisposition to approach argument (ARGap) minus the predisposition to avoid argument (ARGav), or $ARGgt = ARGap - ARGav$. Examples of items that measure ARGap include "I am energetic and enthusiastic when I argue," "I enjoy a good argument

over a controversial issue," and "I enjoy defending my point of view on an issue." Examples of items that measure ARGav include "Arguing with a person creates more problems for me than it solves," "I get an unpleasant feeling when I realize I am about to get into an argument," and "I am happy when I keep an argument from happening." Scores on the scale have been found to predict, for example, the desire to debate a controversial issue with a colleague, the amount of argumentative behavior exhibited in a group problem-solving task, and the degree of disappointment when an anticipated argument does not take place.

The Verbal Aggressiveness Scale was developed to measure the predisposition in which individuals attack the self-concept of another instead of or in addition to their positions on controversial issues. The scale assumes the existence of verbal aggressiveness, so some items ask where, how, and when it is expressed rather than whether it is expressed (e.g., "When individuals insult me, I get a lot of pleasure out of really telling them off"). Second, in some items, justification for the behavior is provided to legitimize the expression of verbal aggressiveness (e.g., "When people refuse to do a task I know is important, without good reason, I tell them they are unreasonable"). Finally, in some items, the verbally aggressive response is made to appear benevolent (e.g., "I try to make people feel good about themselves even when their ideas are stupid"). These strategies are consistent with research revealing that aggressive individuals often attempt to self-justify their socially undesirable aggressive behavior. Verbal aggressiveness scores allow us to predict, for example, the likelihood that a person will use verbal aggression to secure compliance in social influence situations (e.g., "I would tell my friend that he [or she] is simple-minded for not agreeing to vote in favor of my position on this issue") and the amount of teasing a person will engage in with their siblings.

Consequences of Constructive and Destructive Aggressive Communication

The most fundamental conclusion that has been reached by the vast amount of research conducted on aggressive communication over the last quarter of a century is that most outcomes of argumentativeness

are constructive, while most outcomes of verbal aggressiveness are destructive. Several benefits have been associated with argumentativeness. First, argumentativeness enhances perceived credibility. Argumentativeness has been related to credibility because of the assumption that higher levels of the trait may indicate more skill in arguing and reasoning. Research has revealed that more skillful advocacy, refutation, and rebuttal behavior suggests greater competence in communication. High argumentatives are more likely than low argumentatives to be seen as leaders in groups. Argumentativeness has also been associated with higher levels of self-esteem, especially perceptions of personal power and competence.

Recall that a skill deficiency in argument has been suggested as one explanation for verbal aggressiveness. That is, when individuals are low in motivation to argue and lack the skill to generate arguments during conflict, these deficiencies can lead to verbal attacks being directed to another person's self-concept instead of his or her position on controversial issues. Verbal aggression has been suggested as a catalyst for physical aggression. Thus, being high in motivation and skill in argument may reduce the likelihood that this cycle will result because skilled and motivated arguers are better able to direct a verbal attack toward their adversary's position and not toward his or her self-concept.

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See also Anger in Relationships; Approach and Avoidance Orientations; Arguing; Communication Processes, Verbal; Communication Skills; Conflict Patterns; Relational Aggression

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AGING PROCESSES AND RELATIONSHIPS

More adults are living to advanced old age than ever before. In 1900, the average life expectancy was approximately 47 years, and only about 3 million U.S. citizens were 65 years of age or older. As of the 2000 U.S. Census, average life expectancy is about 77 years, depending on gender and race, and at least 35 million persons are 65 or older. The number of centenarians, those 100 years of age or older, increased from about 37,000 in 1990 to over 50,000 a decade later. What do these trends mean for family and friend relationships? On the one hand, older adults are experiencing family and friend relationships for longer than ever. On the other, younger people have increasing opportunities to know and interact with multiple generations of middle-aged and older adults. This entry addresses the effects of aging-related physical and psychological changes on close relationships, including both promising and problematic implications of aging for social interactions.

Age-Related Physical and Psychological Changes

The life-span development perspective as articulated by Paul Baltes encompasses the key idea that

development is a lifelong process extending beyond the years of childhood and adolescence throughout the years of adulthood and old age. Development entails both growth or gains and decline or losses across the entire span of life. According to this view, the rate and direction of change vary for different aspects of human life, such as physical, cognitive, or personality functioning. Development is affected by historical, cultural, and social contexts, and developmental processes are modifiable through individual and societal interventions. Changes that take place in physical, social, emotional, cognitive, and other domains set the stage for experiences in family and friend relationships. Reciprocally, interactions with other people can have an impact on a person's development.

Under ordinary circumstances, peak physical functioning takes place during the adolescent and young adulthood years. As individuals grow older, they may begin to notice some external signs of aging, such as increased skin wrinkling and decreased visual acuity. Note, however, that most organ systems function well into very old age. Many of the physical limitations attributed to aging actually result from lifestyle choices that interfere with good health, such as poor diet, inadequate exercise, or smoking. Adults who engage in health-promoting behaviors generally can function well despite advancing age. Even so, wear and tear on the body along with some genetically programmed changes mean that older adults are likely to experience gradual decline in vision and hearing, the circulatory system, bone density, and muscle mass. Brain structure and functioning also changes with age. If any of these conditions lead to serious changes in health and functioning, the ability to interact with family and friends can also become impaired.

Turning to the psychological domain, Erik Erikson offered an analysis of psychosocial development across the life span that highlights particular challenges or turning points with emergent strengths or failures for each stage. In the adult years, the challenges encompass developing the capacity to form intimate relationships and care deeply about others versus remaining isolated, becoming concerned about the welfare of future generations versus being self-absorbed, and accepting one's life as satisfying and meaningful versus

regretting one's choices and fearing death. Resolving these challenges successfully contributes both to personal maturity and to the quality of social relationships.

Although different stages of life bring different challenges to the foreground of experience, basic personality traits, or typical patterns of thoughts, feelings, and actions, tend to remain constant across the adult years. Robert McCrae and Paul Costa have confirmed the stability of the Big Five personality traits (neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness) throughout the adult years in many cultures. This means that ways of responding to life events and social interactions are not likely to change much with the passage of time. Similarly, many adults retain good cognitive functioning well into old age, especially if they are healthy and well educated. Even very old adults can learn new information, master new technology, and acquire new interests—it just might take them longer than when they were younger. Individuals who exhibit severe memory loss or sudden personality change are likely to be experiencing the effects of disease processes, not normal aging.

Impact of Aging on Close Relationships

Most older adults have close relationships with numerous family members and friends. Their social interactions reflect both continuity—sibling, parent–child, and friend ties are very long-lasting—and change wrought by relocating from one community to another or by the increasing functional limitations of older adults as well as the functional limitations or death of their relatives or friends. Growing old can have both positive and negative effects on the quality of close relationships, reflecting the lifelong complex interplay between personal development and social bonds.

Positive Effects of Aging on Relationships

Same-Generation Relationships

The relational benefits of living for a long time are manifold. Considering first the personal relationships older adults have with their age peers, research shows that long-standing experience can

be advantageous for marriage, sibling ties, and friendships alike. Most individuals who stay married into their later years as well as those who choose new romantic partners in late life rate their marital or marital-like relationships as happy and satisfying. This is partly because unhappy marriages or partnerships are likely to have ended in divorce previously. Also, stable personality traits contribute to stable patterns of marital interaction. In addition, older partners typically have learned to manage the give-and-take of intimate life, have had practice in resolving difficulties, and take pleasure in being close with someone they care about deeply.

Although some adults find themselves too busy to interact much with their sisters and brothers during the busy years of rearing children and pursuing work goals, especially when siblings live far apart, relationships with siblings may take on new meaning in old age as work and family responsibilities decline. Sibling ties are the longest-lasting family bond, and studies show that siblings usually keep in touch throughout life or at least are aware of one another through common contact with other persons. In old age, renewal of sibling bonds can provide pleasurable opportunities to reminisce about a shared past as well as a sense of security and reassurance in the face of uncertainty about future health care and other needs.

Adults who nurture long-term friendships and make new friends throughout life can reap the beneficial effects of knowing significant others deeply and enduringly. The majority of older adults have friends, interact with them often, and appreciate the companionship, understanding, and support that friends provide. In fact, research shows that friends contribute to older adults' life satisfaction more than family members do, probably because friendship ties are based more on choice than obligation. Many older adults make sure they stay in touch with long-term friends as well as enjoy the stimulation that a widening circle of new friends can bring.

Intergenerational Relationships

Looking at the intergenerational family relationships of society's elders reveals other positive dimensions of old age. With increased longevity comes the potential for knowing multiple succeeding generations of kin, a benefit which was not possible in the past when people lived barely long

enough to see their children become adults. Generally, parent-child relationships are more peer-like than hierarchical at this stage of life. Older adults rely on their children for companionship, emotional support, and instrumental help; in turn, offspring usually report commitment to filial responsibility for aiding their aging parents. Having grandchildren and great- or even great-great-grandchildren provides elders with a strong sense of family lineage continuity and numerous opportunities for expressing generativity to their heirs. Many elders obtain great satisfaction from associating with their grandchildren, particularly in the absence of extensive responsibility for rearing them. Based on accumulated life experience, older adults can impart wisdom, transmit social and other skills through role modeling, and convey forgiveness for transgressions within the family. Often older adults serve as the kinkeepers who foster cross-generation linkages, promote extended family ties, pass on ancestral lore, and preserve family legacies and traditions.

The gain-loss phenomenon described previously can be applied to late-life close relationship changes. For example, among older adults who can afford to retire from paid employment, the availability of more discretionary time contributes to the likelihood of pursuing the preferred amount of family interaction as well as having more time for friends and mutually enjoyable activities with them. In this sense, retirement represents a social gain even while it entails loss of work-based contacts and activities. Moreover, older adults usually perceive themselves as having more freedom than in the past to choose the relationships and relational foci they wish to pursue while letting less meaningful ties fade away.

Negative Effects of Aging on Relationships

Along with the strengths old people might bring to family and friend relationships, advanced levels of age-related changes in physical or psychological function can create relationship impediments that frustrate older adults and their significant others. If older adults have living parents, the parents are likely to be quite frail and in need of support, but the older adult offspring may require assistance as well. In such cases, older adults who are already supporting their spouses as well as adult

grandchildren who are tapped for assistance can feel overwhelmed from having multiple generations of family elders to support along with all the other demands on their time. Normative slight declines in vision, hearing, and mobility usually are inconsequential to relationships. But more extensive hearing impairment can interfere with effective communication while high levels of vision or mobility loss can isolate older adults from their family and friends. If elders must cease driving but do not live near public transportation or are too frail to use it, their physical limitations can have direct impact on their relationships. Unresolved developmental challenges related to generativity, or concern for the welfare of future generations, and integrity, or satisfaction with life, can result in older adults who are self-absorbed and fearful of death.

Even more serious in some ways is the effect of memory loss on family and friend relationships. Older adults who become confused in their surroundings and cannot remember names of loved ones may be reluctant to socialize or pursue hobbies and interests with others. Brain damage associated with Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia can lead to unexpected and unpleasant personality changes that make it difficult to be around the affected elder. Such cognitive and memory declines demand great patience of relatives and friends, who must be willing to tolerate loss of the usual relational reciprocity found in close relationships.

Another negative dimension of old-age relationships is the potential for long-standing unresolved conflicts to be sustained over many years, leading to ongoing relational disharmony and disappointment or even abuse and violence. Often, the victims of mistreatment in old age are the very persons who engaged in relational violence when they were younger, reflecting a destructive cycle of abuse transmission over the generations.

Ageism, or negative stereotyping of old people and prejudice against them, is rampant in U.S. culture. Ageist attitudes and values can promote beliefs that old people have nothing to offer younger relatives or friends and can inhibit older adults from pursuing romantic relationships. Older adults themselves may believe ageist stereotypes and refrain from seeking new relationships or engaging in activities where they feel unwanted. Segregating older adults from the rest of society

not only reduces their chances for meaningful social interactions, it also prevents them from contributing to the social good.

A final consideration of the negative aspects of old-age relationships concerns bereavement. Older adults are more likely than persons in any other age group to experience death of parents, spouses, siblings, and friends. Some must cope with loss of children or grandchildren as well. Although bereavement is difficult at any age, the accumulation of deaths among family and friends can be especially troublesome for older adults who grieve repeatedly. In addition, loss of key relatives and friends can make old people feel particularly vulnerable as they face their own advanced years and the potential need for increased assistance and emotional support.

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See also Adulthood, Sibling Relationships in; Couples in Later Life; Couples in Middle Age; Family Relationships in Late Adulthood; Family Relationships in Middle Adulthood; Friendships in Late Adulthood; Friendships in Middle Adulthood; Grandparent–Grandchild Relationship

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AGREEABLENESS

Agreeableness is one of the five major dimensions of personality within the five-factor structural approach to personality (also known as the Big Five). It is an abstract, summary term for a set of lower-level traits that describe individual differences in being likable, pleasant, and harmonious in interactions with others. Agreeableness has been conceptualized as a motivational system that is concerned with maintaining positive relationships with others. Of the major dimensions of personality in the Big Five, Agreeableness is the one implicated most in how individuals differ in their orientations towards interpersonal relationships. Because of this motivation, Agreeableness generally influences a wide range of thoughts, feelings, and social behaviors. There are many implications for social relationships if people differ in their motives to maintain positive relationships.

Friendships and romantic relationships have been conceptualized in terms of sequential phases. Relationships begin with an initiation phase, which includes attraction and dating. Once relationships have been initiated, they quickly move into the maintenance phase. If a couple's attempt at maintenance fails, relationships move into a series of phases involved in the dissolution of the relationship. These phases include decline, repair, and exit. Different behaviors and responses to a relationship partner are required at each phase, but agreeableness is related to all five phases of the relationship sequence. This entry describes recent research examining the relationship between agreeableness and relationship behavior at each of these five phases.

Relationship Sequence

Stage 1: Initiation

Initiation of a relationship generally occurs because individuals are attracted to each other. Once individuals realize this initial attraction, they may undergo a series of initiation behaviors, such as spending time together (friendships) and dating or sexual intercourse (romantic relationships) in an effort to establish the relationship.

Attraction

According to now classic research on attraction, one of the leading causes of attraction is similarity. Individuals are attracted to people who are similar, or who they believe are similar, to them. Recent research on helping behavior has provided initial evidence that individuals high in agreeableness rate victims in need of help as more similar to themselves and more likeable. They also treat outgroup members—people who come from different social groups than oneself—similarly to ingroup members—people from one's own social group—in most respects, such as in terms of helping or prejudice. If agreeableness is related to perceptions of similarity, then agreeableness and attraction may be related also. That is, individuals high in agreeableness may find more potential dating targets similar to themselves than do individuals low in agreeableness. This may lead individuals high in agreeableness to finding more others attractive, even when they are relatively dissimilar to themselves.

Recent research has shown that agreeableness is an important characteristic that women want in a potential dating partner. In an experimental study examining whether women are attracted to “nice guys,” women were asked to rate the attractiveness and desirability of men who behaved in prosocial, agreeable ways and of men who did not. Given the same level of physical attractiveness, men who behaved in a prosocial, agreeable way were rated as more attractive and more desirable as a dating and sexual partner. This research provides initial evidence that women look for prosocial motives in their mates, and agreeableness may be an important predictor of this attraction.

Initiation Behaviors

Once attraction between two people has been established, certain behaviors facilitate the

development of the relationship. Two of these behaviors are commitment and sexual intercourse. Extending the finding that agreeableness is related to attraction among women, recent research found that agreeableness was related to commitment and frequency of sexual intercourse. Men low in agreeableness report more casual, uncommitted relationships and a higher frequency of casual sex. Women also rated these low agreeable men as more desirable for uncommitted relationships, which included higher rates of casual sex. These results point to the idea that agreeableness is related negatively to commitment and positively to frequency of casual sex, especially in short-term relationship contexts.

If one examines the reasons underlying this negative relationship between agreeableness and frequency of casual sex, different patterns of motivation in men and women are uncovered. Overall, for both men and women, agreeableness was related to higher levels of commitment in relationships. Men high in agreeableness report having sex when they feel loving and committed to their partner. Among women high in agreeableness, however, patterns were less clear. For them, virtually every major reason for sex was negatively correlated with agreeableness. By comparison, in women virtually every major reason for sex was positively correlated with neuroticism, an individual's level of emotional stability. Part of the explanation may rest with the fact that women high in agreeableness report less casual and unrestricted sex. Another possibility is that women high in agreeableness are more traditionally romantic and prefer not to endorse any reason for having sex, as it is too personal.

Stage 2: Maintenance

Once the initiation stage of relationships is concluded, relationship maintenance behaviors become important. If relationships are not maintained, they may decline and possibly dissolve. Not surprisingly, agreeableness is related to many relationship maintenance behaviors. Inherent in the definition of agreeableness is the motivation to maintain positive relationships and therefore, the maintenance of personal relationships.

Satisfaction

Agreeableness is related to satisfaction in relationships. Research indicates that men who are higher in agreeableness are more satisfied with their relationship and rate their relationship as more intimate than men who are low in agreeableness. This is not true for women. Agreeableness seems not to be related to perceptions of relationship satisfaction or intimacy for women.

Recently, trait expressiveness has been linked to marital satisfaction. Trait expressiveness is not linked empirically to agreeableness, but there are reasons to believe that the two constructs are related. The words used to categorize people high in trait expressiveness—kindness and understanding—are similar to those used to describe individuals high in agreeableness—warm and kind. Trait expressiveness leads to greater levels of affectionate behavior in relationships, which in turn leads to greater responsiveness from a spouse. These higher levels of affectionate behavior and responsiveness lead to greater marital satisfaction in both husbands and wives. These processes could also hold true for agreeableness because of the similarities between trait expressiveness and agreeableness.

Perceptions of a partner's agreeable behavior have also been shown to be an important determinant of relationship satisfaction. When members of couples perceive their partner as more agreeable than would be expected (based on perceptions of the frequency of their partner's agreeable behaviors), they may begin to have positive illusions about their partner. That is, they see their partner as displaying more agreeable behavior than the partner actually displays. Spouses who have positive illusions of their partner rate themselves as being more in love as newlyweds and remain more in love throughout their marriage.

Social Support

Perceived social support is also related to perceived levels of agreeableness. Individuals who are perceived as more agreeable by their family members are also perceived as more supportive to their family members. This effect does not hold for mothers, however. Mothers are perceived as supportive regardless of how their family members perceive them as high or low in agreeableness. There is no evidence, however, that perceptions of

support are related to actual agreeableness. That is, individuals who perceive more support from their family members are not necessarily higher in agreeableness than individuals who perceive less support from their family members.

Conflict

Agreeableness is also related to observed negative interactions in marriages. Wives and husbands who are lower in agreeableness report and experience higher levels of negative interactions in their marriages. This is true when the spouse rates their partner's level of agreeableness as well. That is, a wife who perceives her husband as higher in agreeableness also reports lower levels of negative interaction in their marriage and vice versa. Self-ratings of agreeableness are also positively related to sexual satisfaction and perceptions of marital quality for both husbands and wives. Spouses who are higher in agreeableness are more sexually satisfied in their marriage and have more positive global evaluations of their marriage.

Agreeableness is related to the type of response an individual uses in these negative interactions as well. Individuals high in agreeableness are more likely to respond to conflict in constructive ways, such as negotiation, whereas individuals low in agreeableness are more likely to use negative tactics of asserting power of their partner (e.g., yelling and hitting).

Individuals high in agreeableness are also more likely to display accommodation behaviors in romantic relationships. Accommodating behaviors occur when an individual responds to a partner's negative behaviors in a relationship-enhancing manner. Individuals high in agreeableness are more likely to use accommodating behaviors in relationships than their peers. In fact, being accommodating to romantic partners may be an automatic response (i.e., a response that requires no cognitive effort) to negative behaviors in individuals high in agreeableness.

Stage 3: Decline

One reason relationships begin to decline, the third phase, is because the relationship is not properly maintained by either member of the couple. Little research to date has examined the link between agreeableness and relationship decline.

Based on the positive relationship between agreeableness and relationship maintenance behaviors, researchers might expect that agreeableness is negatively related to decline in relationships. If individuals high in agreeableness are more likely to display accommodating behaviors and respond to conflict in a more positive manner, they should be less likely to experience decline in their personal and romantic relationships.

Relationship decline is associated with decreases in levels of commitment and decreases in the number of investments partners share. Based on the relationship between agreeableness and commitment, it is reasonable to expect that agreeableness may exhibit a similar pattern when predicting relationship decline. More specifically, because higher levels of agreeableness are related to higher levels of commitment, and therefore higher levels of investments, agreeableness should also be positively related to lower levels of relationship decline.

Stage 4: Repair

Once relationships begin to decline, repair behaviors are necessary, or the relationship will either end or remain dissatisfying. One important factor in relationship repair is forgiveness. One or both couple members must forgive each other for repair to occur fully. Research examining the relations among agreeableness and forgiveness has identified a positive relationship between them. That is, individuals high in agreeableness are more likely to forgive others, thereby possibly leading to higher rates of repair in relationships.

Empathy and perspective taking may be additional factors involved in successful relationship repair. To reverse the decline of a relationship, couple members must recognize the perspective of their partner. Being able to take the partner's perspective and, therefore, feel empathic concern for the partner should lead to prosocial behaviors and more successful attempts at repairing relationships.

Stage 5: Exit

If repair attempts are unsuccessful, the final relationship phase, exit, is reached. The term *exit* is used traditionally to describe the end of a relationship, but it has also been used to denote one

response to conflict (i.e., avoiding or ending the conflict—threatening to leave the relationship or walking out to end conflict; voice—actively working constructively with the partner to improve the situation, loyalty—saying and doing nothing but optimistically waiting for improvement, and neglect—avoiding discussion of critical issues are additional strategies). Little research has examined the link between agreeableness and exiting or ending relationships, but research on agreeableness and conflict resolution strategies may shed light on this topic. Similar to research on conflict resolution, agreeableness should be related to more positive endings of relationships. Because agreeableness is defined as the motivation to maintain positive relationships with others, agreeableness may be related not only to the positive behaviors in the dissolution of relationships but also to more positive behaviors following the dissolution of the relationship.

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See also Accommodation; Empathy; Forgiveness; Maintaining Relationships; Personality Traits, Effects on Relationships; Perspective Taking; Repairing Relationships

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AIDS, EFFECTS ON RELATIONSHIPS

Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) destroys the blood cells critical to healthy immune functioning and compromises the body's ability to fight off illnesses. HIV infection occurs through sexual or blood-to-blood contact, and the primary

transmission vector, unprotected sex, typically occurs in the context of dyadic relationships. Once infected, people living with HIV disease become susceptible to opportunistic infections, may develop AIDS, and can die. People living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) experience their illness in the context of relationships with sexual partners, social support providers, medical professionals, caregivers, and long-term relationship partners. Some key issues in considering AIDS and relationships include prevention of HIV transmission, social support and caregiving, and potential loss and bereavement.

HIV Prevention and Safer Sex

In order to minimize the risk of HIV infection and other sexually transmitted diseases, couples should use a latex condom during oral, anal, or vaginal sexual contact. Studies of diverse populations from around the world indicate that people in long-term and committed relationships, both heterosexual and homosexual, use condoms less frequently than more casual couples. This could be because married or cohabiting people generally do not perceive that they are at risk for HIV infection. Couples also may engage in unprotected sex because they view condoms as detrimental to their relationship or as implying that partners are not monogamous or cannot be trusted. Research suggests that relationship dynamics and qualities are important in safer sexual practices. Specifically, feeling intimate with a partner predicts sexual behavior; greater intimacy, closeness, and commitment all predict reduced likelihood of using condoms.

Interestingly, marriage is actually a risk factor for HIV infection, particularly for women. Research with heterosexual couples suggests that married couples use condoms less frequently than unmarried couples and especially to the extent that they perceive little HIV risk from partners. Moreover, in many cultures around the world, gender expectations and social norms do little to discourage infidelity in husbands and simultaneously make it more difficult for wives to demand safer sexual practices. Such cultural norms heighten the risk of HIV infection for both partners.

In some couples, one partner is HIV positive (HIV+) and one is HIV negative (HIV–, i.e., they

are serodiscordant). In these couples, secondary prevention, or how to simultaneously prevent HIV transmission to the uninfected partner and minimize health risks to the HIV+ partner, is a central concern. Research suggests that couple serostatus is related to sexual behavior and intimate relating; unprotected sex is more likely in couples in which *both* partners are HIV+ (i.e., they are seroconcordant) than in couples in which only one partner is HIV+ (serodiscordant). Although PLWHA may be motivated to practice safer sex to protect their HIV- partners, relationship closeness seems to influence the likelihood that couples engage in unprotected sex. Even among serodiscordant couples, greater feelings of relationship closeness predict greater likelihood of engaging in unprotected sex, with this tendency more pronounced among women than men in heterosexual relationships. The more dependent or less powerful partner in a relationship (e.g., women in traditional heterosexual relationships) may be pressured to not use condoms or it may be impossible for them to insist on safer sexual practices even when they are motivated to do so.

Couple-based interventions may be one way to minimize HIV risk in couples of all types. When both couple members support and encourage condom use, risky sexual behavior occurs less frequently. And to the extent that safer sexual practices can be linked to maintaining a satisfying and caring relationship, couples may be less likely to engage in unsafe behaviors.

Social Support and Caregiving

Social support is critical for the health and well-being of PLWHA. Support from partners, families, and friends is associated with less substance abuse and distress (e.g., hostility, depression, anxiety, and grief) and increased health promotion behaviors among PLWHA. Social support also has the potential to impact dyadic functioning; it can organize couple behavior patterns and interactions and may serve as one means of relationship maintenance for couples coping with HIV/AIDS.

Although PLWHA may receive support from people who do not know their serostatus, those who disclose that they are HIV+ typically report

greater social support after doing so. A related research finding is that, among gay identified HIV+ men, social inhibition and being “in the closet” about their sexual identity are both related to poorer overall health and faster disease progression. Thus, concealing disease status (or sexual identity for some PLWHA) may prevent HIV+ individuals from benefiting from social support that could be provided by others.

Although social support is generally associated with positive outcomes for PLWHA, it appears that support provided by informal caregivers, rather than family members, friends, or professionals, especially predicts improved health and well-being. One potentially important determinant of this effect is relationship quality. Research suggests that greater relationship quality between caregiver and PLWHA is associated with fewer symptoms and better overall health for the HIV+ partner.

In providing support and assistance, caregivers face difficulties of their own. They may witness health and psychological changes in the HIV+ partner, and they experience stress in redefining their relationship and engaging in caregiving activities. Caregivers may find it difficult to fully commit to their partners, their new roles, and to caregiving, and these challenges seem particularly difficult for caregivers who are themselves HIV+. In fact, HIV+ caregivers report greater feelings of burden than HIV- caregivers. Nonetheless, it is important to note that caregivers also often report increased relationship closeness as a result of caregiving.

The challenges of caregiving may be complicated by stigma associated with HIV disease and by the caregiver's serostatus. Caregivers may fear or experience *courtesy stigma*, negative feelings and prejudice from others associated with HIV disease, with this stigma contributing to their feelings of isolation, burden, and depression. If the caregiver is HIV+, these negative effects may be especially pronounced; HIV+ caregivers report greater feelings of stigma than their HIV- counterparts, especially if their own health is compromised. Feelings of stigma among caregivers also are associated with greater feelings of depression, anxiety, and hostility. In short, caring for a PLWHA is stressful and can be particularly difficult for HIV+ caregivers.

Potential Loss and Bereavement

With medical advances, the course of HIV/AIDS in industrialized countries has changed dramatically, and PLWHA can remain healthy and live longer than earlier in the epidemic. However, a climate of loss still permeates communities hardest hit by HIV/AIDS (e.g., the gay community in the United States). Members of these communities have experienced the deaths of numerous friends and loved ones, with these multiple bereavements producing "AIDS fatigue" and psychological distress even among uninfected individuals.

PLWHA and their relationship partners commonly experience anticipatory mourning, a process of dealing with imminent or anticipated death. Anticipatory mourning enables PLWHA and partners to prepare for illness and death, but also it can create relationship difficulties. Anticipating health problems, HIV+ partners may withdraw from relationships and limit social participation. With disease progression, illness and medication side effects can also impair functioning to the degree that relational behaviors, even as mundane as hand-holding, become difficult or impossible. Some caregivers and partners find it difficult to maintain relationships with PLWHA and also may withdraw. However, caregivers also report that coming to terms with a partner's impending death is important for their own well-being.

Despite medical advances, PLWHA still suffer from opportunistic infections and health problems. Individuals whose partners die mourn not only their partner, but also the loss of significant relationships and parts of their own identity. In addition, surviving HIV+ partners in seroconcordant couples may view their partner's death as foreshadowing their own, making grieving even more difficult.

Conclusion

Like other chronic illnesses, there are many relationship issues to consider with HIV and AIDS. Primary among these issues are the roles that relationship closeness plays in increasing or decreasing sexual behaviors that put individuals and couples at risk for HIV, the benefits and stress associated with social support and care for PLWHA, and coping with illness and the potential

of premature death among PLWHA and their relationship partners. Considerable research has explored these topics to date, but additional scientific and clinical work is needed that explores HIV transmission and care among couples, families, and social networks in diverse populations and in different cultural contexts.

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See also Disabilities, Chronic Illness, and Relationship Functioning; Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Relationships; Health and Relationships; Safe Sex; Sexually Transmitted Diseases and Relationships; Social Support and Health

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ALCOHOL AND SEXUAL ASSAULT

Alcohol is involved in approximately half of all sexual assaults. Alcohol contributes to sexual assault when either the victim or perpetrator has been drinking alcohol and it alters their perceptions and judgments. Victims' extreme intoxication can also be used by perpetrators as a tactic to obtain sex from individuals who are unable to give consent because of their mental incapacitation.

More than 80 percent of sexual assaults occur within the context of a relationship, ranging from casual acquaintances to long-term sexual partners. The characteristics of alcohol-involved sexual assault are difficult to specify without first describing the general characteristics of sexual assault. Thus, this entry defines sexual assault and alcohol-involved sexual assault, describes their prevalence, and briefly summarizes what is known about their causes and consequences.

Definitions and Prevalence Information

Most researchers define sexual assault as any type of forced sexual activity obtained against the victim's wishes or when the victim is unable to give consent. Thus, it includes acts of physically forced vaginal, oral, or anal penetration that constitute rape. Sexual assault also includes physically forced sexual touching and the use of verbally coercive tactics that may not conform to legal definitions of criminal sexual contact but have negative consequences for victims. In most jurisdictions, sex with someone unable to consent because of permanent or short-term mental incapacitation constitutes rape. Although the media has dramatized cases in which potent drugs such as flunitrazepam (i.e., Rohypnol) have been given to victims without their knowledge, alcohol is the most commonly used date-rape drug.

Alarming high rates of adolescent and adult sexual assault have been documented in surveys that have been conducted in the United States since the 1980s. Sexual assault prevalence has been less well documented in most other countries; however, available data suggest that rates are high throughout the world. The United Nations has documented the frequent use of rape as a tool of war. Crime statistics are notorious for underestimating rates of sexual assault because only a small proportion are reported to the authorities. Also, most people still think of sexual assault as an attack by a stranger; thus, when sexual assault occurs within the context of an ongoing relationship, people are not always sure how they should label it. Consequently, researchers prefer to ask questions that describe sexually assaultive experiences in lay language without using terminology that labels the behavior. Commonly used questions ask about

situations in which someone used physical force or verbal pressure or situations in which the person was so drunk or high he or she did not know what was happening. Using these definitions, approximately one in five American women are likely to be victims of physically forced penetrative sex and another third will be the victim of some type of forced sexual contact. Men are also victims of sexual assault, but at much lower rates. In a large representative study of rape victimization sponsored by the Department of Justice, more than 80 percent of male victims were raped by a man. Sexual orientation is seldom assessed in these surveys; thus, there is limited data about the victimization of gays and lesbians.

Although there is variability across studies, approximately half of sexual assaults involve alcohol consumption. Most studies have not asked victims or perpetrators how much alcohol they consumed, thus the level of intoxication varies from modest to severe. Victims who were too intoxicated to consent usually report being passed out during all or part of the assault. Usually if either the victim or perpetrator consumed alcohol, then they both did. In social settings, people frequently drink together; in fact, research has demonstrated that people view it as atypical when one member of a couple drinks alcohol and the other does not.

Explanations for the Relationship Between Alcohol and Sexual Assault

The fact that alcohol and sexual assault frequently co-occur does not prove that alcohol causes sexual assault. Most researchers believe that the relationship between alcohol and sexual assault is complicated and that there are several pathways through which alcohol increases the likelihood of sexual assault. Focusing on perpetrators' personality characteristics such as impulsivity and a lack of social conscience have been linked to both heavy drinking and sexual assault. Thus, some of the association between drinking and sexual assault perpetration is thought to be due to other shared causes. Although the usual presumed causal direction is from intoxication to sexual assault, ironically, alcohol is such a well-known excuse for engaging in disinhibited and socially disdained

behavior that some individuals drink precisely because it provides a convenient justification for inappropriate behavior. In these cases, the desire to engage in sexual aggression may precede the decision to drink alcohol.

The relationship between alcohol consumption and sexual assault victimization is also complex. There are high rates of post-traumatic stress disorder among sexual assault survivors. Some victims begin to drink heavily after childhood or adult sexual victimization as a means of managing their symptoms. Although this may reduce their anxiety in social and sexual situations that remind them of the sexual assault, it also puts them at risk of revictimization. Many perpetrators encourage female companions to drink heavily or look for intoxicated women at parties or bars because these women are viewed as easy targets.

Alcohol's effects on behavior are usually grouped into two categories: psychological effects and pharmacological effects. Every society has beliefs about how alcohol affects behavior. In American society, alcohol is viewed as a sexual aphrodisiac that enhances sexual desire and performance. Alcohol is also thought to make people more aggressive. People tend to see what they expect to see in social situations; thus, when drinking alcohol, ambiguous behavior is often perceived as conveying sexual or aggressive intent. On its own, this perception should not cause sexual assault; however, many male perpetrators have hostile cognitions about women and view women as sexual commodities who "owe them" once they are sexually aroused. Thus, for some male perpetrators, beliefs about alcohol's effects reinforce their beliefs about women and consequently serve to further justify sexual aggression.

Pharmacological effects of alcohol also appear to play a causal role in sexual assault. Alcohol consumption impairs cognitive functioning, especially the ability to integrate and interpret complex information from multiple sources, to engage in problem solving, and to inhibit well-learned behavior. These effects begin with just two drinks (a blood alcohol level of about .04) and increase as the dose increases. Researchers interested in aggression have brought men into a laboratory and randomly assigned them to drink alcohol or a placebo beverage. Drinkers respond much more aggressively toward others than do nondrinkers, especially

when they believe the other provoked them. Of course actual sexual aggression cannot be examined in a laboratory; however, researchers have interpreted these findings as supporting the argument that intoxicated men feel more justified about using force to obtain sex than do sober men. Other researchers have asked men to react to a date rape scenario and found that intoxicated men report more approval of the perpetrators' behavior and greater willingness to consider acting similarly as compared to sober men.

This research paradigm has also been used with women to determine their ability to recognize potentially risky social situations. Several research teams have demonstrated that as compared to sober women, intoxicated women report that they would engage in riskier behavior with a man they liked but did not know well, such as going to an isolated place with him. Researchers in this area emphasize that women should not be held responsible for trusting a man and that sexual assault is always the fault of the perpetrator. However, information about factors that increase the risk of sexual assault victimization can be used in risk-reduction programs.

Characteristics and Consequences

One important area of research involves identifying unique characteristics and consequences of alcohol-involved sexual assaults. Most sexual assaults occur in the context of social situations. This is also true for alcohol-involved sexual assaults, although, not surprisingly, they are more likely than other sexual assaults to involve time spent together at a party or bar and with groups of other people. In young, unmarried populations such as college students, sexual assaults that involve alcohol also tend to occur among individuals who know each other less well than sexual assaults that do not involve alcohol. Based on victims' narratives, common situations involve spending time at a party with someone one knew casually from class or work and then agreeing to go somewhere more isolated with that person. Typically, the victim is attracted to the perpetrator and is interested in developing a relationship prior to the forced sex. When victims are extremely intoxicated,

completed rapes are more common because alcohol's effects on motor skills makes it difficult to resist. When perpetrators are extremely intoxicated, they are more violent, but they are also less likely to complete the rape because of alcohol's effects on their motor skills.

Some research has also compared the characteristics of perpetrators who commit sexual assault when intoxicated to perpetrators who commit sexual assault when sober. Although sexual assault perpetrators are heterogeneous and there is no one profile that describes them, multiple studies have demonstrated that as compared to nonperpetrators they are more likely to have experienced sexual or physical abuse in childhood, have engaged in delinquent behaviors in adolescence, have peers who approve of engaging in violence against women, have more hostile attitudes toward women and relationships with women, are more likely to view sex as an act of dominance, and have more positive attitudes about casual sexual relationships. This pattern does not appear to differ for perpetrators who commit sexual assault when intoxicated. The primary domains in which they differ from perpetrators who commit sexual assault when sober is in their impulsivity and in their attitudes and behavior regarding alcohol. They tend to be more impulsive, heavier drinkers and to believe more strongly that alcohol enhances their sexual drive and is used by women to signal their sexual interest. Thus, the motives of intoxicated perpetrators and sober perpetrators do not appear to differ in most domains, only the circumstances in which they feel comfortable committing sexual assault.

Sexual assault has a profound negative impact on its victims. Survivors show great resilience but also have high rates of post-traumatic stress disorder. Because sexual assault most often happens among people who know each other, in social relationship contexts in which victims believed they could trust their perpetrators, social anxiety and difficulty establishing trust within relationships are common consequences. Traditional stereotypes about women's role as gatekeepers who should control men's sexual impulses are still common and encourage victim blame. Some research suggests that victims are more likely to be blamed by others when they were intoxicated during the assault; drunken women are perceived as more sexually

loose and deserving. Although the victim's inability to give consent due to intoxication is a part of the criminal code in many jurisdictions, in practice, intoxicated victims are often derogated and their cases are rarely prosecuted. Some victims turn to alcohol, prescription medications, and illicit drugs after being sexually assaulted in an attempt to lessen their anxiety, fear, and depression.

Antonia Abbey

See also Abuse and Violence in Relationships; Dark Side of Relationships; Rape; Sexual Aggression; Substance Use and Abuse in Relationships

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ALCOHOLISM, EFFECTS ON RELATIONSHIPS

Alcoholism has pervasive effects on relationships. It also can be powerfully affected by relationships, such as those formed in recovery. For whom, how, and under what circumstances are alcoholism's effects seen? This entry describes the relationships affected by alcoholism, what these effects are, how they come about, and the circumstances that intensify or deintensify the effects. After defining terms and identifying relationships and situations affected by alcoholism, this entry also considers relationships in recovery from alcoholism.

Definitions and Extent of Problem

An individual with *alcoholism* meets the criteria for alcohol *dependence*; that is, there is craving, loss of control over drinking, tolerance (needing to drink more to experience the effects), and physical dependence (experiencing withdrawal when not drinking). Alcoholism is accompanied by profound impairments of relationships, at school, work, and family. Someone who *abuses* alcohol (drinks too much, too often, but has not experienced tolerance or withdrawal) may not technically meet the definition of an alcoholic, yet there are often serious problems in their important relationships. Among college students, heavy drinking, such as frequent binge drinking (the consumption of four, if female, or five, if male, drinks on one occasion) is associated with romantic relationship quality. For example, the more frequent the binge drinking, the greater the communication problems and the less the relationship quality with romantic dating partners. Thus, relationship problems and heavy drinking co-occur even in the absence of a clinically recognized diagnosis of alcoholism.

According to the U.S. National Survey on Drug Use and Health, during the years 2002 through 2004, there were 18.2 million people ages 12 and older who were alcohol dependent or alcohol abusers. Almost 20 percent of young adults, 18 to 25, met the criteria for alcohol dependence or alcohol abuse. These percentages declined steadily with age.

Of considerable concern are the 1.5 million youth, 12 to 17, who needed alcohol treatment—only 111,000 received it. Also of concern are the more than 6 percent of those alcoholics 18 and older who lived with at least one child under 18, accounting for approximately 5 million households.

In terms of demographic characteristics, for every 33 women who meet the criteria for alcohol dependence and abuse, there are 66 men. Of those who actually receive treatment, about 70 percent are men compared to 30 percent who are women. Factors that hinder women from seeking treatment include concerns for the care of children in the home, fears of having children removed, or if pregnant, being arrested for endangering a fetus. Ethnic groups in the United States vary, with the highest rates of alcoholism among Native Americans and the lowest among Asian Americans. Marriage is less likely for alcoholic adults, and divorce, more likely. Across these variations by age, gender, ethnicity, and marital status, almost 8 percent of the U.S. population from adolescence through old age abuses alcohol. Moreover, each alcoholic is part of a social network whose members are affected by the alcoholic's behavior.

Relationships Affected by Alcoholism

A life-span approach to alcoholism suggests that it is important to consider the effects of alcoholism on relationships at different stages of the life course. This life-span approach begins with infants. In any given year, some 40,000 children are born with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD); a range of effects occur in children whose mothers drank alcohol during pregnancy. A number of these children are born alcohol dependent and suffer withdrawal at birth. Such infants are fussy, with difficult temperaments and poor bonding with caregivers. FASD is associated with life-long difficulties in cognitive, physical, and social development.

Children and adolescents can become alcoholics. The earlier a child begins drinking, the more severe the problems with alcohol. Developmental tasks of childhood and adolescence include learning prosocial skills in order to initiate and maintain appropriate relationships with peers, parents, and other adults. Heavy alcohol use among children is

associated with serious fights at school or work, group-against-group violence, and harmful attacks on another. Such behaviors hinder positive social relationships. Siblings may be sources of alcohol and provide encouragement for consumption. Observations from clinicians suggest considerable tension, stress, and family dysfunction when a child in the family is an alcoholic.

The alcoholic child may be the offspring of alcoholic parents. Children from alcoholic families (COAs) have a greater likelihood of experiencing alcoholism and other problems. In households with an adult alcoholic, there are generally more arguments, insults, and yelling than in households without such an adult. The households may be embedded in poorer neighborhoods that include poverty and instability. Research has found a particular risk for boys whose alcoholic fathers are also antisocial. Poorer social adaptation, more violence, and more frequent divorce and separation characterize the family relationships of antisocial alcoholics. As they develop, the boys reflect the environments to which they have been exposed.

Even if a child has an alcoholic parent, there are protective factors. Children fare better when the alcoholic parent is not antisocial. Protection of family rituals and functioning from the alcoholic's behavior appears to be an important factor for better child outcomes. Having a childrearing environment with attention from an important nonalcoholic adult (such as a grandparent or coach) is also protective, as is being female and enacting the hero (e.g., responsible or achieving) role in the family. Children growing up in alcoholic homes have several possible developmental pathways; unfortunately, some of these come with very painful ramifications for close relationships.

Although alcohol's causal role in interpersonal violence is complex, alcohol use by the perpetrator, victim, or both is a frequent aspect of violence in society and in the domestic arena. Between 28 percent and 86 percent of U.S. homicides involved drinking. Greater violence accompanies greater alcohol consumption in dating and married relationships. Courtship violence is often based on a foundation of drinking and is implicated in date rape. Women's alcohol use is a significant factor in the risk for being physically assaulted. And after experiencing an assault, women's use of alcohol may increase substantially. Violent drinking spouses

used alcohol as an excuse for misbehavior and held expectations for aggression after drinking. Drinking that was coupled with expectations of behavioral undercontrol following drinking was the strongest predictor of domestic violence.

The peak years for alcoholism and alcohol abuse occur in young adulthood, a crucial time for building lifelong relationships with peers and romantic partners. Regulating behaviors and emotions appears to play an important role for young adults. Those from alcoholic families where there is family dysfunction have lower levels of emotion regulation and, in turn, greater problems with alcohol. Greater problems with alcohol are also associated with more problems in developing and maintaining close relationships with friends and romantic partners.

Marriage in young adulthood is a turning point in substance use and is associated with declining rates. Thus, the trend toward increased age at marriage could adversely impact the rates of alcoholism in the 18-to-25 age group. Remaining single longer increases the time span of heavy drinking that could lead to an alcoholism diagnosis. Despite the potential beneficial effects of marriage, marriage does not completely eliminate the effects of parental alcoholism on COAs' substance use and relationship quality. Unknown is whether it is legal marriage or pairing with a significant romantic partner that is associated with the reduction in substance use.

Young adult and adult relationships affected by alcoholism include both heterosexual and non-heterosexual relationships. Alcohol misuse among gay and heterosexual men appears to be fairly similar. Greater alcohol misuse occurs among lesbians compared to heterosexual women. Conclusions such as these depend on the person's age and timing of the assessment. For example, gay men increase their alcohol consumption in the transition from high school to college, whereas lesbians' intake levels off. Childhood risk factors such as parental alcoholism may be involved in alcohol abuse among adult lesbians. The differences among gay men, lesbians, and heterosexuals have been attributed to *minority stress*, the experiences of stigma, prejudice, and discrimination that create stressful environments. However, research that provides identification of a person's sexual orientation and drinking patterns does not provide information on

whether the person is in a relationship and how rates of drinking affect that relationship. How alcoholism affects lesbian, bisexual, and gay relationships is not well understood.

Drinking history and changes accompanying aging may contribute to alcohol dependence in older adults. For some older people, the aches and pains of aging as well as the losses of friends and family are alleviated with alcohol. These patterns of alcohol consumption can accelerate the onset of alcoholism in elders more rapidly than in younger adults. Illnesses of advancing age become worse when drinking is involved. As many as a fifth of hospital admissions of adults over 40 were diagnosed with alcoholism. Older adults who drink are not necessarily detected in visits with their physicians. For example, older women are simply not screened for alcoholism. Older men are only slightly more likely to be screened. Regardless of diagnosis, the older person's alcoholism presents difficulties for the spouse, children, and caregivers.

Alcoholism, Recovery, and Effects on Relationships

How does a family member with alcoholism enter into treatment or the recovery process? It is often through relationships. A family member may be instrumental in providing a bridge between the family member with alcoholism and the recovery community. In a family intervention, alcoholics hear from family members and close others about the ways in which the alcoholic's behavior has affected them. Sobriety within the context of programs such as Alcoholics Anonymous involves a prominent role for both the group's fellowship and the mentorship of the sponsor, the person who has more time and quality of recovery.

Families with a member undergoing treatment or recovery from alcoholism often experience additional difficulties in their relationships after the alcoholic goes for treatment. Old roles are dismantled; the alcoholic in recovery is now a hero for ceasing to drink. The former spouse who held it all together loses the need to overfunction and the control that went with it. The children who accepted adult roles now are expected to be children, and those children who acted out the family trauma are now without a cause. If the family alcoholic is an adolescent instead

of a parent, the difficult dynamics are just as evident. Parents want to "hover" and once "good" siblings lose such roles when the recovering adolescent assumes a hero mantle. Thus, family members may wonder if no good deed goes unpunished, as relationships become worse before they get better. Family members benefit from professional help in adjusting to and renegotiating relationships with the alcoholic in recovery. Despite the difficulties of the recovery process, without recovery any improvement in relationships would be unlikely.

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See also Alcohol and Sexual Assault; Family Therapy for Substance Abuse in Adolescents

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ALIENATION AND ANOMIE

This entry describes two related concepts: *alienation*, an idea developed by political economist Karl Marx, and *anomie*, a concept at the heart of Émile Durkheim's intellectual work on social integration. Although there is some conceptual overlap, each is addressed separately below. The entry first explains alienation starting with Marx's initial formulation as it relates to the forces of capitalist development and then follows with some more recent applications. It then provides an overview of anomie, beginning with Durkheim's original use of the concept and then identifies some of the ways it has been used in contemporary research.

Alienation

Karl Marx saw alienation as an outcome of a particular mode of production in which fundamental human relations are undermined. In capitalist economies, Marx theorized, workers are separated from the products they produce, they do not control the production process, they are socially isolated from their fellow workers, and they are denied the natural benefits of engaging in meaningful work. The relations of production in modern capitalism represented a change from previous economic arrangements in which people generally had more control over their work and the products they produced. With the advent of industrial capitalism workers began receiving wages in exchange for their labor while the capitalists appropriated the products workers produced. Because the fruits of their labor now become the property of the owners, they appear as alien objects, disconnected from the workers and the human labor that created them. And because workers no longer controlled the terms, conditions, or products of their employment, they also became estranged from the production process itself. As inherently social creatures, Marx believed humans thrive on cooperation and the pursuit of common goals, but because capitalism demands competition, it forces workers to act in opposition to their collectivist nature and isolates people from one another as they pursue their individual

self-interests. As Marx saw it, industrial capitalism divorced workers from the fruits of their labor, made them into cogs in the machinery of production, and created adversarial relationships between workers. The result was a fundamental dehumanization of workers that he called alienation.

Although alienation is a useful concept in understanding modern relations among workers and between workers and production processes, today the idea is less frequently used in its original Marxian formulation. However, George Ritzer's work on what he terms *McDonaldization*, an extension of Max Weber's critique of mechanization and rationality, suggests a link to Marx's notion of alienation. According to Ritzer, modern societies value efficiency, control, calculability, predictability, and the use of technology. One result is that human labor is replaced by nonhuman technologies that make workers interchangeable and easily replaceable. Consequently, work loses its intrinsic value and becomes unrewarding and dehumanizing for many. People with little autonomy and control over their work lives may experience frustration and anxiety that can affect their relationships with coworkers as well as their personal relationships outside of the workplace.

One can also see the concept of alienation in the work of Robert Putnam, who applies it to his analysis of contemporary political culture. Putnam contends that changes in modern social arrangements have led to a reduction of participation in civic organizations, indicating that people are becoming more socially isolated. As a result, the sense of community, social solidarity, and common goals give way to an increasingly atomized civil society. As people disengage from community life and participation in traditional institutions of civic engagement declines, Putnam fears that the viability and vitality of democratic society will suffer.

Anomie

Durkheim defined the concept of anomie as a state of normlessness that reflected a breakdown of society's mechanisms of social regulation. Durkheim noted that during periods of rapid social change, traditional norms no longer were able to serve their disciplinary function to maintain social equilibrium. Central to his conceptualization of anomie

is the notion of the collective conscience, which represents the beliefs, values, and expectations shared by members of a society. Under normal circumstances, the collective conscience guides the behavior of individuals and establishes accepted goals and expectations. However, periods of rapid change often lead to uncertainty about how people should act and what they should expect from life. In his seminal work on suicide, Durkheim demonstrated that societies undergoing significant change also experienced higher rates of anomic suicide. People in rapidly changing societies were less likely to be deterred from taking their own lives, Durkheim theorized, because with the collective conscience in flux, it could not function as a mechanism of social control.

Robert K. Merton used anomie to explain deviant behavior resulting from the tension between dominant cultural values and goals and insufficient access to legitimate means of attaining them. This tension leads to deviant behavior when people without access to acceptable means adopt illegitimate ways of pursuing culturally valued goals. One can also see the concept of anomie reflected in Arlie Russell Hochschild's analysis of women's participation in the paid workforce and the impact it has on family life. She finds that although cultural expectations regarding women participating in the workforce have changed, traditional gender roles pertaining to family responsibilities have not. Women continue to do a disproportionate share of the housework relative to men even though they are likely to also work outside the home. This inequity often leads to marital tension and stress for both partners—reflecting a state of anomie due to uncertainty over gender norms and the division of labor in the household.

Richard Sullivan and Brian Ott

See also Cohesiveness in Groups; Collectivism, Effects on Relationships; Division of Labor in Households; Employment Effects on Relationships; Norms About Relationships; Work–Family Conflict; Workplace Relationships

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ALTERNATIVE RELATIONSHIP LIFESTYLES

A relationship lifestyle is considered alternative if it varies from what society deems as the cultural norm. In current U.S. cultural context, an alternative relationship lifestyle is one that does not fit the heterosexual nuclear family model in which there is a married husband and wife with children under the age of 18 living together in the same home. It is worth noting that sociological research indicates that historically not only has the status and definition of the model relationship or model family been constantly in flux but also what has been considered the ideal has not always necessarily been the norm. For example, although the number of people who currently live in a nuclear family in the United States is relatively low, this type of family continues to be upheld as the ideal model. Contemporarily speaking, there are a variety of relationships that challenge the nuclear model, and this entry will discuss some of the most common.

Cohabitation

One of the most increasingly common alternatives to the nuclear model is the prevalence of different-sex cohabitation before marriage. Cohabitation refers to two intimately involved, unrelated adults, who live in the same residence. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, there are 4.9 million unmarried different-sex households. The rates of cohabitation are even higher in many European countries.

Research indicates that cohabitation in the United States is a contemporary stage for many in the trajectory toward legal marriage. About half of all Americans cohabit before marriage, and within the first 5 years, about 55 percent of cohabiting couples will marry and 40 percent will break up. Despite that many cohabiting couples may desire to enter the nuclear family model, they still challenge the ideal, which was once more commonly held, of sexual abstinence before marriage. The 2000 U.S. Census indicates that 41 percent of cohabiting households have children under the age of 18 sharing the home.

Committed Unmarrieds

Of the different-sex couples that cohabit, some are committed in their relationship but consciously choose to be unmarried and do not view cohabitation as a step toward legal marriage. The reasons people choose to be marriage-free vary; for example, some decide not to marry as a form of active resistance to the traditional gender roles that historically define husband and wife. Other research indicates that some heterosexual couples choose not to legally marry because they feel as though marriage is an exclusionary institution that actively discriminates against gays, lesbians, and polyamorous family groupings. In addition, there is evidence that people forgo legal marriage because of their fear of divorce, financial penalties, inability to afford or conscious revolt against the expenses associated with the marriage ceremony itself, and the desire to limit the role government and religion play in their lives. Finally, some people choose not to legally marry because they simply do not feel any need or desire to do so and because they do not feel as though marriage would change their level of relationship satisfaction or commitment.

Same-Sex Relationships

In the United States, heterosexuality is upheld as the cultural ideal, and thus, same-sex relationships are viewed as alternative. Despite being viewed as unconventional, the 2000 U.S. Census indicates there are 1.2 million Americans living with a same-sex partner, of which, male same-sex couples accounted for a slightly higher percentage (51 percent) than

female same-sex couples. Some same-sex couples, and individuals, wish they had the legal right to enter into the institution of marriage, whereas some same-sex couples, or individuals, do not. In any case, the question as to whether or not the right to legally marry should be extended to same-sex partners has been at the forefront of many contemporary political debates and has occupied a good deal of the time in many state and federal legislatures, both domestically and internationally. Currently, Belgium, Canada, The Netherlands, South Africa, and Spain allow same-sex marriages. In the United States, as of January 2009, Massachusetts is the only state that extends the legal right to marry same-sex partners. According to the 1996 Defense of Marriage Act, the federal government does not recognize same-sex marriages, thereby leaving the decision to the discretion of each individual state and giving each state the right to refuse to recognize same-sex marriages licensed in other states. As such, same-sex couples who legally marry in Massachusetts are not entitled to any federal marriage benefits and are not likely to have their marriage recognized by any other state. Other states have created marriage alternatives for same-sex couples. Vermont, Connecticut, New Jersey, and New Hampshire have a legal civil union option; a handful of states (e.g., California, Oregon) and a variety of counties have domestic partnerships available. It is commonly understood that these alternatives are not equally comparable to legal marriage, as they do not grant the same privileges, are not nationally recognized, and are often publicly and legislatively contested.

Part of the controversy over same-sex relationships and marriage rests on the issue of children. Nearly one quarter of same-sex couples in the United States are raising children. Many of the children are from prior heterosexual marriages or relationships; some children are products of the same-sex relationship with the aid of assisted reproductive technology or adoption. As same-sex parenting strays from the heterosexual parenting ideal, same-sex couples and gay and lesbian individuals face challenges involving child custody, visitation, adoption, and fostering.

Transsexual and Intersexual Relationships

Although gay-, lesbian-, and bisexual-identified individuals challenge the ideal of heterosexuality,

transsexual- and intersex-identified individuals challenge most society's strict adherence to the gender dichotomy of male and female. Colloquially referred to as hermaphrodites, intersex individuals are born with mixed or ambiguous genitalia and thus have anatomy that does not fit the typical definitions of male or female. A relationship involving an intersex-identified person complicates the common cultural assumption that there are only two distinct biological sexes. Individuals who identify as transsexual, identify with the gender opposite the one assigned to them at birth, and some choose to undergo hormone therapy and/or surgery to align themselves with the sex with which they feel identified. Again, a transsexual-identified person complicates the assumption of two distinct and different sexes and the ideal of heterosexuality.

Child-Free

American society is essentially pronatalist in which heterosexual married couples are encouraged to have children. Thus, different-sex couples who choose to remain child-free can be considered living an alternative lifestyle. There are myriad reasons why people choose not to have children, for example, the desire to succeed in careers, economic concerns, concerns about overpopulation, desire for independence, or a general dislike of children. Not having children is not a conscious decision for all child-free couples, as some are unable to conceive. The assumption that married couples will have children is so culturally ingrained that often child-free married couples not only receive pressure to have children but are also judged negatively for not reproducing.

Polyamory

A key tenet of the nuclear family model rests on the assumption of sexual and emotional monogamy between two heterosexual people. Polyamorous relationships offer a distinct challenge to these assumptions. Polyamory (from the Greek *poly* meaning many and the Latin *amor* meaning love) is an umbrella term that refers to the philosophy and practice of engaging in simultaneous, openly conducted, and nonmonogamous relationships. As

a philosophy, polyamory stresses the importance of consciously choosing how many partners one wishes to be involved with rather than accepting the social norm of loving only one person at a time. The relationships themselves vary in form, but they are based on emotional intimacy, long-term connections with multiple lovers, and with the goal of feeling joy in a partner's enjoyment with another person, known as *compersion*. Sometimes referred to as *responsible nonmonogamy*, polyamory differs from the practice of *swinging* in that the relationships are based on emotional commitment and not on casual sex. The number of people involved in each polyamorous relationship varies, as does the level of sexual involvement, emotional commitment, and the gender and sexual orientation of the participants. Additionally, some polyamorous groupings parent children, while others do not. Since the census does not recognize polyamorous relationships and many polyamorous people are unable to publicly declare their affiliation, the actual number of people identifying as polyamorous is unknown. Although the exact numbers may be unclear, attendance at polyamorous conferences and events, activity on polyamorous Internet sites, and sociological research all indicate that this is a thriving, albeit often misunderstood, community.

Polygamy

Because of the emphasis on egalitarian relationships, the allowance for different sexualities, and its independence from a specific religious tradition, polyamory differs from polygamy. Polygamy is the practice of having more than one spouse. In the United States, some practice polygyny, which is the practice of a husband having two or more wives at the same time. Polygyny in the United States is illegal and primarily exists in religious fundamentalist groups predominantly in Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah. The practice originates from Latter-Day Saints (LDS; Mormon) scripture and the revelations of Joseph Smith, who taught that men need at least three wives to attain the "fullness of exaltation" in the afterlife and that wives are required to be subordinate to their husbands. The LDS church officially banned the practice of polygyny, known as *plural marriage*,

in 1890. Although a difficult population to count, an estimated 40,000 people in Utah and surrounding areas identified as fundamentalist Mormons, of which probably fewer than 50 percent live in plural marriages. Currently, the U.S. polygynous community garnering the most public attention is the Fundamentalist Church of Latter-Day Saints (FLDS), which is a splinter sect of LDS and represents a very small percentage of all Mormons in Utah. The FLDS sect has had its difficulties, including accusations of children and women living in extreme poverty, sexual assault, sex with minors, the abandonment of young men to reduce competition for wives, and the recent sentencing of former FLDS leader Warren Jeffs on two counts of accomplice to rape.

There is a rich history of many cultures practicing polygyny to fulfill certain religious edicts, to earn wealth, to win political power, and/or to produce multiple heirs. Currently, polygyny is far less widespread and accepted than it once was. Cultures that practice polygyny today are largely concentrated in Africa, the Middle East, India, Thailand, and Indonesia. Much less common is polyandry, the practice of a wife having two or more husbands at the same time. Practiced to keep birth rates down in poor communities or when two brothers share one wife in order to keep one household, polyandry is only rarely found in some societies (e.g., in Tibet).

Additional Alternative Relationships

Although not a relationship lifestyle per se, it is worth noting that even though single individuals currently outnumber married couples in the United States, single people (either the never-married, the divorced, or the widowed) fall outside of the nuclear family norm. Single parents, either heterosexual, gay, or lesbian, also fall outside of the two-parent ideal. Married couples who do not always share the same home (e.g., commuter marriages) or couples who live in intentional communities (commonly known as *communes*) also challenge assumptions about the necessity of families living together in isolated dwellings.

The nuclear family model is so embedded in Western laws and regulations that individuals who fall outside of the cultural ideal, either by choice

or involuntarily, do so at the expense of social, legal, and economic privileges associated with legal marriage. Despite Western society's emphasis on monogamous heterosexual relationships, there have always been relationship lifestyles that vary from the cultural ideal. In fact, the existence and prevalence of so many alternative relationship lifestyles may call into question the very label of alternative.

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See also Cohabitation; Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Relationships; Marriage, Historical and Cross-Cultural Trends; Parenting; Polygamy

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 U.S. Census Bureau: <http://www.census.gov>

ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE AND RELATIONSHIPS

The progressive nature of Alzheimer's disease has been called "the long goodbye" for good reason: Many losses occur along the illness trajectory. Some of these losses, such as *psychosocial death* (i.e., the loss of interpersonal relationship with the affected

person), may be even more difficult to manage for family caregivers than eventual bodily death. When someone is diagnosed with Alzheimer-type dementia, it is usually their spouse or adult child whose relationships with them are most affected. Currently, over 5 million people in the United States have Alzheimer's disease. Of those who have the disease, three fourths live out in the community, usually with family members. Equally impressive is the fact that 75 percent of the care given to people with Alzheimer's disease is provided by family members. This entry discusses the effects of Alzheimer's disease and the disease progression on family relationships. Before the impact of Alzheimer's on family relationships can be understood, it is critical to understand the disease itself.

Alzheimer's-Type Dementia

Dementia is a broad term that means a progressive decline in cognitive function. It can be caused by a number of conditions including Parkinson's disease, Alzheimer's disease, AIDS, vascular problems, stroke, malnutrition, severe alcoholism, and hypothyroidism. The American Psychiatric Association explains that this condition involves developing multiple cognitive impairments, including memory, and at least one of the following: aphasia (difficulty with language), apraxia (loss of fine motor skills), agnosia (loss of ability to recognize familiar people, places, and objects), or disturbance in executive function. In addition, the cognitive deficits experienced by the individual must be severe enough to cause impairment in daily functioning as well as represent a decline from a previously higher level of functioning. Although dementia can be caused by several different conditions, the most common cause of dementia is Alzheimer's disease.

Alzheimer's disease is a progressive brain disorder that usually causes the person to suffer from all of the cognitive impairments mentioned above. In addition, as the disease progresses, changes in behavior and personality often occur such as anxiety, suspiciousness, agitation, and delusions.

Some experts have described Alzheimer's as occurring in stages, with each stage ushering in new symptoms and additional cognitive decline. Arguments vary as to the number of stages

involved in the progression of the illness, but generally, physicians and researchers will agree upon three broad periods of impairment known as mild, moderate, and severe dementia—each corresponding to increasing levels of impairment. As people with Alzheimer's progress through these various stages, their relationships with family and friends experience increasing strain.

It is important to explain the multifaceted nature of Alzheimer's disease because it is often misunderstood by the general population as simply a memory disease, and therefore, the true devastation on the person and his/her family is underestimated. The most intense impact is usually felt by the family member who serves as the primary caregiver for the person with dementia. This is usually the spouse or an adult child.

Alzheimer's Disease and Changes in Spousal Relationships

For those who are married to someone with Alzheimer's disease, it is evident that no family relationship bears the brunt of the disease as much as the marital relationship. Roles are likely to shift or reverse as the partner with dementia is no longer cognitively able to perform many daily tasks or share in important household decisions. It is common for the couple to experience a loss of intimacy; changes in the sexual relationship; and feelings of guilt, fear, frustration, and great isolation.

For married couples, sexuality and intimacy are often adversely affected by the progression of Alzheimer's disease. Sexuality and sexual activity can be affected because of brain deterioration. Specifically, it is typical that people with Alzheimer's disease can experience an increase in their sexual drive, which sometimes leads to inappropriate sexual behaviors in public places. Alzheimer's can also result in paranoia among people with the disease, and this can be displayed with accusations of infidelity voiced toward one's spouse. Conversely, spouses of people with dementia often experience a reduced interest in sex due to the pressures of caregiving and personality changes in their spouses. Intimacy can also suffer because of the brain deterioration caused by Alzheimer's disease. The sense of closeness and warmth that the couple shared

may diminish because of imbalance in the roles and strain in daily life. Researchers point out that there are things that can be done to nurture intimacy despite the progression of the disease. Touch and physical contact are critical for the person with dementia. He or she will still be able to respond to a hug, holding hands, or touching of the forearm. People with Alzheimer's disease can experience feelings of reassurance, safety, and love through the simple touch and physical contact.

Changes in Parent–Adult-Child Relationships

Alzheimer's disease presents separate relationship challenges for adult children. Adult children may experience strong feelings of grief or loss as they mourn for the parent who is no longer "present." When interviewed, adult children who have a parent with Alzheimer's disease frequently make comments such as, "She is not my mom anymore" or "The person I knew as my father is gone." Experiencing these feelings of loss while the person with dementia is still alive is known as *anticipatory grief* and can be very debilitating for family members. Spouses experience anticipatory grief but usually not as strongly as adult children.

Another key relationship issue often cited by adult children is difficulty communicating with the parent who has dementia. Adult children voice concerns about understanding what their parent is trying to say as well as trying to communicate effectively with their parent. They want to be able to treat their demented parent with respect and love but also realize that their parent cannot interact the way he or she used to. The communication gap can leave adult children feeling conflicted and frustrated and certainly affects his or her relationship with the ill parent.

Sibling relationships can become strained as their parent's Alzheimer's worsens. Often it is one particular child (usually a daughter) that carries the brunt of the caregiver responsibilities. This particular child may feel resentment and anger toward her siblings and reduce communication with them, believing that this is the only way to avoid further disruption and stress for the person with dementia.

Both adult children and spouses of someone with Alzheimer's may experience feelings of isolation, especially if they are caregivers. Frequently, other relatives and former friends avoid contact

because they cannot face the deterioration of someone experiencing Alzheimer's disease. This leaves the spouse and/or the adult children feeling isolated and sometimes abandoned by those they had relied on in the past. Finally, as the disease progresses, there can be shifts in the family structure as a whole. Long-standing family conflicts between parents and children or between siblings can be exacerbated by the onset of Alzheimer's type dementia. Trying to effectively cope with these relationship changes can be challenging and emotional. Participating in Alzheimer's support groups is often a very successful and rewarding coping strategy for both spouses and adult children. Increasingly, there are also support groups available for people with Alzheimer's disease so that they have an outlet to discuss their feelings about the relationship changes they are experiencing.

Jacquelyn Frank

See also Aging Processes and Relationships; Caregiver Role; Caregiving Across the Life Span; Contextual Influences on Relationships; Couples in Later Life; Parent–Child Relationships

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AMBIVALENCE

The term *ambivalence* is often used to describe conflicting feelings and emotions in relationships. This entry discusses the definitions of ambivalence, predictors of ambivalence, and finally, the implications of ambivalence for well-being.

Definitions of Ambivalence

The definition of ambivalence has evolved over time and often varies by discipline. The term was originally coined in the 19th century by Eugen Bleuler, who defined ambivalence as having competing desires at different levels of consciousness. For example, an individual may verbally express a desire to change his or her life circumstances but exhibit behaviors that contradict those expressed desires. Sigmund Freud further developed this definition in his description of ambivalent feelings as the experience of love and hate toward the same object. Ambivalence is also used in the attachment literature to describe a particular attachment style (anxious-ambivalent). Children with this attachment style are uncertain about their primary caregiver's ability to provide support and thus show inconsistent behaviors toward the caregiver (usually a parent). This type of ambivalent attachment in adulthood is defined as having conflicting opinions about whether a person can be trusted in a relationship. Similarly, ambivalence is used in the romantic relationship literature to describe feelings of confusion and anxiety about whether the relationship should continue.

Ambivalence is also defined by sociologists as incompatible expectations that exist in a social status or role that lead to contradictory attitudes or expectations for behavior. According to this approach, people with fewer social and economic resources are more likely to experience ambivalence.

For the purpose of this entry, ambivalence is defined as having positive and negative emotions or cognitions about the same relationship. This definition of psychological ambivalence is used in a great deal of the adult relationship literature to characterize strong negative and positive feelings in relationships. For example, a person may experience both intense love and irritation regarding his or her spouse. Such ambivalence is distinct from feelings of confusion and/or indifference in which the relationship may include low levels of both positive and negative feelings. In addition, this type of ambivalence is distinct from feelings of confusion.

Measurement of Ambivalence

Psychological ambivalence can be measured directly or indirectly. Direct measures ask participants to

estimate how mixed their feelings are about a relationship. For instance, participants may be asked how often they feel torn in two directions, conflicted, or that the relationship is very intimate as well as restrictive. Indirect measures combine positive and negative assessments of relationships to create an ambivalence score. Examples of positive items may include qualities such as loving, supportive, and understanding. In contrast, negative items often include qualities such as rejecting, demanding, and critical. Thus, high levels of ambivalence reflect both high levels of positive and negative feelings.

Predictors of Ambivalence

Ambivalence varies by contextual as well as individual difference factors. A contextual factor of particular importance is the type of relationship. Individuals are more likely to experience ambivalence in close family relationships than in non-family or extended-family relationships. A possible explanation may be that nonfamily relationships involve clearer norms for behavior that are less likely to conflict than do close family relations. For example, close or immediate family relationships often involve conflicting needs of closeness and autonomy. Close family ties also have a longer history that provides more opportunity for tensions. Indeed, ambivalent feelings may occur when a relationship was negative in the past but is currently positive or when relationships that were once positive have become negative. In addition, close family ties in particular (parent, child, spouse) involve more frequent contact and greater feelings of obligation than do extended-family and nonfamily ties.

The adult intergenerational research in particular has established that ambivalence is most likely to occur when there are conflicting needs for independence and closeness in relationships. Both parents and adult children desire independence from one another as well as cohesiveness. When an imbalance occurs between those desired attributes, both parents and children tend to experience more ambivalence. For example, parents are more likely to report ambivalence when their adult children have not achieved expected adult statuses (e.g., career, children), when their

children have financial problems, or when they do not visit their parents often enough. Adult children, on the other hand, tend to feel ambivalent when they experienced parental rejection earlier in life or when they anticipate having to provide support for elderly or sick parents. Overall, adult children tend to report greater ambivalence than do their parents across situations.

It is important to note that ambivalence also varies by individual differences including demographic and psychological factors such as age, gender, and personality. Older people tend to report less ambivalence across their social network members than do younger people. Women tend to experience more intense positive and negative emotions in relationships. Thus, women are generally expected to report experiencing greater ambivalence than do men; however, the research is inconsistent. Ambivalence also varies by personality. People who have more neurotic personality types report greater ambivalence in their relationships.

Implications of Ambivalence

Overall, ambivalence has negative implications for well-being and relationship satisfaction. Researchers have found that ambivalence predicts depression, lower quality of life, physiological reactivity, and lower relationship satisfaction. For example, ambivalent relationships are associated with lower self-reported well-being than solely negative relationships. Research also shows that older people who have more ambivalent relationships have greater cardiovascular reactivity to stress in the laboratory. Further, ambivalence is associated with increased interpersonal stress. The romantic relationship literature indicates that feelings of ambivalence during the early stages of the relationship (e.g., casual dating) are associated with greater conflict, whereas during the later stages of courtship (e.g., marriage) ambivalence is associated with lower love. Finally, parents who feel greater ambivalence regarding their children report lower quality of life. Bert Uchino provides two possible explanations for these findings: (1) ambivalent relationships are more unpredictable than solely negative or positive relationships, which may lead to increased distress, or (2) ambivalent ties cannot be depended on to provide

support when it is needed most. These two lines of reasoning provide interesting directions for future work in this field.

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See also Anger in Relationships; Approach and Avoidance Orientations; Attachment Theory; Dark Side of Relationships; Emotion in Relationships; Parent–Child Relationships

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AMERICAN COUPLES STUDY

The American Couples study was funded by the National Science Foundation, and its signature book, *American Couples: Money, Work and Sex*, was published by Philip Blumstein and Pepper Schwartz in 1983. The book and subsequent academic papers were the result of more than a decade of gathering data from over 12,000 heterosexual and same-sex couples, obtained from diverse groups and volunteers over the United States. The design of the study was to compare four kinds of relationships—heterosexual married couples, heterosexual cohabiting couples, gay male couples, and lesbian couples—to address two overall questions. First, is marriage different from all other kinds of cohabitation and would married couples be different from all other kinds of couples? Second, would gender be more predictive than couple type or how people behaved in intimate relationships, therefore showing continuities between husbands, male cohabiters, and gay males and between wives, female cohabiters, and lesbians? Areas of investigation included levels of

overall satisfaction, couple durability, the importance of sex, sexual frequency, monogamy, division of labor, child raising, attitudes about money, money management, work and family attitudes, the impact of work and money on power, negotiation tactics, commitment, and durability.

The sample was nonrandom, but a stratified subsample was selected in order to look at potential differences that might be caused by the duration of relationships and other important variables. Variation in income, education, and age were also systematically introduced into the sample. Minorities were underrepresented, and differences between race and ethnic groups were not generally statistically reported.

The American Couples study was unique because it compared actual partners (rather than a sample of husbands and wives who were not necessarily married to each other) across the four kinds of couples. For many decades, it was the primary provider of comparative data on same- and opposite-sex couples in family textbooks. The raw quantitative data from the study is still housed at the Radcliffe Institute at Harvard and is available to scholars.

Some of the most interesting findings were about the power dynamic of couples, what created satisfaction in couples, and whether gender or type of relationship was likely to predict behavior. Overall, the authors found that money was highly predictive of power within all kinds of relationships, though least important for lesbians. Quite consistent with gender socialization, the authors found that if a gay male couple broke up, the leaving party was more likely to be the lower earning partner. This was just the opposite for lesbians—the higher earning woman was the more likely person to leave. In general, men did not like to be “provided for” and women did not like to be the primary provider.

On the other hand, institutional forces were often definitive. For example, married couples were the most likely to pool all their resources, to give the same answers on the questionnaires, to be equally committed, to have a traditional division of labor (one person predominating as the provider, the other much more in charge of domestic duties) and have longer durability. Domestic duties were more egalitarian in all three nonmarital types of relationships (the study was done before any

same-sex couples had legal standing). Interestingly, however, there were many instances when the married couples and same-sex couples were more like each other than they were like heterosexual cohabiters. This was interpreted by the authors as proof of the impact of commitment: Cohabiters were much more likely to disagree about how long the relationship was going to last compared to all of the other kinds of couples. They were the least likely to pool resources of any kind and the least likely to be generous about economic sharing.

Sexual frequency did not predict longevity in any of the four kinds of couples. However, the amount of sex varied widely depending on couple type. Sexual frequency declined greatly after the first year in a relationship, although more in married couples and lesbians than in cohabiters and gay men. Married couples went from three or more times a week to approximately twice a week or less. It may be that married couples could afford an attenuation of sexual activity since relationship commitment was more solid. Or some of this greater loss of sexual behavior could be accounted for by pregnancy or child bearing. All four kinds of couples had less sex based on increasing age and duration of the relationship. There were significant gender differences: Sex was more important to all the men in the different kinds of couples than to the women, and women were more likely to compartmentalize sexual dissatisfaction, while men were more likely to let sexual issues undermine relationship satisfaction in general. If women did not like their sexual life with their partner, it did not affect their evaluation of the entire relationship. However, if men were disappointed with their sex life, their total relationship happiness was less highly rated.

Initiation of a sexual event was generally male; in fact, each gay male partner in a couple was generally likely to claim that he was the initiator, and each woman in a lesbian relationship was more likely to claim that she was not the initiator of sex. This pattern may have affected the total frequency of sex in lesbians since each partner was reluctant to suggest having sex. On the other hand, lesbians were most likely to have nongenital affection such as hugging and kissing, and this type of affection may have made the need for genital sexuality less important.

There were, however, many facets of sexual intimacy that seemed to apply to all types of couples. Fighting about nonsexual issues (such as

money) correlated with higher breakup rates in all couples (while more equal control over money predicted more satisfaction); affairs correlated with breakups for all couples, although gay men could survive recreational (nonromantic or uncommitted) sex outside the relationship, which, at that time, was actually normative for male romantic relationships. Indeed, not only was nonmonogamy expected for gay couples, but also it was counter-normative to insist on monogamy. Satisfaction with sex correlated with relationship satisfaction for all four kinds of couples.

Although the American Couples study has been supplanted by newer studies in some of its findings (particularly in regards to gay male sexual behavior that has become more, although not entirely, monogamous in response to the high risk of AIDS infection and transmittal), the data still provide a fascinating look into how intimacy is affected by the structural norms and constraints of marriage and how gender traditions and changes affect sexuality, work, domestic duties, economic roles, and power.

Pepper Schwartz

See also Boston Couples Study; Early Years of Marriage Project; Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Relationships; Marital Satisfaction and Quality; Marriage and Sex; Processes of Adaptation in Intimate Relationships (PAIR) Project

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ANGER IN RELATIONSHIPS

The term *anger* refers to a powerful human emotion, elicited when individuals perceive that their needs, desires, or goals have been thwarted or obstructed by others. Given that friends and family

members have the greatest capacity to thwart personal desires and goals, it is not surprising that researchers have found anger to be one of the most frequently experienced relationship emotions. It should be noted, though, that anger is not necessarily a negative or harmful emotion. Rather, anger is an innate, evolved psychological mechanism that serves an important survival function: Specifically, it alerts individuals to the fact that their goals have been obstructed and motivates them to attack the perceived source of the obstruction. Even so, although the experience of anger may be energizing and have potentially functional outcomes, angry individuals may also behave in aggressive and dysfunctional ways that exacerbate rather than resolve their relationship problems. These features and functions of anger in relationships are discussed in more detail in this entry.

Causes of Anger in Relationships

The first major survey of laypeople's experiences of anger was published by James Averill in the 1980s. Averill found that anger was a profoundly interpersonal emotion, experienced most often within relationship contexts and elicited by perceptions that others were behaving badly or in ways that violated important interpersonal rules and standards. Since the 1980s, a number of empirical studies have confirmed that almost any event or stimulus can elicit anger in relationships depending on how this event is appraised or interpreted by an individual. Specifically, to the extent that a stimulus (such as a partner's unwillingness to share household chores) is appraised as unwanted, undeserved, and "not right" (typically expressed as "unfair"), then an individual is likely to experience anger in response to that stimulus. Further, to the extent that the stimulus is appraised as intentional (i.e., one believes one's partner is being deliberately lazy) and controllable (i.e., one's partner is not physically disabled and knows how to operate a vacuum cleaner), then an individual's anger may be intense.

Other kinds of cognitive appraisals may moderate the experience of anger. For example, when the kinds of anger-eliciting appraisals described above are coupled with perceptions of powerlessness (i.e., one's partner clearly has no intention of ever

doing household chores), one may experience what Attachment Theorist John Bowlby referred to as a futile “anger of despair,” as opposed to the potentially functional “anger of hope.” Further, researchers have found that appraisals of powerlessness in anger-eliciting situations may be associated with feelings of hatred for the offending partner, whereas appraisals of actual and/or moral superiority may be associated with contempt. Overall, however, the key cognitions associated with anger concern perceived “wrongness” or injustice and other-blame. Little wonder, then, that some have referred to anger as the judicial emotion.

Motivational and Behavioral Features of Anger

Along with judgmental cognitions, anger is associated with powerful urges, or impulses to action. Physiologically, anger prepares the body for removing obstacles and winning battles. The angry individual’s heart rate and blood pressure rise, and he or she feels energized, focused, strong, and, importantly, right. Accordingly, researchers have found that a key defining feature of anger in relationship contexts is a desire to confront or engage with offending partners and make them see the error of their ways. Anger is also associated with powerful urges to punish offenders and/or to take revenge on them. Such desires may manifest in verbal and nonverbal displays of intimidating behaviors such as shouting, stamping, throwing objects, or displaying physical aggression and violence. Some individuals also express anger by ignoring, ostracizing, or attempting to inflict emotional pain on offending partners. Importantly, however, angry impulses are not always acted upon, particularly when such impulses are aggressive or destructive. Indeed, researchers have found that people typically report trying to control the expression of anger in close relationships, though there are some important gender differences in the ways in which men and women express and regulate anger.

Gender and Anger

Empirical research has shown that men and women are equally likely to be angered by perceived

injustice and equally likely to experience urges to express their anger and to take remedial and/or retributive action. However, researchers have also found that, compared to men, women’s vocal and facial expressions of anger are less clear. For example, women are more likely than men to report crying when they are angry, a reaction which can generate confusion in observers (“Is she mad, sad, or scared?”). In part, these expressive differences may derive from the widely held belief that anger is an essentially male emotion, associated with dominance and getting one’s own way. Certainly, in relatively nonintimate contexts such as in the workplace, anger displays are generally regarded as more acceptable for men than for women. Researchers have also demonstrated that within organizational settings, angry men are perceived by others as dominant and powerful, whereas angry women are perceived as weak and lacking control. Women report feeling unprofessional and less competent when they express anger at work. Within intimate contexts, however, women appear to feel more comfortable about expressing anger, and they are more likely to engage in confrontational and openly angry behaviors. In contrast, men are more likely than women to report using humor and distancing behaviors, as opposed to direct confrontation, when they experience anger within intimate contexts.

In part, these gender differences may be a function of perceived power. For example, researchers have found that in the workplace, superiors tend to express anger more directly than subordinates, who tend to withdraw and/or express anger indirectly for fear of the consequences. In many organizations, men are still more likely to hold positions of power than women; hence, their anger displays are more likely to be perceived as appropriate and acceptable. Within intimate, emotional contexts, however, men may feel relatively more vulnerable and less powerful than women, who may thus feel better able to express anger directly (and in particular, verbally) to their partners. In these circumstances, some men may tend to respond to their partners’ expressions of angry assertiveness with avoidant or distancing behaviors. On the other hand, researchers have found that men with insecure attachment styles may respond to feelings of vulnerability and anxiety with anger as a means of regaining a sense of power and control. Such anger

may be expressed in the form of confrontational and destructive behaviors including physical intimidation and violence, especially when individuals are affected by alcohol or other behavior-disinhibiting drugs.

There are also physiological differences associated with anger expression in men and women. Research has shown that for women, expressing anger is associated with a lowered heart-rate activity and more rapid blood-pressure recovery, whereas for men, expressing anger is associated with higher heart-rate activity and higher sustained blood pressure. Marital interaction researchers such as John Gottman and Patricia Noller have also demonstrated how, during marital arguments in laboratory settings, the most apparently stoic, nonangry men may show intense physiological stress reactions, as indicated by online measures of sweating, heart rate, and blood pressure. However, it is too simplistic to conclude from these findings that expressing anger is always helpful; it depends on how it is expressed and the opportunity such expression affords for a constructive outcome.

The Impact of Anger in Relationships

Relationships can be intrinsically frustrating, with partners not always able or willing to meet each other's needs, desires, and goals. Consequently, there is always the potential for anger when an individual's desires and goals are perceived to have been thwarted by his or her partner. As noted previously, angry individuals typically feel powerful and capable, and such perceptions may sometimes motivate energetic and successful attempts to resolve relational problems. At other times, however, anger may interfere with constructive problem-solving behaviors. In particular, both husbands and wives have been found to react more negatively to explicitly angry messages than to messages that communicate hurt or distress. Blaming, accusatory messages tend to be reciprocated in escalating cycles of negativity that become difficult to escape. Further, researchers have demonstrated that, once the attention of angry individuals is focused on perceived obstructions, they tend to become less trusting of their relationship partners and less likely to cooperate with them. Thus, the frequent experience and/or expression

of anger in relationships may have a corrosive effect over time, with angry partners perceiving each other through blood-shot spectacles and appraising each other's behaviors as automatically blameworthy and maliciously motivated. In support of this pattern, researchers have found strong negative associations between the overall frequency of angry displays by either or both partners and the marital satisfaction and stability.

There are also important individual differences with respect to so-called anger-proneness, a personality trait that has a negative impact on relationship functioning. In particular, researchers have identified individuals with chronically angry dispositions (also referred to as high trait anger) who are ever vigilant for offense and apparent injustice. Such individuals have a short fuse and tend to assume whenever anything unwanted occurs that someone (e.g., a partner or family member) must be to blame. To an extent, anger-proneness is similar to the hostility component of the type-A personality, whereby individuals hold general attitudes of dislike, cynicism, and contempt for others. However, anger-prone individuals do not necessarily dislike others. Rather, they perceive the world and others in narrow terms of 'right' and 'wrong' and respond to any undesired situation with appraisals of other-blame and expressions of anger. Such chronically angry individuals generate a relational climate of fear and loathing with anger, or the threat of it, serving to intimidate and control relationship partners. Further, strong associations between anger-proneness and the likelihood of physical violence toward intimate partners have been found, with some of the angriest and most physically violent men, in particular, suffering from fears of abandonment and/or loss of control.

These findings do not imply, however, that anger has no place in happy and successful long-term relationships. In fact, longitudinal research has demonstrated that like unhappy spouses, happy spouses still express anger to each other, but they also (and more frequently) express love, affection, and good humor. Further, happy spouses appear to understand that anger is a signal of unmet or thwarted needs and expectations; hence, they are more likely to inhibit their impulses to react defensively when their spouses express anger and to

respond instead in a conciliatory or constructive manner.

Finally, it should be noted that the basic theme underpinning almost all episodes of anger is the perception that someone has behaved in a way that violates individuals' expectations of how others (e.g., family members, spouses, friends, work colleagues) should behave. This perception implies that an effective way to regulate anger is for individuals to become aware of and to modify their expectations so that others' behaviors are less likely to be perceived as deliberately obstructive and their dispositions as intrinsically blameworthy. Research confirms that such reappraisals are effective in moderating feelings of anger and in encouraging constructive problem-solving responses to relationship difficulties, as is a healthy sense of humor to help put an individual's needs and desires into a wider perspective.

Conclusions

Evolutionary theorists have noted that there are times when anger is an appropriate and functional emotion. Indeed, the Greek philosopher Aristotle argued that only fools were never angry and that the absence of anger against just causes was a vice, not a virtue. In this sense, anger signals caring and commitment as opposed to apathy, and can be a healthy and natural feature of human relationships. However, research on psychological and relational well-being also suggests that people fare best when they can control the experience and expression of this powerful emotion, rather than be controlled by it.

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See also Abuse and Violence in Relationships; Conflict Patterns; Emotion in Relationships; Fairness in Relationships; Hostility; Relational Aggression; Revenge; Transgressions

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APOLOGIES

Apologies express remorse for transgressions or social failures. A secondary meaning, associated with the Greek term *apologia*, is the offering of a justification or the defense of honor. The related term, *apologetics*, refers to a sustained defense of this type, as in the case of *Christian apologetics*. Apology remains an active area of study for researchers interested in the repair of broken relationships, relational justice, and the management of identity. The use of apology is linked to important and diverse social outcomes, such as the granting of forgiveness in marriage, judgments of guilt in court proceedings, and the success of public figures in restoring their reputations after

committing unethical or embarrassing acts. After reviewing historical and contemporary uses of the term, this entry considers three major traditions of apology research, measurement approaches, and emerging issues of concern.

Historical Perspectives

Apology is one of the oldest and most scrutinized of speech acts. It first received extended attention in the writings of Plato and Aristotle, who analyzed the defense offered by Socrates to his accusers. *Apologia* is a defensive discourse, a carefully crafted public statement through which the accused explain their motives and request exoneration. The audience for such statements includes not only the accusers but also a larger citizenry assumed to be acting as judges of the speaker's character.

Later, in the medieval period, the church became the audience and judge of these public apologies. The expected form of an apology resembled that of a confession—admitting one's mistakes before God. Apologies were crafted to seek God's forgiveness and, perhaps, intervention on behalf of the accused. As rhetorician Sharon Downey notes in her historical review, in the 19th century apology evolved to be a rebellious form of speech. The accused admitted guilt while also claiming that the guilty deeds were justified by a higher moral standard. As used by speakers like the American abolitionist John Brown, this brand of apology allowed the offender to play the role of scapegoat while inciting indignant audiences to further the speaker's objectives.

In recent decades, *apologia* has evolved further, often serving as an image restoration strategy for disgraced public figures and institutions. In such cases, the accused party cultivates audience identification with statements such as "We all make mistakes" and sympathy by casting doubt on the motives of the accusers. This form of apology minimizes the speaker's responsibility for the act while increasing the chances of political survival.

Social Science Perspectives

Contemporary writing on apology, including that of most social scientists, focuses on its role as an

expression of remorse for relational transgressions or social failures. The literature is complicated by its sometimes interchangeable use of related, but slightly different, terms. *Remorse* is a feeling of distress, sadness, or sorrow over one's actions. *Contrition* is a related term, often defined as the showing of sorrow or grief over one's behavior and its negative consequences. *Regret* is a painful feeling of disappointment with past behavior, often accompanied by a wish that the act had not occurred. *Repentance* is a future-oriented commitment to "turn away from sin." Regret and/or repentance are frequently included in apologies. They communicate a recognition of moral failure. Apologies are often considered a kind of *account*. Accounts provide an explanation for behavior that violates social expectation.

Research on apology has been conducted in three broad traditions that differ primarily in terms of relational context. The impression management tradition focuses on the ordinary interaction of strangers and acquaintances. A second relationship repair tradition is mostly concerned with the role of apology in redressing transgressions in personal relationships. Finally, the relational justice tradition concerns itself with institutionally mediated relationships, including those found in courtrooms and restorative justice systems.

Apology as Impression Management

Since at least the 1950s, apology has been conceptualized as a form of identity management. This approach has largely developed from the pioneering work of sociologist Erving Goffman, who studied how social actors negotiate the maze of social rules that regulates everyday interaction. According to Goffman's dramaturgical approach, social interaction is a kind of stage performance in which the actors must recognize the scene, enact the appropriate lines, and coordinate with the other actors to pull off a convincing performance. *Face* is Goffman's term for the identity derived and sustained by successful social performances, or *facework*. Apology is a strategy actors use when face is threatened by a failure to conform with social expectations that define a social situation. It is a means of addressing the embarrassment and emotional distress experienced by actors caught in such situations.

Preemptive apologies are used when a violation of expectation is anticipated. For example, the statement, "I am sorry to ask you such a personal question, but . . ." signals that the speaker is aware of rules against social intrusion and distressed by placing the listener in an awkward position. The apology compensates for looming face threat. It creates the impression of social competence and shows respect for the rules of interaction. Other times, apologies are offered after a face threat as a kind of compensation. After accidentally spilling a drink on another attendee, the visitor to a cocktail party typically offers an elaborate apology, replete with expressions of remorse and sometimes self-flagellation ("I am so, so sorry. How clumsy of me. How embarrassing!"). Apologies assure the audience that the victim is not at fault and restores respect through a display of deference.

False or insincere apologies play different roles in identity management. A false apology may be offered under duress (as when a parent orders siblings to apologize). When an apology is deliberately insincere, it may signal contempt for the recipient or a rejection of social conventions. To determine the sincerity of an apology, recipients and observers assess the degree of remorse it exhibits, often by examining tone of voice, facial expressions, and other nonverbal cues. Of course, minor infractions may require the mildest of apologies, as they simply acknowledge the rules of polite interaction. A quick "sorry!" is all that is needed when pedestrians collide on a crowded sidewalk. In such cases, a lack of intentional harm makes elaborate apology unnecessary.

Apology as Relationship Repair

Children learn early in life that an apology is the appropriate response to violations of the rules that govern family relationships. Indeed, the ability to recognize the social conditions that call for an apology is an important skill in close personal relationships. Apologies acknowledge the relational rights of family members, affirm relational rules, and increase certainty that transgressions will not reoccur. In marital relationships, the offering of a full apology increases the chance that the victimized partner will be forgiving. Full apologies acknowledge harm or wrongdoing, communicate remorse, and pledge improved

behavior, and sometimes offer compensation ("I will make it up to you. I promise"). Clinicians report some success when these elements are incorporated in therapies used to help distressed family members recover from serious transgressions. Full apologies are more likely to facilitate relationship repair than are excuses, denials, or justifications.

Research on close relationships indicates that severity of the transgression is an important consideration for offended partners. Severe transgressions require more elaborated apologies. Yet for some romantic partners, certain kinds of transgressions (e.g., sexual infidelity) are considered unforgivable. In such cases, apology may be expected and offered, but it may be insufficient to promote reconciliation. Forgiveness researchers have argued that sincere apologies may be valuable in fostering the mental health benefits that accompany forgiveness, even when victimized partners choose not to reconcile with the offending party.

Apology and Justice

Apology is linked in several ways to informal and formal systems of justice. For example, research on account-making examines the kinds of explanations offenders offer for violating laws, including traffic violations. In contrast to denials or justifications, researchers classify apologies as a type of concession—an admission of guilt. Evaluators, including courtroom judges, expect violators to apologize for transgressions and may be more lenient when apologies appear sincere. Apologies combined with convincing excuses ("I take full responsibility, but I was speeding to get my pregnant wife to the hospital") may be rated most favorably.

Restorative justice procedures supplement the punishments administered in traditional justice systems. Although procedures vary, most involve some kind of informal communication between victim and offender. A central feature of these programs is the opportunity for the victim to receive an apology. Although research is still developing in this area, advocates claim that the offender's apology empowers the victim and potentially reduces feelings of fear or bitterness. Critics are wary of these benefits, particularly for victims of certain

kinds of crimes, such as domestic violence. Repeated but insincere apologies are typical of abusers. Exposing victims to apologies in restorative justice programs potentially perpetuates the cycle of abusive communication.

Research Approaches

Researchers study apologies using several methodologies. Discourse analytic techniques examine the forms of verbal and nonverbal communication used to enact apologies. These researchers typically collect audio or video samples of naturally occurring apologies in settings such as courtrooms, therapy sessions, daycare centers, or press conferences. The data are sometimes converted to written transcripts. Analysts describe the organizational structure, content, style, and apparent functions of apologies, looking for (as examples) the nonverbal cues that signal sincerity or the language used to express remorse. The interpretations and evaluations of apology recipients and observers are often used to assess the meanings of apologetic discourse.

Apologies often occur in private, making direct observation impossible or unethical. As a case in point, spousal apologies for acts of marital infidelity are typically not available for direct observation. In these instances, researchers collect self-report data, including retrospective accounts ("Please describe a time when you delivered an apology to your spouse") or responses to hypothetical scenarios ("How would you respond if your spouse said this . . . ?"). In well-developed areas of research, participants complete psychometrically validated measures of relational repair behaviors, including apologies. Surveys of account-making or forgiveness-seeking communication ask participants to rate various types of apologies on Likert-type scales measuring likelihood-of-use or perceived effectiveness.

Emerging Research Concerns

Apology has been an object of systematic study for several thousand years. However, research is expanding in at least four areas. The role of apology in the healing of damaged relationship continues to interest clinicians and relationship researchers. This is most obvious in the growing

literature on forgiveness in personal relationships. In the public realm, the use of apology by public figures (e.g., President Bill Clinton), organizations (e.g., the Catholic Church), and even nations (i.e., Australia's apology to aboriginal peoples) continues to draw interest, particularly from scholars using the methods of critical discourse analysis. As mentioned above, research interest in the role of apology in restorative justice programs is growing. Finally, the role of gender in making and interpreting apologies is receiving attention. Researchers increasingly question how apologies are enacted differently by men and women and how these enactments sustain or resist gender stereotypes and power differences.

Vincent R. Waldron

See also Accounts; Facework; Forgiveness; Repairing Relationships

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APPROACH AND AVOIDANCE ORIENTATIONS

To what extent do people try and enhance their close relationships or share many fun and meaningful experiences with their friends? To what extent do people try and stay away from situations that could harm their relationships or make sure nothing bad happens to their friendships? People have motivations or goals within their

social relationships that are derived from two separate systems: Motives focused on movement toward desired, positive relationship outcomes represent the *approach* system; motives focused on movement away from undesirable, negative relationship outcomes represent the *avoidance* system. This entry describes approach and avoidance orientations and reviews current work applying it to motivation in social relationships. It also discusses implications for how people think, feel, and act in relationships.

The approach and avoidance distinction has been a fundamental aspect of psychological theory and has been prevalent in many domains of research. For instance, Ivan Pavlov's early work on conditioning noted the existence of one reflex oriented toward the stimulus while another reflex was oriented away from the stimulus. More recently, Jeffrey Gray posited distinct approach and avoidance motivational systems, which he referred to as the Behavioral Activation System (BAS) and the Behavioral Inhibition System (BIS). BAS activates behavior in response to signals of reward and non-punishment, whereas BIS inhibits behavior in response to signals of punishment and nonreward.

There is also evidence to suggest these two motivational systems represent different underlying brain structures, providing a possible reason for its association with different emotions and behaviors. Specifically, the approach system is associated with more beneficial emotions and behaviors than the avoidance system. For example, BAS is associated with feelings of hope, and BIS is associated with feelings of anxiety. Other researchers have supported this BAS-positive emotions link by suggesting that the approach system is associated with a strong inclination to feel high positive emotions (elation, excitement) and low positive emotions (dull, sluggish). This research similarly supports a BIS-negative emotions link in that the avoidance system is associated with a strong inclination to feel high negative emotions (distress, fear) and low negative emotions (calm, relaxed).

Achievement motivation research has also distinguished approach focused motivation (performance-approach goals/need for achievement) from avoidance focused motivation (performance-avoidance goals/fear of failure). One motive is focused on the desire to outperform others and the feelings of pride that accompany that success,

while the other is focused on the desire to avoid doing worse than others and the feelings of shame that accompany such failure. Avoidance motivation has been shown to produce negative performance outcomes. Students who fear doing worse than others tend to have low self-efficacy, experience high anxiety, possess low interest in tasks, and earn low course grades. Approach motivation, by comparison, reliably predicts high achievement in the classroom.

Motivation in Social Relationships

Building on research in these other contexts, relationship researchers have incorporated the approach and avoidance distinction into their models of motivation. Approach social motivation is focused on movement toward positive outcomes, such as making social contacts and obtaining closeness. It is associated with establishing, maintaining, and restoring positive relationships with others and includes a hope for affiliation and intimacy. Researchers measure the strength of this motivation with items addressing such constructs as the frequency of social interactions and social functions, the association of positive emotions with social interactions, and the desire to be with friends and partners. For example, on a first date, a person who has strong approach social motivation may say, "I want to make a good impression."

Avoidance social motivation is focused on movement away from negative outcomes, such as avoiding being hurt and preventing conflict in relationships. It stems from feelings of insecurity and includes fear of and sensitivity to rejection. Researchers measure the strength of this motivation with items addressing such constructs as uneasiness with discussing controversial topics, sensitivity to criticism, fear of hurting others, and anxiously expecting and intensely reacting to rejection. For example, on a first date, a person who has strong avoidance social motivation may say, "I don't want to make a fool of myself."

Implications for How People Think, Feel, and Act in Relationships

Similar to emotion, achievement, and other domains, the approach system in relationships is

associated with better outcomes than the avoidance system. People with strong approach social motivation elicit more positive emotions from others, are less anxious and lonely, and feel more self-confident. They also experience greater relationship satisfaction and are more likely to maintain satisfying relationships over time. People with strong avoidance social motivation are more anxious and lonely, less self-confident, and are judged less positively by others. They also experience lower relationship commitment and greater rates of relationship dissolution.

During everyday life, people with high levels of approach social motivation tend to experience more positive events such as fun with friends and partners, pleasant conversations, and feelings of appreciation and support. This increased exposure to enjoyable interpersonal experiences is one reason why they may feel better about their relationships and maintain them longer. People with high levels of avoidance social motivation, in contrast, tend to react strongly to disagreements and conflict in their daily life, and this is one reason why they feel more anxious and dissatisfied about their relationships. Reactivity to social rejection has been a particular focus of research by Geraldine Downey. She and her colleagues examine one specific form of avoidance social motivation called *rejection sensitivity*, described as a tendency to anxiously expect rejection, readily perceive it, and overreact when it occurs. For people who have a high level of rejection sensitivity, an ambiguous social situation may be perceived as rejection. Rejection sensitivity is associated with negative behavior and hostility during problem solving discussions and increased negative emotions following conflicts with a romantic partner. For men, high rejection sensitivity has also been associated with increased incidents of violence in dating relationships. Downey and colleagues have also found that the partners of high rejection sensitive individuals may respond in ways that fulfill these rejection expectations. In other words, a self-fulfilling prophecy may occur such that partners actually behave more rejecting toward high rejection sensitive people.

Approach and avoidance motivation also influence the information used to judge life satisfaction and relationship satisfaction. People with strong approach motivation are more likely to base ratings

of daily life satisfaction on the positive emotions and social interactions experienced that day and similarly, base their relationship satisfaction evaluation on the positive emotions and interactions associated with their romantic partner. To someone who is mainly approach oriented, successful interactions and relationships are those that provide fun, companionship, and understanding; and painful relationships are those that fail to provide these rewards. In contrast, people with strong avoidance motivation base their satisfaction evaluations on the negative emotions and interactions felt that day. To someone who is primarily avoidantly motivated, pleasing interactions and relationships are defined as those that lack uncertainty, disagreements, and anxiety; painful relationships are those that possess these negative qualities.

There are other ways in which approach and avoidance motivation influence how people think about the social environment. People with strong avoidance social motivation are more likely to remember and interpret social information with a negative bias and to evaluate social situations more pessimistically. For example, participants were given a fictitious short essay describing a dating couple and their recent evening at a party. When asked to remember this story word for word, those with strong avoidance motivation were more likely to remember the negative events (e.g., the boyfriend did not introduce his girlfriend to other people at a party) and remember the positive events with a negative twist. Furthermore, this negative bias can be exacerbated depending on the social situation. In a separate study, participants were told they were going to meet a stranger and given either avoidance-oriented instructions (i.e., "Try not to make a bad impression) or approach-oriented instructions (i.e., "Try to make a good impression"). When people with strong avoidance social motivation were given the avoidance-oriented instructions, they remembered more negative information about the stranger and expressed more dislike for him or her.

Motivation in Sexual Relationships

Approach and avoidance motivation has also been applied to the context of sexual interactions. Approach sexual motivation includes having sex to increase intimacy with a partner and to enhance

physical pleasure. Avoidance sexual motivation includes having sex to prevent rejection by a partner or peers and relief from negative emotions such as loneliness. People with strong approach sexual motivation experience greater levels of positive emotions, well-being, sexual satisfaction, and relationship satisfaction. Perceiving a partner's sexual motivation as approach-oriented is also associated with better emotional and relationship well-being. In contrast, people with strong avoidance sexual motivation experience more negative emotions and relationship conflict, less relationship satisfaction, and a greater likelihood of relationship dissolution.

Approach social motivation has also shown to influence sexual desire in relationships. People with strong approach social motivation are more likely to engage in sex for approach-oriented reasons, and this helps to maintain sexual desire during the relationship. Furthermore, sexual desire tends to be higher on days with a greater number of positive relationship events (e.g., share enjoyable activities together, show affection) and lower on days with a greater number of negative relationship events (e.g., have arguments, feel criticized). People with strong approach social motivation capitalize on these good times and experience even stronger sexual desire on days with positive relationship events while not letting the days with negative events bring down their sexual desire.

Motivation for Sacrifice and Commitment

Another way approach and avoidance motivation affects relationships is through everyday relationship sacrifices (i.e., enacting a behavior that is not preferred such as accompanying a partner to a work function instead of spending time on an enjoyable hobby). On days people sacrifice for approach reasons (e.g., to promote intimacy), they tend to report more positive emotions and relationship satisfaction, whereas on days when they enact the same behaviors for avoidance reasons (e.g., to avoid conflict), they report more negative emotions, lower relationship satisfaction, and more conflict. Sacrificing for avoidance reasons is particularly detrimental to the maintenance of relationships over time. The more people sacrifice for avoidance

reasons, the less satisfied they are in their relationships and the more likely they are to break up.

Relationship commitment can also be understood from an approach-avoidance perspective. Specifically, people with strong approach commitment want to maintain their relationship for the incentives it can provide, such as fun, love, and companionship. People with strong avoidance commitment do not want the relationship to end because of the threats and costs associated with ending the relationship, such as loss of invested time and energy, having to start over in a new relationship, and the possibility of being alone. Studies in dating relationships have shown approach commitment is associated with high relationship satisfaction, whereas avoidance commitment is associated with low relationship satisfaction.

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See also Affiliation; Motivation and Relationships; Need Fulfillment in Relationships; Rejection Sensitivity; Sexuality and Attachment; Sexual Motives

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ARCHIVAL METHODS

Archival data can be inclusively defined as information that is stored in some identifiable location for some substantial period and to which researchers can obtain access so as to carry out an investigation on a subject unrelated to the original rationale for preserving the data. The information can assume almost any form, including newspapers, magazines, diaries, letters, reports, photographs, drawings, carvings, music, advertisements, or film clips. The data may have been saved for many different reasons. At one extreme are documents or artifacts that are quite deliberately saved as part of the historical record. Examples include acts of the U.S. Congress, patent applications, election results, crime figures, census data, sports statistics, issues of the *New York Times*, and restored classic films. At the other extreme are items of more ephemeral interest that may have been originally preserved more by accident than by design. Instances might include old high school yearbooks, private wartime correspondence, or amateur photographs of graffiti in public bathrooms. Although the researcher must have access to the archives to obtain the raw data, the access may vary in openness. Some archives require exclusive approval, such as the letters of a recently deceased celebrity or the film outtakes still stored in studio vaults, whereas others are open to the general public, such as the records kept by the Library of Congress or databases made available on the Internet.

This entry begins with an overview of the method and then turns to an evaluation of its usefulness in the scientific study of human relationships.

Methodology

An archival data analysis begins like most research in the behavioral sciences, namely with a hypothesis or at least conjecture about the way human beings behave in a given situation or set of situations. Yet

from that point, archival analyses must depart from such standard methods as the experiment, survey, or interview. This departure occurs because the raw data already exist, requiring that the investigator only determine the data's location and the optimal manner of exploiting the data retrieved. The next steps after data retrieval are also distinctive in comparison to more mainstream methods. In the first place, the investigator must decide on the most appropriate unit of analysis. Whereas for most research the unit would be the individual research participant, archival data analyses have more options. For instance, the units might consist of consecutive years of national divorce statistics, film clips depicting scenes in which two characters fall in love, or newspaper comics whose main characters are parents, friends, or coworkers. The choice of analytical unit will often represent a compromise between the hypothesis being tested and the data that are actually available.

The next step is to define the sampling criterion or criteria. Here again there are abundant choices. The units might be confined to specific years and to geographical locations. The units might be randomly selected from a larger sample or even taken to exhaust the population (e.g., all Pulitzer-winning novels). Once the sample is defined, the raw data must be collected and prepared for variable coding and statistical analysis. Although sometimes archival data are already in a form suitable for data analysis, more often they must be first subjected to a well-defined coding scheme, most commonly some form of content analysis. These coding procedures will include not just the substantive variables of interest but also any control variables needed to avoid methodological artifacts. Once this process is complete, the investigator can apply various statistical techniques, such as multiple regression, factor analysis, structural equation models, and time-series analysis. Because archival data studies are inherently correlational in nature, the statistical analyses will often have to be more sophisticated than in laboratory data over which the investigator can exert experimental control.

Evaluation

Archival methods are much less frequently used than more mainstream techniques. One reason for this infrequent use is that the data samples and

coding strategies may be less than ideal. Researchers using archival data must deal with the information that they can get rather than what they would like to have. At times, the data may contain methodological artifacts that may not be immediately apparent. From time to time a recently published archival study will inspire critiques by researchers who have managed to discern a source of spuriousness not immediately obvious to the original investigator.

These disadvantages do not suffice to invalidate the method. For one thing, potential artifacts can often be avoided by improved data collection and analysis procedures. In addition, archival methods can help establish when results obtained in the laboratory have genuine applicability to the practical world. Furthermore, unlike more commonplace approaches in which the data are most often collected within a single year, archival methods permit analyses of changes in human behaviors over long periods of time (e.g., historical trends in the average age at first marriage). But most significantly, researchers using archival methods have made important contributions to the scientific study of human relationships. Just in the area of intimate adult relations the substantive contributions include using (a) animal encyclopedias to decipher the evolutionary origins of adult pair bonding, (b) print and online singles advertisements to understand mate preferences in both heterosexual and homosexual couples, (c) wedding and divorce announcements in celebrity magazines to identify the factors underlying marriage longevity, (d) crime statistics and professional game schedules to assess the impact of viewing team sports on reported domestic violence, and (e) shelter admission interviews to discover the conditions that lead battered women to remain in abusive relationships.

The potential utility of archival methods has been reinforced by three recent developments. First, with the advent of the Internet, archival data have become much more diverse and at the same time much more accessible. Second, researchers are increasingly expected to archive their data sets, thereby making them available for future research, including investigations not directly related to those that motivated the original study. Third, advances in statistical techniques, such as multilevel modeling, greatly

expand the analytical power that can be applied to archival data.

Dean Keith Simonton

See also Abused Women Remaining in Relationships; Attraction, Sexual; Divorce, Prevalence and Trends; Evolutionary Psychology and Human Relationships; Interpersonal Attraction; Marital Stability, Prediction of; Mate Preferences; Mate Selection

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ARGUING

Arguing (also called *quarrelling*, *verbal conflict*, and *interpersonal conflict*) is expressed disagreement. Because arguments can have negative consequences, some people try to avoid them; when arguing, they try to minimize the likelihood that their disagreement will escalate. Hence, relative to other types of conversations, arguments are infrequent, and argumentative episodes are often of very short duration. Arguing occurs among strangers, superiors and subordinates at work, colleagues, neighbors, roommates, friends, dating partners, and family members. Frequent interaction with another as well as increased interdependency stimulates arguing, and arguments typically are more frequent, prolonged, and intense with intimates than with nonintimates. This entry examines how arguing is conceptualized and measured, the causes and correlates of arguing, and the consequences associated with arguing.

Conceptualization and Measurement

Arguing is a form of interaction as well as a form of conflict and can be distinguished from other forms. Relative to nonargumentative interactions, people report that arguments are more likely to involve disagreement, criticism, sarcasm, and

insults that are loudly expressed. Not surprisingly, individuals frequently use negative metaphors (e.g., being in a war) to describe their arguments. Conflict is the existence of incompatible activity, and expressed disagreement falls under that rubric. Although arguing is a form of conflict, not all conflicts become arguments. Some incompatible activity is not discussed, and there is no argument. In such cases, there can be mutual awareness of conflict in the absence of arguing (e.g., discussing the conflict topic is declared taboo), and conflict may be manifested in different forms than arguing (e.g., the silent treatment, denial of support).

Arguments are episodic (i.e., composed of a connected set of events). They are initiated when a person perceives a provoking action and challenges the provocateur who responds by resisting. Arguments are typically focused on a given issue (e.g., money), but they can expand to include others (e.g., “You are a spendthrift”) and may include a hidden agenda (e.g., “You don’t respect me because you never ask my opinion”). During an argument, individuals can pressure the other person to change, disclose feelings, generate solutions, repair the relationship, minimize the disagreement, and withdraw from the interaction. Some behaviors occur in sequences, such as demand and withdraw (i.e., one partner demands and the other withdraws), escalating reciprocity of negative affect and mutual complaining. Because arguments frequently end with no resolution, episodes may be repeated and become serial arguments. Between episodes, individuals often mull about what was said and what they will say in the next one. Over time, serial arguments can become scripted in that each partner plays a given role (e.g., initiator or target); partners can predict when an episode will occur and anticipate what each will say.

Researchers study both the general characteristics of arguing and the features of specific argumentative episodes; the measures vary with the focus of the research. When examining the general characteristics of arguing, respondents are typically asked to self-report (either on questionnaires or in diaries) the degree to which their everyday arguments can be characterized as frequent, stable, intense, predictable, constructive or destructive, emotional, or resolved. Such measures provide a summary of what individuals perceive that most of their arguments are like, but these measures may not provide

a fine-tuned assessment of the behaviors that are perceived to be enacted within an argumentative episode. To gain insight into episodic behaviors, researchers rely upon self-reports about what occurred in a specific encounter (e.g., one that occurred on a given day or that occurred most recently). Respondents report the degree to which their argument focused on particular issues, how long the episode lasted, how long ago the episode occurred, the conditions that prompted the argument, who initiated the argument, the behaviors or behavioral sequences that their partners enacted, and the outcome of the episode.

Because self-reports can be inaccurate, researchers rely upon behavioral observations to assess arguments. When doing so, they often ask relational partners to reenact a prior argument, engage in a simulated argument, or discuss an upcoming issue that could lead to an argument. Interactions are taped, and the actions are categorized or rated by trained coders. In some cases, the partners are shown the tape of their interactions and asked to code the behavior or to describe what they were thinking at a given point. This approach allows research to compare an individual’s response with that of his or her partner and with trained coders. Although providing a rich source of data about argument, behavioral observations are labor intensive. Researchers must convince relational partners to participate in a taped argument, find appropriate contexts (e.g., a laboratory, the home) in which to observe the episode, choose an appropriate stimulus for the argument, select the appropriate verbal and nonverbal stimuli to code or rate, develop coding categories that are valid indicators, train coders to make reliable judgments, and control for a variety of factors that adversely influence the statistical analysis (e.g., skewed distributions, nonindependent observations).

Causes and Correlates

Individuals report that they argue about a variety of issues including money, social issues, personal habits, sex, communication, and power. Underlying these issues is the notion that arguing arises from violated expectations. Something about the state of the relationship and/or a partner is perceived to be at variance with appropriate standards (e.g.,

etiquette, morality, conventionality, role expectations, well-being, and consistency). However, individuals may perceive such violations and never confront a partner about them or, if confronted, may comply and thereby avoid an argument. Hence, certain conditions must be present to stimulate arguing. A variety of factors increase the willingness to argue, including (a) relational intimacy, (b) perceiving that another's actions are disrespectful, (c) confidence that one knows how to argue, (d) the urgency of the situation, (e) having a legitimate right to argue, (f) enjoying arguing, (g) perceiving that arguing will enhance relational quality, and (h) concern for the partner's well-being.

The manner in which one acts during an argument results from a number of factors. Some individuals have a conflict style or set of beliefs about conflict that predisposes them to argue in a particular way. Individuals who believe that disagreement is personally and relationally destructive avoid confrontations, while individuals who enjoy arguing confront others. Verbally aggressive individuals use competency and character attacks to influence others, while argumentative individuals rely on logic. The perceptions and emotions associated with an argument may also influence a person's actions. The degree to which individuals blame their partners for a problem or are angry with them can stimulate destructive actions. When in an argument, individuals often influence each other's actions. In many instances, individuals reciprocate each others behaviors (e.g., complaints lead to countercomplaining), but in other instances, complementary patterns are observed (e.g., complaints lead to apologies). Finally, the presence of observers can influence argumentative behaviors by signalling approval or disapproval of certain actions.

Skills associated with approaching conflict in a competent fashion include perspective taking, using polite and sensitive language, engaging in emotional control (e.g., impulse control, self-soothing), asking questions, being responsive to the partner's statements, summarizing and paraphrasing, taking time-outs, and developing solutions. Skill enactment results from knowledge (i.e., understanding what one should do during an argument), outcome efficacy (i.e., believing the skills will be successful), and self-efficacy (i.e., feeling that one has mastered the skills).

Consequences

The most obvious consequence of arguing is whether or not the issue was resolved. Although surprisingly little research has directly assessed resolution, arguments most frequently end in a standoff or with one or both parties withdrawing from the interaction. Apologies and compromises are less common outcomes. Furthermore, some arguments end with a pseudo-agreement in which one party submits to the partner's desires simply to stop the argument and therefore has little commitment to the agreement.

In part, the ability to resolve an argument stems from the manner in which the confrontation begins. In some cases, individuals confront their partners in a highly emotional way that creates emotional flooding followed by reciprocated emotion or withdrawal. Or individuals may begin the confrontation in a way that is perceived to be a face attack (e.g., a criticism or insult) that prompts partners to become defensive as they try to restore their image. In both cases, partners stand their ground or may even adopt increasing divergent positions as the argument progresses, a situation that makes resolution unlikely.

Arguing also has consequences for relationships. In general, the frequency of arguing is negatively related to relational satisfaction and positively related to the likelihood of relational dissolution. Indeed, the frequency of arguing about relatively minor issues is negatively related to relational satisfaction. Relational difficulties arising from arguing may stem from several processes. First, frequent arguing may give rise to negative actions such as insults and physical aggression. Second, frequent arguing may cause individuals to believe that a conflict is irresolvable and will remain a part of their relationship. Third, frequent arguing could have a negative impact on others who are related to the partners such as family and friends.

The point at which arguing becomes damaging to a relationship may vary. Some couples thrive because of their willingness to argue and their view of disagreements as a sign of vitality and relational commitment, whereas other couples find even infrequent arguing to be unpleasant and threatening. The key seems to be the beliefs partners hold about arguing as well as their ability to repair any damage resulting from their disagreements. If

couples view arguing as positive, believe they are making progress toward resolution, avoid enacting destructive argumentative patterns (e.g., mutual attacks), and reinvest in their relationship after an argument, there may be less relational harm and possibly even relational enhancement. However, constructive conflict behaviors such as active listening and empathy do not always protect a relationship from damage. Indeed, the negative effect of destructive conflict behaviors is greater than the positive effect of constructive actions.

Arguing can also affect personal well-being. Some individuals are emotionally drained, depressed, and stressed after an argument. These outcomes can adversely influence their physical and psychological health as well as their ability to perform in other areas of their life (e.g., at work), and these effects can extend over several days after an argument. Such consequences are especially likely when arguments are frequent and are perceived to be irresolvable. However, not all individuals find arguing to be punitive. Argumentative individuals are very good at reasoning, enjoy arguments, seek out disagreements, and regret having missed the opportunity to argue with another. Moreover, some individuals engage in personal coping tactics that seem to alleviate the negative states often resulting from arguing.

Although arguing is not universally harmful, many distressed couples seek therapy to control excessive and destructive conflict. Couples therapists can utilize behavioral approaches that train individuals to reciprocate positive actions and to engage in problem-solving communication. This approach is sometimes combined with a cognitive component aimed at reducing negative attributions for relational problems and increasing perspective taking and/or therapies aimed at increasing acceptance of irresolvable issues. The aforementioned approaches have positive short-term impact on marital quality and may have longer term benefits for particular types of couples.

Michael E. Roloff

See also Abuse and Violence in Relationships; Aggressive Communication; Agreeableness; Apologies; Conflict Patterns; Conflict Resolution; Couple Therapy; Criticism in Relationships; Marital Satisfaction and Quality

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ARISTOTLE AND PLATO ON RELATIONSHIPS

The eminent 20th-century philosopher Alfred North Whitehead is reported to have said, “All of Western philosophy is but a footnote to Plato—and Aristotle wrote most of the footnote.” Indeed, the seminal contributions of Plato and Aristotle, writing in Athens 2,500 years ago, are foundational for

nearly all Western scholarship, including the various social science approaches to understanding human relationships.

Plato's writings are in the form of dialogues centered around his teacher, Socrates, so that it is impossible today to sort out which ideas are Socrates' and which are Plato's. Aristotle was Plato's student. Plato's greatest direct influence relevant to relationships is his work on love, mainly in the *Symposium*. Aristotle's greatest directly relevant influence is on friendship, mainly in his systematic treatise, the *Nicomachean Ethics*.

This entry briefly summarizes Plato's work on love and Aristotle's on friendship, noting links of each with contemporary social science work on relationships.

Plato on Love

The *Symposium* (a drinking party) is a series of toasts or speeches praising love. The initial speeches describe various understandings of love, ranging from love as sexuality, love as the search for one's soul mate, to love as the highest virtue. Socrates, the honored guest, speaks last, supposedly quoting the mystic Diotima of Mantinea, "a woman wise in this and in many other kinds of knowledge":

Love may be described generally as the love of the everlasting possession of the good.

All animals . . . , in their desire of procreation, are in agony when they take the infection of love, which begins with the desire of union; whereto is added the care of offspring, on whose behalf the weakest are ready to battle against the strongest even to the uttermost . . . the mortal nature is seeking as far as is possible to be everlasting and immortal.

[Then] think of the ambition of men, and . . . consider how they are stirred by the love of an immortality of fame. They are ready to run all risks greater far than they would have for their children, and to spend money and undergo any sort of toil, and even to die, for the sake of leaving behind them a name which shall be eternal. . . .

These are the lesser mysteries of love. . . . For he who would proceed aright in this matter should begin in youth to visit beautiful forms; and first, . . . to love one such form only . . . and soon perceive that the beauty of one form is akin to the beauty of another; and then . . . recognize that the beauty in every form is and the same . . . and become a lover of all beautiful forms. [I]n the next stage, consider that the beauty of the mind is more honourable than the beauty of the outward form. . . . until he is compelled to contemplate and see the beauty of institutions and laws, and to understand that the beauty of them all is of one family, and that personal beauty is a trifle; and after laws and institutions go on to the sciences, . . . create many fair and noble thoughts and notions in boundless love of wisdom; until at last the vision is revealed of a single science, which is the science of beauty everywhere. . . . toward the end he will suddenly perceive a nature of wondrous beauty—a nature which in the first place is everlasting, not growing and decaying, or waxing and waning. . . .

Summarizing all this, Socrates' Diotima concludes with "the true order of love":

[B]egin from the beauties of earth and mount upwards for the sake of that other beauty, using these as steps only . . . from fair forms to fair practices, and from fair practices to fair notions, until from fair notions one arrives at the notion of absolute beauty, and at last knows what the essence of beauty is. . . . Would that be an ignoble life?

In terms of direct contemporary influences, the initial speeches are reflected in sociologist John Alan Lee's taxonomy of love styles and the widely used questionnaire based on it developed by Clyde and Susan Hendrick. Socrates' speech is reflected in Arthur and Elaine N. Aron's self-expansion model emphasizing love as a motivation for the person to expand the self toward greater and greater goals.

As an aside, in common modern usage *platonic* refers to a nonsexual relationship. This is largely a misunderstanding of Plato, who saw sexuality as a central part of love, at least in its less-exalted stages.

Aristotle on Friendship

For Aristotle, friendship is based on the reciprocation of affection between individuals, with this type of emotional bond forming the basis for various levels of social organization, whether personal or institutional. Aristotle considers friendship necessary for achieving the “good life” in which one will be most happy. This is because devotion to another creates opportunities to do generous and virtuous deeds, which develops moral character. This view is reflected in modern thinking most prominently in the role of friendships in children’s development of social skills and values.

Aristotle also holds that central to friendship is fairness and sympathetic interest, characteristics he believes are present in a good person’s relationship with the person’s inner, true self. In *Nicomachean Ethics*, he states, “To perceive a friend, therefore, is necessarily in a manner to perceive oneself, and to know a friend is in a manner to know oneself”; friends are “other selves”; friendship is “one soul abiding in two bodies.” These ideas are reflected in the contemporary self-expansion model work on inclusion of other in self in which those in a close relationship spontaneously think and act to some extent as if each also contained the other’s resources, perspectives, and identities.

A particularly influential aspect of Aristotle’s views is that there are three main forms of friendship: one based on usefulness or utility, one based on enjoyment, and one based on the good or pure virtue. The last refers to relationships where partners seek to benefit each other for the other’s sake rather than for the benefit to the self alone. This three-part view has been a basis for some modern taxonomies of friendship and is most prominently reflected in Margaret Clark and Judson Mills’s influential distinction between exchange relationships (where each is expected to provide benefits to the other—thus reflecting Aristotle’s utility and enjoyment) and communal relationships (where each attends to the other’s needs—thus reflecting Aristotle’s notion of virtue).

Arthur Aron and Kristin M. Davies

See also Communal Relationships; Friendship Formation and Development; Self-Expansion Model

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AROUSAL AND ATTRACTION

Many of the entries in this encyclopedia refer to specific human relationships concepts (e.g., loneliness, unconditional positive regard). In contrast, this entry reviews the influence of one concept, *arousal*, on another, *attraction*. This association merits its own entry for several reasons. The influence of arousal on attraction has been examined directly by psychologists for over 30 years. During that time, researchers have offered multiple theories to explain the link between arousal and attraction or have questioned whether arousal influences attraction at all. The association between arousal and attraction is important because it provides valuable information about romantic attraction and romantic relationship development. The association between arousal and attraction also provides a specific testing ground for broader theories of human behavior.

To understand the influence of arousal on attraction, one should first clarify the concepts of arousal and attraction. In this context, arousal refers to the experience of being in a physiologically aroused state. The exact nature of such arousal might be difficult to define precisely, but measures of physiological arousal include increased heart rate, increased blood pressure, and increased sweating. Researchers also measure physiological arousal by simply asking participants whether they feel physiologically aroused or alert. These measures are consistent with activation of the sympathetic

nervous system. The sympathetic nervous system prepares the body for action, whereas its counterpart, the parasympathetic nervous system, slows the body's functioning to allow energy conservation and recovery. Research examining arousal and attraction has incorporated a variety of methods to induce arousal, such as having participants experience fear, engage in exercise, or view sexually stimulating material.

Attraction (often called interpersonal attraction) refers to the process by which individuals form positive attitudes toward others and seek to interact with others more closely. This general concept includes more specific forms of attraction. For example, the arousal and attraction effect is most closely tied to *romantic attraction*—a desire to develop a nonplatonic relationship with another person. Similarly, arousal and attraction research has often required participants to rate another's *physical attractiveness*. Perceived physical attractiveness is clearly intertwined with romantic attraction, although individuals could conceivably evaluate others as more or less physically attractive without altering their interest in forming corresponding romantic relationships. The influence of arousal on attraction has also been examined using *liking* as an outcome.

The Arousal and Attraction Experiment

The traditional arousal and attraction experiment has two primary components. First, participants are randomly assigned to an arousal condition or to a control condition (sometimes these conditions are labeled high-arousal and low-arousal). Second, after arousal is induced (or not induced), researchers measure attraction by having participants respond to questions or engage in a situation in which they can demonstrate attraction behaviorally. To illustrate, researchers might tell participants in the arousal condition that the experimental procedure includes painful electric shocks but tell participants in the control condition that the procedure includes a less-threatening stimulus such as the sound of a typewriter. Following this manipulation, all participants respond to questions about how much they would like to date a particular individual (i.e., the target) or see the individual on another occasion. The target individual is often an attractive person of

the opposite sex (i.e., men respond about women, and women respond about men). The experiment then concludes, and none of the participants actually receive electric shocks.

Using this traditional paradigm, research generally shows that aroused individuals indicate more attraction toward attractive opposite-sex persons than do nonaroused individuals. The size and reliability of this effect is difficult to determine precisely, as the influence of arousal on attraction varies in different experimental settings. Notice also that arousal and attraction research has generally relied on the practical assumption that the vast majority of participants are heterosexual; presumably, aroused homosexual participants would respond to same-sex persons much like heterosexual participants respond to opposite-sex persons.

Arousal and Attraction Theories

Researchers have offered three primary theories to explain why arousal influences attraction. First, according to misattribution theory, arousal from one source is mistakenly attributed to another source—in this case, the target individual. For example, individuals who are aroused by the anticipation of electric shocks mistakenly attribute that arousal to the presence of an attractive opposite-sex person and therefore experience greater levels of attraction. Second, according to negative-reinforcement theory, participants find the target to be reinforcing because the presence of another person reduces unpleasant fear-based anxiety. This negative-reinforcement causes participants to experience increased attraction to the target. Third, according to response-facilitation theory, romantic attraction is the dominant, or prevailing, response when most individuals encounter an attractive opposite-sex person. Because arousal increases the likelihood of the dominant response, aroused participants experience enhanced levels of attraction toward attractive opposite-sex persons. Each of these theories can plausibly explain why fear-based arousal increases attraction toward attractive opposite-sex persons. Yet the basic arousal and attraction paradigm has been implemented in several ways, and these methodological variations have important implications.

First, arousal appears to influence attraction even when the source of the arousal is not

ambiguous. To illustrate, when participants assess their romantic attraction shortly after exercising, they likely recognize the exercise as the true source of their arousal. This finding appears inconsistent with misattribution theory, which suggests that individuals will misattribute arousal only when its true source is ambiguous.

Second, arousal influences attraction regardless of whether the arousal was generated by fear, exercise, or sexually explicit material. This finding appears inconsistent with negative-reinforcement theory, which is based on the reduction of unpleasant fear-based arousal.

Third, arousal has a polarizing effect on attraction. Arousal enhances attraction toward attractive opposite-sex persons, but it reduces attraction toward unattractive opposite-sex persons; arousal appears to have minimal influence on attraction toward opposite-sex persons of average attractiveness. This polarizing effect is inconsistent with negative-reinforcement theory because there is no compelling reason to believe that fearful individuals would find the presence of an attractive opposite-sex person to be reinforcing but the presence of an unattractive opposite-sex person to be punishing. The polarizing effect of arousal on attraction is also awkward for misattribution theory because individuals probably do not perceive their arousal as being generated by the unattractiveness of an opposite-sex person. Response-facilitation theory can account for the polarizing influence of arousal on attraction if aversion is a common dominant response toward unattractive opposite-sex persons.

Fourth, the influence of arousal on same-sex versus opposite-sex attraction is less clear, but there is some evidence to suggest that arousal has a stronger influence on attraction toward opposite-sex persons than it does toward same-sex persons. Examinations into the influence of arousal on same-sex versus opposite-sex attraction have focused primarily on liking rather than on romantic attraction or perceived physical attractiveness. Results demonstrating that arousal influences liking for opposite-sex persons more than same-sex persons are troublesome for negative-reinforcement theory, which does not suggest directly that opposite-sex persons reduce fear-based arousal more than same-sex persons do. Response-facilitation theory could account for this finding if liking is more frequently a

dominant response for opposite-sex persons than it is for same-sex persons.

Based on these findings, response-facilitation theory appears to have the best potential to explain the influence of arousal on attraction, but this theory still suffers from a lack of clarity about dominant responses. Conceptions of the dominant response have traditionally focused on behavior (e.g., actually asking a person to go on a date), but most arousal and attraction experiments measure evaluation (e.g., reporting that the target is attractive). Some research has associated dominant-response theory with cognitive processes like evaluation, but the singular use of dominant-response theory to explain how arousal influences attraction is potentially complicated. For example, even if individuals commonly experience romantic attraction toward attractive opposite-sex persons emotionally, they might not typically engage in behaviors that demonstrate romantic attraction. In fact, individuals commonly avoid approaching attractive opposite-sex persons, particularly when such individuals are shy or romantically involved. Accordingly, it seems unclear currently as to which dominant responses would be triggered in different situational contexts.

A more recent interpretation of arousal and attraction has attempted to integrate the deliberate social-cognitive process suggested by misattribution theory and the more unintentional process suggested by response-facilitation theory. The influence of arousal on attraction might be explained by a judgment and adjustment model. This model proposes that individuals evaluate their attraction towards others automatically. Accordingly, individuals evaluate attraction before they can account for situational factors like the original source of arousal. Recent research has supported the perspective that many social-cognitive processes occur efficiently and without noteworthy levels of individual awareness, intention, or control. Similarly, arousal might be integrated automatically into evaluations of attraction, thereby making attractive opposite-sex persons more attractive and unattractive opposite-sex persons less attractive. Following this automatic process, individuals can control their evaluations and adjust for situational factors. Thus, individuals can adjust their estimates of romantic attraction when they believe that the situation influenced their initial judgments. Because individuals often underestimate or fail to recognize

the influence of arousal, this adjustment reduces but does not eliminate the average influence of arousal on attraction. A handful of experiments have attempted to manipulate the degree to which aroused participants were aware of their original source of arousal, either by making the original source of arousal salient or by distracting participants with a cognitive task (e.g., remembering a seven-digit number without writing it down). Results are potentially consistent with the concept of adjustment; awareness of the original source of arousal seems to reduce the influence of arousal on attraction.

Conclusion

The influence of arousal on attraction is important to scholars because it provides insight into interpersonal attraction and more general emotional and cognitive processes. However, the lay person who is equipped with an awareness of arousal and attraction could attempt to apply this knowledge to his or her advantage. Attractive individuals might be able to enhance their attractiveness by making use of environments that elicit physiological arousal. For example, an attractive individual might appear more attractive to those exercising in a gym or to others on exhilarating amusement park rides. In fact, it seems that some individuals have been using the arousal and attraction effect by taking dates to horror movies in hopes that the arousal generated by a frightening film might enhance romantic excitement. Indeed, so long as there is existing chemistry, providing a potential partner with a plethora of cappuccinos might contribute to an interpersonal love potion.

Craig A. Foster

See also Attraction, Sexual; Excitation Transfer Theory; First Impressions; Interpersonal Attraction; Misattribution of Arousal

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ARRANGED MARRIAGES

Young children in the United States taunt one another about cross-sex friendships by chanting “First comes love, then comes marriage. . . .” This chant reflects a common assumption in the Western industrialized world, as well as elsewhere, about how one enters into a marital relationship—via the process of developing an intimate, romantic relationship with another person and subsequently choosing to formalize a commitment via marriage. In arranged marriages, the people getting married may not know one another prior to their wedding day, and the decisions that resulted in their marriage were made at least in part by other people—their family and community. By some estimates, 80 percent of documented cultures in the world engage in some form of arranged marriage practice. Even in the industrialized West, arranged marriages occurred in the past, and certain subgroups, such as Hindu individuals living in the United States and Canada, continue to arrange marriages in the present time.

Variation in Marital Arranging Practices

The variety of ways in which arrangements for marriage are made across and within cultures is enormous. This variety is made even more complex because cultural practices for arranging marriage are not static—they change over historical time. The exporting of Western concepts like that of love marriage, as represented in films and popular culture, also alters the practices that people in different places engage in and the ways they talk about their relationships.

Some of the variability in practices revolves around who is eligible to be married. For example, cultures and subcultures vary in whether arrangements involve prepubescent children, who may live apart until they reach a marriageable age, whether the age of eligibility for marriage is the same for males and females, and whether first cousins are viewed as appropriate or desirable

marriage partners (termed *consanguineal marriage*). Practices may involve the exchange of gifts or money, in some cases money that comes with the bride (also termed *dowry* or *bride wealth*), and in some cases, money or resources that the groom's family pays as a kind of exchange for the wife. Often, both sides provide at least some gifts or resources, but there is often an imbalance in one or the other direction. The criteria for selecting possible matches also vary substantially. Because arranged marriages often involve establishing relations between families and entail the distribution of family property, wealth and community status figure prominently in many practices. Religion, character, and reputation also are important. The individual capabilities and achievements of the potential spouses may matter to varying degrees—traditionally, brides and grooms may be expected to demonstrate skills relevant to their roles as spouses.

Perhaps most importantly, arranging practices also vary in terms of who does the arranging. In many instances, parents serve a primary role, but cultures vary in the extent to which fathers versus mothers or both parents are involved. Furthermore, in most cultures with arranged marriages, the arrangement engages a variety of individuals in addition to parents, as other parties are consulted. For example, in traditional Hindu arrangement practices, uncles and priests may be consulted for help in identifying and evaluating potential suitors or brides even when parents make primary decisions. The relative power and involvement of the to-be-married individuals varies extensively, from approaches in which the potential spouses can only resist via extreme measures, such as feigning insanity or illness, to approaches in which the potential spouses have full veto power over a potential match. In some cases, the power of the potential spouses to refuse a match varies as a function of gender, with males having more power to refuse than females. Related to the power of potential spouses to refuse a match is the possibility of premarriage contact. Typically, arranging practices that permit more premarriage contact have more scope for potential spouses to develop their own opinions and to provide input. Such contact, however, is not like Western ideas about dating and courtship—continuing to meet with a potential partner carries strong commitments.

Comparing Love and Arranged Marriages

Comparisons of love and arranged marriages often examine either divorce rates or marital satisfaction. Those comparisons, which involve a tiny subset of the array of places in which marriages are arranged, typically show equivalent or lower divorce rates for arranged marriages and equivalent levels of marital satisfaction. There are many problems with interpreting these findings because people who enter into arranged marriages differ from those in love marriages in many respects, even when researchers are looking at love and arranged marriages within a single culture. For example, arranged marriages may have lower divorce rates because the culture as a whole has lower divorce rates or because they involve individuals with more traditional values and a willingness to stay in a marriage that is less than optimal. Lower divorce rates may arise because arranged marriages occur in social systems where women are viewed as the property of men and are therefore unable to exit their marriage, because arranged marriages involve social groups where divorce is negatively stigmatized, or because of a complicated interplay among these factors.

Two other issues bear mention. Although on the surface choosing spouses on the basis of family status, religion, reputation, and other issues that often play a role in arranging marriages looks very different from choosing spouses based on love, both these methods may result in choosing spouses who are similar to each other. At least for younger couples, similarity has been linked to high levels of marital satisfaction. Second, equivalent divorce rates and satisfaction levels may be linked to different underlying processes. For example, couples in love marriages may base marital satisfaction on different factors than do couples in arranged marriages, and the factors predicting how marital satisfaction changes over time may be different in the two types of marriages. These two issues represent important ones for future research that compares love and arranged marriages.

Concerns Regarding Arranged Marriages

Scholars studying arranged marriages sometimes express concerns with the implications of

arranged marriage practices for individual autonomy and broader issues of how different cultural traditions may coexist in pluralistic, multicultural societies. On the one hand, societies that practice arranged marriage are often societies in which men and women are not viewed as equal and in which there is evidence for the oppression and abuse of women (and often children). On the other hand, most scholars note that the issues are very complex because the variety in practices across cultures and over historical time is very large.

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See also Culture and Relationships; Mate Selection

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ASIAN-AMERICAN FAMILIES

Asian Americans represent more than 28 subgroups who share common ethnic origins in Asia and who share similar physical appearances and cultural values. Some Asian Americans immigrated to the United States in the late 19th century and early 20th century, while other more recent immigrants or refugees arrived after the 1965 Immigration Reform Act. Therefore, a single classification of Asian Americans masks important differences within Asian-American groups in terms of immigration experiences, occupational skills, primary languages, income, education, average ages, and ethnic identity.

Considering this diverse background, to speak of the Asian-American family is to ignore the great diversity in the structures, lifestyles, and experiences of such families. This entry describes general patterns of Asian-American families, but it is important to remember the diverse family experiences of Asian Americans.

In general, Asian-American families have frequently been considered problem-free because of their economic and educational success, low divorce rates, and strong family commitment. However, this model family image applies to more established Asian Americans such as Japanese and Chinese Americans rather than to more recent immigrants and refugees from Southeast Asia. Therefore, the variations within Asian-American families exist mainly due to differences in generations and time since immigration. This entry discusses several aspects of Asian-American families including mate selection, relationships between spouses, parent–child relationships, intergenerational relationships, and extended family.

Mate Selection

For many Asian Americans, marriage has been considered not just as a union between two individuals but also, and perhaps more important, as a union between two families. Therefore, Asian-American parents were often involved in mate selection for their offspring. This form of arranged marriage was particularly common among early Asian immigrants in the United States. For example, in the early 1900s, many Japanese male immigrants resorted to “picture-bride marriages” in which the partners knew each other only through the exchange of photographs before marriage. These prospective wives of Japanese men were frequently chosen by their parents and relatives back in Japan. Later generations of Asian Americans, however, have been more likely to select their future spouses based on individual factors. An increase in Asian-American interracial marriage (marriage between two people of different races) since the 1970s indicates that Asian-American marriage has become a matter of individual preference.

Relationships Between Spouses

Traditional Asian-American husbands often maintain an authoritative and dignified relationship to their wives. However, as succeeding generations of Asian Americans become more exposed to the mainstream culture, their marital relations become more like those of most White middle-class American families in which egalitarian couple relations are expected. For example, most Japanese and Chinese Americans who immigrated to the United States in the early 1900s tended to have more egalitarian marital relationships compared with Korean and Vietnamese Americans, many of whom immigrated to the United States after the 1965 immigration reform. This tendency suggests that Japanese and Chinese Americans, through longer contact and participation in the larger culture, are more likely to have absorbed the dominant cultural and familial values in the United States compared with recent immigrants from Korea and Vietnam. This assimilation perspective also partly explains a relatively large number of interracial marriages among well-educated and professional Japanese and Chinese Americans compared with their Korean and Vietnamese counterparts.

Parent–Child Relationships

Some studies on parent–child relationships report that Asian-American children are expected to comply with familial authority to the point of sacrificing their own desires and ambitions. Although this portrayal gives an authoritarian image of Asian-American parents, their relationships with children have been influenced by the diverse historical and immigration experiences of Asians in the United States. For example, Japanese-American parents lost their parental authority and supervision when they were interned during World War II. These parents' activities and contacts with their children were supervised and restricted in internment camps, giving Nisei (the second generation) children greater independence in their decision making. Parent–child conflicts are also reported among Korean-American children and their immigrant parents. It was found that Korean-American children who are proficient

in the Korean language have closer relationships with their parents than do their peers who are not. This relationship is generally found true between immigrant parents and their children among more recently immigrated Asian-American groups.

Although contemporary Asian-American parenting does not seem to differ significantly from that of European Americans, some studies have found that Asian-American parenting is unique in terms of communication styles by using indirect and nonverbal methods of communication. Additionally, many Asian-American fathers feel obligated to be leaders and the principal economic provider in the families. In contrast, many Asian-American women believe that their important family role is to monitor the emotional well-being of their families. These gender differences are more pronounced among Asian Americans compared to other ethnic and nonethnic groups. Consequently, Asian-American children usually report feeling emotionally closer to their mothers than to their fathers.

Intergenerational Relationships

Prior research has generally indicated that Asian Americans tend to have strong commitments to care for their elderly parents. Studies have shown that, compared to European Americans, Asian Americans, in general, feel more obligated to provide more financial aid and interact more frequently with their elderly parents. Asian-American elderly members also tend to live with their family members rather than in nursing homes, and family members of all age levels are typically integrated into family activities. Many younger Asian-American adults are also expected to live with their families until they marry. However, Asian-American intergenerational relationships are undergoing several changes. Among Japanese Americans, for example, retired Nisei, unlike Issei (first generation) parents, generally do not want to live with their children. It has also been reported that contemporary Japanese Americans are less likely to exchange resources between generations than are Chinese, Filipino, and Korean Americans.

Extended Family

Asian Americans are more likely to report sharing their thoughts and problems with their family members and relatives and helping each other than European Americans, the latter giving more emphasis to individual family members' right to privacy. The conventional explanation for the cohesion among family members and extended kin has been that Asian-American values emphasize family solidarity that is derived from Confucian ethics. However, this family cohesion can also be viewed as reflecting a familial response to external pressures on the family. For example, an immigrant Asian family that is coping with adaptation to American society or facing racism can find solace, strength, and identity by affiliating closely within the family. The emphasis on family cohesion could also reflect the historical need for all members of an Asian-American family to work together and cooperate to contribute to the financial support and functioning of the family.

It is difficult to speak of a singular Asian-American family experience. In tracing the diversity within Asian-American families, several sources of diversity should be noted. One is that the formation and maintenance of Asian-American families have been profoundly influenced by the immigration history and external hostility that Asian Americans have faced in the United States. Second, Asian-American family diversity is reflected in the differential experiences of men and women in different social classes. Many working-class Southeast-Asian refugee women are still reluctant to reject their husbands' authority, whereas middle-class Asian-American women who are often employed as professionals have a bargaining chip to negotiate for their husbands' greater involvement in household labor. Asian-American families will experience further intra-ethnic diversity as rates of interracial marriage continue to increase and generational differences divide the experiences of immigrant parents and native-born children. These changes indicate that each Asian-American population will continue to experience its own diverse family lives.

Masako Ishii-Kuntz

See also African-American Families; Extended Families; Family Relationships in Childhood; Hispanic/Latino Families; Kin Relationships

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ASSESSMENT OF COUPLES

Assessing couples involves measuring relationship quality and other aspects of intimate dyadic relationships. Popular methods include self-report questionnaires for relationship satisfaction, communication behavior, and relationship cognitions, as well as laboratory-based observational methods, informal observation, and clinical interview. Although dyadic partners complete many measures individually, the conceptual focus in couples assessment is on relationship functioning. This entry examines conceptual issues and common approaches to assessing married couples and similar intimate dyads.

Measurement Questions About Dyadic Relationship Quality

The most widely used and cited measure of intimate relationship quality is the 32-item Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS) developed by Graham Spanier to measure the level of adjustment in heterosexual, homosexual, married, or unmarried cohabitating romantic dyads. Many writers have questioned whether a single self-report construct such as marital adjustment can represent the health or status of a relationship. The predominant belief is that global self-report measures reflect the overriding sentiment of the person

about the relationship, and this global construct is best termed relationship satisfaction.

Assessment of Couples' Distress as a Syndrome

Although most self-report marital assessment methods yield dimensional scores, investigators have used a range of strategies to dichotomize couples into happy or unhappy categories for purposes of treatment study selection or defining treatment success. These strategies have derived cut-points by comparing clinic versus nonclinic or treatment-seeking versus nontreatment-seeking couples. These strategies have obvious limitations; for example, it is clear that many unhappy spouses in poorly functioning relationships never seek or enter treatment, and certainly a portion of those relationships fail.

In the last two decades, some relationship theorists and therapists have sought formal recognition of diagnoses for types of relationship dysfunction, such as marital discord, in standard psychiatric diagnostic manuals. The empirical work on developing reliable and valid structured interview assessment methods to support this effort has been limited. Existing diagnostic interview assessments are modestly associated with cut-point strategies for dichotomizing successful and unsuccessful relationships.

Use of Assessment Results to Represent Couples' Relationship Functioning

The assessment of couples often occurs at the level of the individual, as in the self-report of relationship satisfaction, but the results from assessing two partners are often integrated in some way to represent the couple system in data analyses or in clinical description. There are various approaches, such as using the mean of the individual partners' scores or an index of the difference in their scores. These approaches have been criticized on the basis that they substantially obscure the contribution of individual partners' scores. The concept of *level validity* has been introduced to describe the degree to which individual family members' scores can be used to represent the couple (or larger family unit). Level validity can be examined using structural equations modeling in which the contributions of the scores of each type of family member (e.g., husband, wife) to the scores of the unit are estimated simultaneously.

Important Domains as Targets of Couples' Assessment by Self-Report and Related Methods

Both verbal and nonverbal interaction behaviors are recognized as key domains of evaluation. Assessment can focus on discrete behaviors (e.g., problem description, solutions) as well as on patterns that couples exhibit. The Response to Conflict Scale developed by Gary Birchler and colleagues is a 24-item checklist that assesses destructive interaction strategies, including "yelling or screaming," "swearing" and "criticizing" of both partners. The Conflict Tactics Scale, developed by Murray Straus, focuses primarily on verbal and physical abuse strategies. The Peterson Interaction Record (D. R. Peterson) is a less-structured measure that directs partners to record the context of couples' interaction and the sequence of the interaction; the form also invites differing perceptions of an event. The Communication Patterns Questionnaire developed by Andrew Christensen and Chris Heavey assesses the destructive demand-withdraw pattern that occurs when one partner attempts to engage, influence, or demand change, while the other partner avoids, withdraws, or stonewalls the first partner.

Relationship cognitions have also been shown to be important for the quality of relationships. Measures of relationship cognitions include attributional dimensions associated with depression (i.e., internal-external, stable-unstable, specific-global) as well as dimensions such as responsibility, blame, and attributions to malicious intent of the partner. Reliable measures with evidence of validity include the Marital Attitude Survey (Norman Epstein and colleagues), Dyadic Attributional Inventory (Donald Baucom and colleagues), and the Relationship Attribution Measure (Frank Fincham and Tom Bradbury). Measures of maladaptive relationship beliefs include the Relationship Beliefs Inventory (Norman Epstein and colleagues) and the Inventory of Specific Relationship Standards (Donald Baucom, Norman Epstein, and colleagues). Other methods, such as video-assisted recall (VAR) of relationship cognitions, are less practical but are used in research to ascertain novel types of cognitions. The VAR method involves replaying a couple's laboratory-based videorecorded communication sample to a partner from the couple, who is prompted at

regular intervals to pause and record his or her thoughts about the interaction as realistically as possible. The recorded thoughts are then coded using standard cognitive dimensions or novel coding categories.

Sexual functioning, a highly important aspect of intimate relationships, can be evaluated briefly using the Arizona Sexual Experiences Scale (developed by Cynthia McGahuey and colleagues) assessing sex drive, sexual arousal, penile erection or vaginal lubrication, ability to reach orgasm, and level of satisfaction with orgasm. More detailed assessment using a structured interview tool can be accomplished using the Derogatis Sexual Functioning Index (Leonard Derogatis).

The degree of positive and negative affect expressed by partners is another important area to assess. Clinicians typically assess this domain through informal observation during the clinical interview or by observing couples' communication. The most important factors include the degree to which partners reciprocate positive and negative affects, the intensity and degree of escalation of negative affect, and the degree to which negative affect is expressed across many situations. Affect can be assessed in research contexts using a video-assisted method in which partners provide continuous ratings of their own affect using a rating dial, while viewing a videorecorded sample of the couple's communication.

Multidimensional self-report measures such as the Marital Satisfaction Inventory (MSI) developed by Douglas Snyder and colleagues cover many of the key areas for assessment in a single instrument. The subscales of the MSI cover a wide range of aspects of couples' relationships including global satisfaction, affect expression, ineffectiveness of problem solving, and level of satisfaction in specific content areas (e.g., finances). The Style of Conflict Inventory, developed by Michael Metz, follows a cognitive behavioral framework by assessing both communication styles (e.g., engaging versus avoiding pattern) and partners' perceptions of their conflict.

Observational Methods

Laboratory-based observational assessment of couples' communication has been an established

research method for close to four decades. The most common procedure involves having a couple discuss a specific issue or problem for a discrete 10-to-20 minute time period in an attempt to solve, or come to a resolution, on the topic. The discussion is videorecorded and later rated by trained observers using a coding scheme devised for the purpose.

Coding schemes have typically focused on a broad range of problem solving and affective behaviors, although more recently investigators have devised systems to assess social support behaviors. The Marital Interaction Coding System (MICS) and related systems, developed by Robert Weiss and others, assesses rates and sequences of specific units of spouses' behaviors. The Specific Affect Coding System developed by John Gottman focuses on physical, facial, vocal, and verbal behavior to code a range of positive and negative affective states. Other coding systems use ratings of behavioral dimensions (e.g., criticism) based on specific time units across the recording period to characterize couples' communication. Data analyses have typically used two basic strategies: percentages or rates of categories of behavior and the analysis of sequential association of partners' behaviors over time.

Physiological Measures

Marital quality and couples' conflict have been shown to have significant physiological correlates—including long-term physical well-being of intimate partners and even outcomes such as the rate of wound healing. There are several physiological measures that have been linked to negative interaction patterns, primarily associated with endocrinological and immunological functioning. Excessive excretion of cortisol, a key hormone related to stress, has a negative impact on immunological regulation, as well as other physical risk factors such as osteoporosis and abdominal obesity. Cortisol levels, extracted from blood samples drawn at 15-minute intervals during a couple's communication interaction task, are associated with a range of observational and cognitive measures. Epinephrine, norepinephrine, growth hormone, and adrenocorticotrophic hormone (ACTH) also appear to be important physiological correlates worthy of measurement.

Clinical Interviewing and Assessing Couples for Treatment

Clinical assessment of couples typically has the following elements: partners' statement of key problems, relationship history, paper and pencil self-report of satisfaction and other domains of relationship functioning, and observation of the couple's interaction. The clinician may also assess individual histories and clinical symptoms depending on the presenting complaints and context of the treatment. Initial assessment often extends to two or three hourly sessions. Clinicians must strike a balance between getting sufficient, standardized information about the couple's problems and using methods that are acceptable and expeditious from the clients' points of view.

The relationship history entails the date and manner in which the couple met and includes the major phases and milestones for the couple (e.g., relationship development, marriage, and birth of children). It is important to observe the degree of partners' fondness for the other, use of relationship-oriented language, and negative attitudes during their reciting of the history. Observation of couples' communication in the clinical setting can occur as an unstructured observation as the assessment interview proceeds, or can follow the basic procedure of laboratory observational assessment with careful observation by the clinician. Using this latter strategy, termed analogue behavioral observation, the clinician can benefit from familiarity with well-validated and reliable observational coding systems.

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See also Assessment of Families; Coding Systems for Observing Interaction; Dyadic Data Analysis; Marital Satisfaction, Assessment of; Negative Affect Reciprocity; Sexual Dysfunctions

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ASSESSMENT OF FAMILIES

Four aspects of family assessment are discussed in this entry: (1) the purpose of family assessment, (2) the level of assessment, (3) the importance of content and construct validity, and (4) the level of analysis. Although this is not an exhaustive consideration of family assessment, these issues have been central topics for the past 30 years.

Purpose of Family Assessment

Scholars and practitioners from an array of disciplines (e.g., family studies, psychology, sociology, public health) are interested in family relationships, most typically as predictors of specific well-being outcomes such as individual development and health status. This interest has stemmed from the belief that family dynamics and relationships are fundamental correlates or predictors of individuals' cognitions, emotions, and behavior in close relationships and role settings.

Scholars' disciplinary orientation and research interests shape how family assessment is conceptualized and designed. For example, family studies

scholars have focused on the connections between subsystems or dyads within the family, such as marriage (or cohabitating) relationships and parenting. From this perspective, family is examined as a set of potentially interconnected dyads. Family studies scholars who have included an assessment of the whole family often have tried to sort out predominant influences. Do families as a whole matter or does dyadic functioning take priority as an influence of individual well-being? Do whole family system properties, such as cohesion, add any additional understanding to assessments of parent-child relationships, such as attachment, or assessments of marital relationships, such as intimacy?

Most scholars generally have approached the issue of family assessment in two different ways. Some disciplines, such as developmental psychology, have favored focusing on parent-child relationships as central correlates of child and adolescent development. Often properties of the parent-child relationship have been viewed as more central because they are thought to be more proximal to developmental outcomes than are whole family system properties. Recent theorizing has shifted a bit in this area with some scholars testing process models that suggest that certain family characteristics, such as cohesion or disengagement, moderate the relationships between parent-child properties and individual outcomes. Within this paradigm, family becomes one of the contexts for the effects of socialization influences on individual well-being.

Scholars in disciplines with a health and medical focus often have focused on the family system as a whole. They typically have tested and implemented practice models that suggest that family properties shape individual health outcomes, such as children's asthmatic symptoms, adolescents' use of condoms, and parents' cardiovascular health. Within this paradigm, scholars most often have conceptualized the family system as a holistic constellation of relationships and have assessed general family functioning or specific aspects of family process and structure such as openness and quality of communication among family members.

Although an extensive listing of family constructs assessed in the research literature is beyond the scope of this entry, a core of salient family constructs is feasible. Frequently studied family constructs have included adaptability, affective expression,

behavioral control, boundaries, boundary ambiguity, coalitions, cohesion, communication, conflict, coping, differentiation, disengagement, enmeshment, fusion, individuation, intimacy, and family stress.

Level of Assessment

There are four common levels of family assessment: families as a whole, triads, dyads, and individual family members. One controversial issue is whether the level of assessment must match the level of conceptualization. For example, when scholars study a child's involvement in parents' marital conflict, which is by definition a triadic construct, must the researchers collect information from all three family members? Although there has been little consensus regarding the issue of matching between the level of conceptualization and level of assessment, two conclusions have received a great deal of support. First, the conceptual definition of the construct must be explicit and must delineate the ways in which cognitions, emotions, and behaviors constitute the essential elements of the construct. This definition and delineation informs assessment decisions and affects the degree to which matching is necessary. Second, scholars must demonstrate a clear understanding of systematic biases that may occur when implementing specific assessment decisions and must design research in ways that minimize the chance that these biases affect the interpretations of the findings. For example, it is plausible that parents' depressive affect negatively skews their reports of children's behavior problems and that adolescents' attachment security increases their perceptions of positive parenting behaviors. In the context of these examples, without adequate consideration within the design and analysis, interpretations of results that derive from parents' reports of children's problem behaviors and adolescents' reports of parenting might be suspect because of the contaminating influence of parents' depressive symptoms or adolescents' attachment insecurities. In general, systematic biases can stem from the influence of related constructs, as illustrated in the above example, from family members' personality traits, from differences in developmental and relational expectations among family members, and from the implementation of specific data collection

methods, as in reactivity concerns that are present in observational methods.

A second controversial issue is whether the level of assessment must match the level of analysis. For example, do all three family members need to be included in the assessment procedure when the construct being assessed is triadic, such as youths' involvement in parents' disputes? Until recently this dilemma focused on (1) the use of aggregated scores, such as summed scores or discrepancy scores; and (2) the inclusion of individual scores within the same analytic model. Each procedure raised conceptual and methodological concerns, some of which have threatened the validity of interpretations of findings. Recent developments regarding the use of multilevel statistical analyses have provided exciting and innovative techniques for addressing this dilemma because both within (i.e., across family members) and between families hypotheses can be tested. The examination of within and between family hypotheses will advance the understanding of family dynamics and family influences on individual well-being.

A third important issue in decision-making regarding level of assessment is measurement equivalence. Measurement equivalence means that a given assessment means the same thing for different groups of respondents. This issue is particularly important when individual family members are reporters. For example, do measures of family communication quality mean the same thing to mothers and fathers? Do measures of parental harshness mean the same thing to African-American and Asian-American parents? The issue of measurement equivalence has been central to cross-ethnic and cross-cultural research but has not been adequately addressed in family assessment. Ethnic, racial, and gender equivalence (e.g., mothers and fathers, daughters and sons) needs to be examined carefully before testing substantive hypotheses regarding mean differences and patterns of family influence.

Content and Construct Validity

Content validity focuses on evaluating how well a given measure or assessment captures the conceptual domain of the construct the measure represents. It centers on identifying the constituent elements of the construct (i.e., what is in the domain and what is not). For scholars who assess

general family functioning, the key issue has been identifying central elements and using a valid measure that adequately covers the conceptual domain of family functioning. Past researchers have identified as few as 2 central elements and as many as 10. Ronald Sabatelli and Suzanne Bartle emphasized five that are important elements of general family functioning: (1) facilitating the development and enhancement of identity for individual family members and the whole family, (2) establishing and maintaining internal and external boundaries, (3) managing the emotional climate, (4) managing the use of family resources, and (5) identifying and addressing individual and system stress. Scholars interested in general family functioning would be well served to include assessments of these five aspects even when a single assessment score is desired.

Construct validity focuses on evaluating how adequately a given assessment tool measures the focal construct rather than other related and unrelated constructs. Scholars who are interested in assessing two or more aspects of family, triadic, or dyadic functioning need to ensure that the measures of two related aspects of family functioning occupy distinct conceptual domains. For example, scholars recently have shown that parents' use of psychological and behavioral control strategies are related but distinct constructs. Therefore, the measures of these two control strategies should have evidence of adequate discriminant validity (i.e., the part of construct validity that shows measurement distinction across different constructs). Conceptual clarity, discussed in the first section of this entry, provides a good foundation for ensuring this, as does identifying and minimizing general biases such as social desirability and reactivity that can cause two related measures of family process to become even more confounded. Discriminant validity also can be enhanced within a given study or intervention program by assessing some aspects of family relationships, such as perceived fairness, using self-reports, and other aspects, such as harsh communication, using observations or participants' daily time diaries. One of several reasons this is an important issue is because some researchers have found that how family members' feel or think about a particular relationship influences their behavior as much or more than their family member's preceding behavior.

Level of Analysis

Scholars have discussed and debated how to use multiple scores for a given family (e.g., observations of several family members, self-reports from mothers and fathers) in cases where a unitary family score is not obtained using an observational method and measure. A central issue has been whether or not to combine within-family scores to obtain one score for each family on any given aspect of family, triadic, or dyadic functioning. Scholars who have combined scores generally have chosen to either take an average to represent the family system or have created discrepancies scores that represent each family member's deviation from the family average. Each might be useful under certain circumstances, but conceptual and statistical issues must be considered carefully. Recent statistical advances emerging from the increased use of structural equation modeling have helped address this issue by allowing each family member's score to serve as an observable indicator of the unobserved construct being measured. This method creates a family score that is a weighted composite of the individual family member's scores. Structural equation modeling also allows the researcher to correlate the error terms that help control for some of the plausible systematic assessment biases identified in previous sections of this entry. This possibility has been described in the literature on family assessment as shared or correlated measurement error. Thus, interpretations of findings are less susceptible to inference problems when some of these potential dependencies that naturally occur in family assessment are accounted for in both the research design and in the statistical analyses.

Recent major innovations also have occurred in family assessment research with the increased use of multilevel modeling, such as hierarchical linear modeling. This technique allows for the simultaneous analysis of both within-family and between-family data. For example, one can examine differences among mothers', fathers', and early adolescents' perceptions of youth autonomy expectations within and across families. Researchers are now able to test process models that suggest different explanations for differences among family members than between families. These statistical advances, combined with greater attention to issues of conceptual clarity and valid measurement, have contributed to significant improvements in the assessments of

families that will enhance the efficacy and effectiveness of prevention and interventions focused on reducing family stress and improving functioning.

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See also Assessment of Couples; Coding Systems for Observing Interaction; Conflict Measurement and Assessment; Dyadic Data Analysis; Family Data, Analysis of; Marital Satisfaction, Assessment of

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ASSORTATIVE MATING

Who one chooses as a partner is often thought of as an outcome of romantic love and mutual compatibility. However, on an aggregative level, individuals' decisions about who to marry, cohabit with, and date follow regular patterns. The tendency for individuals to form romantic relationships nonrandomly with respect to a given

characteristic or set of characteristics is referred to as *assortative mating*. Scholars have consistently found a strong tendency for individuals to choose partners who are similar to themselves (*homogamy*) on many characteristics including physical attractiveness, social status, educational attainment, IQ, and age. Individuals are also much more likely to marry within than outside their social group (*endogamy*) as defined by race/ethnicity, religion, and immigrant status. This entry describes why scholars are interested in assortative mating, outlines historical trends in matching patterns, and reviews recent research on differences in matching patterns by relationship type.

Patterns of assortative mating are of interest to social scientists for several reasons. First, marriage patterns are an indicator of a society's openness. Because marriage creates intimate ties between individuals and families, societies that have many marriages across social boundaries are thought to be more open than societies that have few. Second, patterns of assortative mating have consequences for the distribution of resources in societies. Because spouses share resources with one another and potentially one another's families, marriage within socioeconomic groups tends to reinforce inequalities across families, whereas random matching ameliorates inequalities. Third, to the extent that children's traits are learned or inherited from their parents, assortative mating has consequences for the population composition of future generations. Finally, patterns of assortative mating shed light on gender norms and inequalities. Because socioeconomic status often confers power in relationships, marriage patterns in societies in which most men marry "down" (*hypergamy*) may reflect and reinforce power disparities between husbands and wives.

Historical studies of assortative mating reveal broad shifts in mate selection patterns. In the United States, race/ethnic barriers to marriage have weakened considerably. Although still relatively rare, interracial marriages are now far more common than they were in the 1960s. Interreligious marriages are more common than interracial marriages and have also become increasingly common since the 1960s, but these changes have not been as dramatic as the increase in interracial marriage. By contrast, most studies have found that educational intermarriage has become less common in

the United States since the 1960s. In other countries such as Britain, however, educational intermarriage has become more common. Examining the overall resemblance of spouses masks significant changes in gender patterns of assortative mating. For example, since the 1970s, the likelihood that men marry women with less education than themselves has fallen substantially; so much so that in 2000, when one spouse had more education than the other, that spouse was more likely to be the wife than the husband. Thus, the traditional pattern of men marrying down has reversed.

Scholars have proposed several hypotheses to explain observed trends in assortative mating. Modernization theory predicts that as societies industrialize, the basis of success shifts from ascribed characteristics, or those characteristics inherited from one's parents such as race/ethnicity, class background, and to a large extent religion, to achieved characteristics, such as education. Adapting this theory to assortative mating, scholars hypothesize that matching on race/ethnicity, social background, and religion will decline over time whereas matching on education will increase, a hypothesis largely consistent with observed patterns. A related hypothesis is that individuals today have more freedom to intermarry because parents, religious communities, and other third parties have less control over young people's marriage choices as a result of increased geographic mobility and a prolonged interval between nest-leaving and marriage. Other scholars emphasize the potential link between economic inequality and assortative mating. They hypothesize that when economic inequality between groups is large, the "costs" of marrying down will increase, giving individuals a greater incentive to marry homogamously. The difference between the earnings of college graduates and those with less education has increased substantially over the past several decades, a trend that is consistent with the increase in educational homogamy. Finally, increases in educational assortative mating may also be the result of an increasing symmetry in the preferences of men and women for mates. As women have increased their labor force participation, men may have begun to compete for high-earning, highly educated women, just as women have traditionally competed for high-earning, highly educated men. Increasing symmetry of men's and women's preferences tends to increase educational

homogamy as a result of increased competition for highly educated mates.

Studies of assortative mating were once largely confined to marriage, but because of the increasing prevalence of cohabitation, there is a growing body of research on mate selection patterns among individuals who choose more nontraditional unions. The first studies on this topic compared the resemblance of married and cohabiting couples to better understand the nature and meaning of cohabitation. Because who one chooses as a partner may depend on the type of partnership sought, differences in partner selection provide insight into differences between relationship types. A common hypothesis is that individuals in the most committed relationships will be the most likely to be homogamous because heterogamous couples split up before moving to the next relationship stage. Empirical research is consistent with this claim: dating couples are the most likely to cross race/ethnic and religious divides, followed by cohabitators, and last by married couples. Other research has incorporated information on matching among gay and lesbian couples. These studies find that same-sex couples tend to resemble one another to a lesser extent than different-sex cohabiting and married couples on a variety of characteristics including race/ethnicity, age, and education. Specifically, same-sex male couples tend to resemble one another the least, followed by same-sex female couples, different-sex cohabitators, and different-sex married couples.

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See also Interpersonal Attraction; Interracial and Interethnic Relationships; Marriage Markets; Mate Preferences; Mate Selection

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ATTACHMENT THEORY

Attachment Theory, originally formulated by John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth, conceptualizes emotional bonds in close social relationships. Attachment Theory is one of the most influential psychological theories of the past half century, having generated thousands of published studies and scores of books. It has been adopted and used by all kinds of researchers, including developmentalists, clinicians, personality and social psychologists, and even psychologists who study groups and organizations. There are several reasons for the theory's success: First, it is both deep and broad. It has roots in psychoanalysis, cognitive developmental psychology, control systems theory, and primate ethology and has provided a new approach for social and personality psychologists who study social relationships in adulthood. Second, the theory was expounded very clearly and systematically in Bowlby's trilogy on attachment and loss—*Attachment* (1969/1982), *Separation* (1973), and *Loss* (1980)—one of the most thorough and coherent integrations yet achieved of clinical insights and diverse research literatures concerning the impact of close relationships on personality development and psychopathology. Third, although Bowlby was primarily a psychoanalyst and clinical theorist rather than a researcher, his close collaboration with Ainsworth, an empirically oriented research psychologist, resulted in measures and research paradigms that have been used effectively by basic researchers as well as clinicians. This entry briefly summarizes the current version of the theory, especially as it applies to adults.

The Attachment Behavioral System

According to Bowlby, human infants are born with a repertoire of behaviors (*attachment behaviors*) that were selected during evolution to increase the

likelihood of maintaining proximity to supportive others (whom Bowlby called *attachment figures*). Attachment behaviors include making eye contact, smiling, crying, calling, following, hugging, and clinging. Attachment figures—such as parents, grandparents, neighbors, older siblings, and daycare workers—typically protect a child from threats and dangers, provide encouragement and promote safe exploration of the environment, and help the infant learn to regulate emotions. Proximity-seeking behaviors are part of an adaptive behavioral system (the *attachment behavioral system*) that emerged over the course of primate evolution because it increased the likelihood of survival and reproduction in species whose offspring are born before they are able to walk, explore their environment, find food and water, or protect themselves from predators and other dangers. This behavioral system governs the choice, activation, and termination of proximity-seeking behaviors aimed at attaining an attachment figure's protection in times of need. Although the attachment system is most important early in life, Bowlby claimed it is active over the entire life span and is evident in thoughts and behaviors related to proximity seeking in times of need. This claim provided the impetus for subsequent theorists and researchers to conceptualize and study adult attachment.

During infancy, primary caregivers (such as parents) are likely to occupy the role of attachment figure. During adolescence and adulthood, peer relationship partners often become attachment figures, including close friends and romantic partners. Teachers and supervisors in academic settings or therapists in clinical settings can also serve as important sources of comfort and support. Moreover, groups, institutions, and spiritual personages (e.g., God, the Buddha, the Virgin Mary) can also be recruited as attachment figures. In addition, mental representations (thoughts, memories, images, conscious and unconscious) of attachment figures can serve as internal sources of support, comfort, and protection. They can also provide models of loving behavior that help a person sustain a sense of security even in the absence of physically present attachment figures.

From an attachment perspective, a specific relationship partner is an attachment figure, and a specific relationship is an attachment relationship, but only to the extent that the partner and

the relationship accomplish three important functions. First, the attachment figure must be viewed as someone from whom comforting proximity can be sought in times of stress or need, which often implies that a degree of worry, distress, and protest will arise if proximity to this person is threatened by separation or reduced attentiveness. Second, the person should be viewed as an actual or potential safe haven that can provide comfort, support, protection, and security in times of need. Third, the person should be viewed as a secure base, allowing a child or adult to pursue personal goals in a safe environment and to sustain exploration, risk taking, and personal growth. In other words, the attachment figure should be viewed as a haven of safety when the world seems dangerous and as an encourager and support provider when the world seems safe and offers interesting challenges for the development of skills and knowledge.

According to Bowlby, the goal of the attachment system is to increase a person's sense of security—a sense that the world is generally safe and challenging in a good way, that one can rely on others for protection and support when needed, and that one can confidently explore the environment and engage in social (affiliative) and nonsocial (skill learning) activities without fear of injury or failure. This goal is made particularly salient by actual or symbolic threats or by appraising an attachment figure as not sufficiently available or responsive. In such cases, the attachment system is activated, and the individual is motivated to reestablish actual or symbolic proximity to an attachment figure (a set of behaviors and behavioral tendencies that attachment researchers call the *primary strategy* of the attachment system). These bids for proximity persist until a sense of security is restored, at which time the individual comfortably returns to other activities.

During infancy, the primary attachment strategy includes mostly nonverbal expressions of need, such as crawling toward the attachment figure, reaching out to be picked up, crying, clinging, and so on. In adulthood, this primary strategy includes many other methods of establishing contact (e.g., talking, calling someone on the telephone, sending an e-mail or text message, driving to the person's workplace) as well as mentally

conjuring up soothing, comforting, encouraging mental representations of attachment figures. Such mental representations can bolster a person's sense of security, allowing him or her to continue pursuing other goals without interrupting goal pursuit to engage in bids for proximity and protection.

Bowlby described many of the adaptive benefits of proximity seeking. Becoming and remaining physically and emotionally close to another person is necessary for forming and maintaining successful, satisfying relationships. Moreover, seeking proximity to a loving, caring relationship partner helps a person learn to regulate and deescalate negative emotions, such as anxiety, anger, and sadness, which allows a person to be emotionally balanced and resilient in the face of life's inevitable stresses. Attachment security is also important as a foundation for learning about life's tasks and developing necessary and self-chosen skills of all kinds. A child or adult who feels threatened and inadequately protected or supported has a difficult time directing attention to free play, curious investigation of objects and environments, and affiliative relationships with peers. Extended over long periods, this kind of interference disrupts the development of self-efficacy, self-esteem, and trust in other people. Because of Bowlby's emphasis on felt security, he rejected theoretical formulations that equated attachment with excessive dependency or childishness. In his view, secure attachment provides a foundation for personal growth and mature autonomy, states that continue to involve successful close relationships.

Individual Differences in Attachment Working Models

Bowlby also discussed individual differences in the quality of attachment-system functioning. In his view, these individual differences reflect the sensitivity and responsiveness of one's past attachment figures to bids for proximity and support, and they take the form of internalized *working models* (i.e., expectations, cognitive schemas) of self and others in relationships. These ideas have been empirically supported in several longitudinal studies running from infancy to early adulthood.

Interactions with attachment figures who are available and responsive in times of need allow the attachment system to function smoothly and effectively. They promote a sense of connectedness and security, create positive expectations concerning other people's likely responsiveness and social support, and enhance perceptions of oneself as valuable, lovable, and special. When a person's attachment figures are not reliably available and supportive, however, a sense of security is not attained, working models of self and relationship partners contain many negative, distressing elements, and strategies of affect regulation other than normal proximity seeking (ones that Mary Main called *secondary attachment strategies*) are adopted and reinforced.

Attachment Theorists emphasize two secondary strategies: hyperactivation and deactivation of the attachment system. Hyperactivation is manifested in energetic, insistent attempts to get a relationship partner, viewed as insufficiently available or responsive, to pay more attention and provide better care and support. Hyperactivating strategies include being overly vigilant and intrusive regarding a relationship partner's interest, availability, and commitment or reliability; clinging to and attempting to control the partner; energetically attempting to achieve greater physical and emotional closeness, and being too dependent on relationship partners as constant sources of protection or reassurance. Deactivation of the attachment system includes inhibition or suppression of proximity-seeking tendencies and development of a personal style that Bowlby called *compulsive self-reliance*. Deactivating strategies require a person to deny or downplay attachment needs; avoid closeness, intimacy, commitment, and dependence; and maintain cognitive, emotional, and physical distance from others. They also involve active inattention to threatening events and personal vulnerabilities, as well as suppression of thoughts and memories that evoke distress because such thoughts might cause unwanted urges to seek proximity to and rely on other people.

According to Attachment Theory, a particular history of attachment experiences and the resulting formation of a person's attachment-related working models lead to relatively stable individual differences in *attachment style*—a habitual pattern of expectations, needs, emotions, and behavior in

interpersonal interactions and close relationships. Depending on how attachment style is measured, it includes a person's typical attachment-related thoughts, feelings, and behavior in a particular relationship (relationship-specific style) or across relationships (global attachment style).

The concept of attachment patterns or styles was first proposed by Ainsworth to describe infants' responses to separations from and reunions with their mother in a laboratory Strange Situation designed to activate the infants' attachment systems. Based on this procedure, infants were originally classified into one of three categories: secure, anxious, or avoidant. In the 1980s, researchers from different psychological subdisciplines (developmental, clinical, personality, and social psychology) constructed new measures of attachment style to extend attachment research into adolescence and adulthood. Based on a developmental and clinical approach, Main and her colleagues devised the Adult Attachment Interview to study adolescents' and adults' mental representations of attachment to their parents during childhood. In an independent line of research, Cindy Hazan and Phillip Shaver, who wished to apply Bowlby and Ainsworth's ideas to the study of romantic relationships, developed a self-report measure of adult attachment style. In its original form, the measure consisted of three brief descriptions of constellations of feelings and behaviors in close relationships that were intended to parallel the three infant attachment patterns identified by Ainsworth's Strange Situation research.

Hazan and Shaver's study was followed by hundreds of others that used the simple self-report measure to examine the interpersonal and intrapersonal correlates of adult attachment style. Over time, attachment researchers made methodological and conceptual improvements to the original self-report measure and reached the conclusion that attachment styles are best conceptualized as regions in a two-dimensional space. The first dimension, attachment-related avoidance, concerns discomfort with emotional closeness and depending on relationship partners, as well as a preference for interpersonal distance and self-reliance. Avoidant individuals, identified by using self-report measures, employ deactivating strategies to cope with insecurity and distress. The second dimension, attachment-related anxiety, includes a strong desire

for closeness and safety, intense worries about partner availability and responsiveness and about one's value to the partner, and the use of hyperactivating strategies (crying, begging, intruding, demanding) for dealing with insecurity and distress. People who score low on both dimensions are said to be secure or to have a secure attachment style.

Attachment styles are formed initially in early interactions with primary caregivers, a conclusion supported by much research, but Bowlby contended that notable interactions with significant others throughout life have the effect of updating a person's attachment working models. Moreover, although attachment style is often portrayed as a single, global orientation toward close relationships, there are theoretical and empirical reasons for viewing working models as parts of a memory network that includes a complex, heterogeneous array of specific and generalized attachment representations. In fact, research indicates that (a) people possess multiple attachment schemas, (b) that both congruent and incongruent working models can coexist in a complex memory network, and (c) that actual or imagined encounters with supportive or unsupportive interaction partners can activate particular attachment-related memories and expectations even if they are incongruent with a person's global attachment style. These various representations can be experimentally or therapeutically "primed" in order to change a person's attachment orientation in either the short run or the long run.

According to Attachment Theory, the physical and emotional availability of an actual security provider, or access to mental representations of supportive attachment figures, increases the sense of felt security and fosters a broaden-and-build cycle of attachment security. This cycle includes a cascade of mental and behavioral processes that increase a person's resources for maintaining emotional stability in times of stress, encourage intimate and deeply interdependent bonds with others, increase personal adjustment, and expand a person's perspectives and capacities (e.g., by allowing the person to be more creative, resourceful, or thoughtful). In the long run, repeated experiences of attachment-figure availability have an enduring effect on intrapsychic organization and interpersonal behavior. At the intrapsychic level, such experiences act as a continuing resilience resource,

sustaining emotional well-being and adjustment. At the interpersonal level, repeated experiences of attachment-figure availability provide a foundation for attachment security, which encourages the formation and maintenance of warm, satisfying, stable, and harmonious relationships.

Although secondary attachment strategies are initially aimed at achieving a workable relationship with a particular inconsistently available or consistently distant or unavailable attachment figure, they are often maladaptive when used in later relationships where proximity, intimacy, and interdependence would be more rewarding. Moreover, according to Bowlby, these insecure attachment strategies are risk factors that reduce resilience in times of stress or loss and increase the probability of emotional difficulties and poor adjustment. Anxious attachment encourages distress intensification and evokes a stream of negative memories, thoughts, and emotions, which in turn interferes with cognitive organization and, in some cases, precipitates psychopathology. Although avoidant individuals can often sustain a defensive façade of security and imperturbability, they ignore, misinterpret, or misunderstand their emotional reactions and have difficulty dealing with prolonged, demanding stressors that require active problem-confrontation and the mobilization of external sources of support. In addition, although avoidant individuals are often able to suppress or ignore distressing emotions, the distress can still be indirectly manifested in somatic symptoms, sleep problems, and other physical health problems. Moreover, avoidant individuals are prone to transform unresolved distress into hostility, loneliness, and estrangement from others.

Adult attachment research is currently being extended in studies of stress-related physiological processes (e.g., secretion of the stress hormone cortisol) and patterns of brain activation (e.g., overactivation of emotion generators and underactivation of frontal executive functions needed for emotion regulation). Moreover, what Bowlby called the attachment behavioral system has been linked to the functioning of other innate behavioral systems, such as caregiving, exploration, and sex, with results that are being applied clinically in individual and couples therapy. In sum, Bowlby and Ainsworth's concept of attachment has become central to most psychological subdisciplines, and

the scientific and clinical influence of Attachment Theory shows no sign of waning.

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See also Adult Attachment, Individual Differences; Adult Attachment Interview; Attachment Typologies, Childhood; Dependency Paradox; Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy; Evolutionary Psychology and Human Relationships; Strange Situation

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ATTACHMENT TYPOLOGIES, CHILDHOOD

John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth, pioneers of Attachment Theory, have set forth several criteria

that need to be met in order for a relationship to be considered an attachment relationship. Attachment relationships in childhood have been described as enduring, emotional bonds that a child forms with a particular caregiver, typically a parent. Ideally, the relationship provides the child with security and comfort so that he or she can use the attachment figure as a secure base from which to explore the environment and as a safe haven in times of distress. The formation of attachment to caregivers is a normative event. That is, all children form attachments to their caregivers even if they do not receive adequate care. Attachment relationships are thought to be long-enduring, and the attachment figure is not interchangeable with another person. There is a desire to maintain closeness to the attachment figure and reestablish proximity if the bond is threatened. In an attachment relationship, a child may experience distress if separated from his or her attachment figure and will experience grief if there is permanent loss. This entry will focus on parent-child attachment during childhood (1 to 10 years of age).

This entry begins with a discussion of normative changes in the attachment system from infancy through middle childhood and then moves to a description of individual differences in the quality of attachment and on how differences in attachment organization are related to children's developmental outcomes. A number of complex issues surrounding measuring attachment during this age period are also highlighted. The entry ends with current directions in the study of attachment during childhood.

Changes in the Attachment System From Infancy to Middle Childhood

During infancy, children begin to organize their affect, cognition, and behavior in relation to a particular figure. Their behavior is organized around the set goal of the attachment system. The set goal refers to a desired state children try to achieve, which in infancy is proximity to an attachment figure. When infants experience a threat or distress, their attachment systems are activated and they will display several attachment behaviors (e.g., crying) to achieve the goal of proximity (e.g., physical contact with an attachment figure). Once

the goal is achieved, and distress is alleviated, the attachment system is less activated, and infants can explore their environment.

As children move from infancy to early childhood, there are some changes in the attachment system. One change is that children develop more elaborate internal working models, or representations, about the self and others. These representations develop from earlier interactions children have had with their attachment figures and include expectations for how others will react or respond to the child in times of distress, views about whether the world is an interesting place to explore, information about how conflicts are resolved, and information about how to cope with emotions. Additionally, there is an increase in the use of language during early childhood. This increase allows children and their attachment figures to talk about and make plans for situations that may be potentially upsetting. For example, attachment figures may reassure children that they will continue to be accessible and responsive.

As children enter middle childhood they experience many changes including increased time spent outside the home, shifts in their responsibility to assist in parental supervision, and greater contact with and interest in peers. They also experience changes in parent-child attachments. Some researchers have suggested that this is when the set goal of the attachment system changes from proximity of the attachment figure to the availability of the attachment figure. Children in middle childhood can tolerate longer separations and increased distance from attachment figures as long as they know that it is possible to contact the figure if needed. Another change during middle childhood is a decline in the frequency and intensity of attachment behaviors. For example, it is rare to see a 7-to-12-year-old child following and clinging to their attachment figure in the presence of a stranger, even though these behaviors were quite common during infancy and early childhood. Finally, as children enter middle childhood, they begin to share responsibility for communicating to and maintaining contact with the attachment figure. For example, children at this age must notify their parents about where they are and any changes that may occur in their plans.

Individual Differences in the Quality of Attachment

The above is a brief introduction to normative, age-related changes in parent–child attachment. However, the majority of attachment research has focused on individual differences (i.e., how attachments vary in quality), not normative changes. Although children’s relationships with their parents may vary in many important ways, Attachment Theory has conceptualized these variations in terms of attachment security, which reflects differences in how children organize their behavior in relation to an attachment figure. Further, Attachment Theory emphasizes that differences in attachment security reflect the strategies children develop to regulate contact with the attachment figure and thus represent adaptations to a particular caregiving environment.

Children who experience sensitive and responsive care are expected to form a secure relationship with their caregiver. A sensitive and responsive parent is able to notice his or her child’s communication signals, respond appropriately, and is warm, accepting, and affectionate. In this relationship, the child is able to use the parent as a secure base from which to explore the environment and as a haven of safety in times of distress. Additionally, because they have received sensitive and responsive care, securely attached children are likely to develop an internal working model of the attachment figure as sensitive and responsive and as an internal working model of the self as worthy of care. The perception of the attachment figure’s availability gives the securely attached child the confidence to explore new situations.

Children who are not able to use their attachment figures as a secure base and safe haven may develop insecure attachments to their attachment figures. Insecurely attached children have failed to develop confidence in the responsiveness and availability of the caregiver. There are three forms of insecure attachment that are characterized by avoidance, ambivalence, or disorganization in relation to a particular attachment figure. Each has been associated with a distinct pattern of caregiving.

Children who experience rejecting caregiving are expected to form an insecure-avoidant relationship with their caregiver. Rejecting parents tend to ignore or punish their child’s bids for contact and attention,

especially when the child is expressing negative emotions. Insecure-avoidant children are likely to develop an internal working model of the attachment figure as consistently rejecting. Because their parents reject the children’s expression of negative emotion, these children tend to minimize (i.e., hide or mask) their emotions. The minimizing of emotion is thought to be adaptive because it is a way for the child to maintain a connection with his or her attachment figure. That is, when insecure-avoidant children minimize their emotions, they reduce the risk of isolating themselves from their rejecting caregiver. Minimizing emotions to less stressful events also leaves open the possibility for the caregiver to be responsive if a more stressful or serious event occurs.

Parents of insecure-ambivalent children tend to be inconsistently responsive or somewhat inept at reading social signals of their child. As a result, children are unsure they can count on the parent’s support. Insecure-ambivalent children are likely to develop an internal working model of the attachment figure as inconsistently available and heighten their displays of emotion. Just as minimizing emotions is adaptive for insecure-avoidant children, heightening emotions is adaptive for insecure-ambivalent children because it serves as a way to maintain a connection with an inconsistently available caregiver (i.e., displays of emotion draw the attention of their attachment figure). By maximizing their emotions, these children are ensuring that their inconsistent caregiver will be available if a serious, stressful event does occur.

Parents of insecure-disorganized children are often psychologically unavailable. They may be coping with stress in their own lives such as adapting to their own loss or trauma (e.g., death of a parent) or marital problems. Other parents of insecure-disorganized children may be abusive or neglectful. Children who form a disorganized attachment to a caregiver are unable to use the attachment figure as a secure base or safe haven in a coherent and organized way. At times, they may show a combination of avoidance and ambivalence. These children also may show bizarre behaviors, such as freezing when the attachment figure is around because the caregiver is a source of fear as well as a safe haven (e.g., if the child has experienced abuse). Some older insecure-disorganized children respond to the psychological unavailability

of their parent by adopting the parental role, and the role reversal may be manifested in the child's either serving as a caregiver to the parent or treating the parent in a punitive way.

Associations Between Attachment and Developmental Outcomes

The quality of parent-child attachment has been found to have implications for later development. Attachment Theory predicts that children who form secure attachments will have a developmental advantage over children who form insecure attachments in terms of their ability to manage stage salient tasks. Securely attached children show benefits in areas such as school competence, self-concept, emotion regulation, peer competence, and lack of behavior problems. There is less consistent evidence regarding whether particular forms of insecure attachment are related to particular difficulties. Most research has investigated children's behaviors that are correlated with different categories of mother-child attachment.

School Competence and Self-Concept

The quality of attachment may be related to school competence in that securely attached children may show better adaptation to school due the sense of confidence, competence, and self-efficacy that they gain from experiencing a secure attachment relationship. Research generally supports this hypothesis. Secure attachment seems to be related to better adaptation to school as shown in children's work habits, attitudes, and persistence. However, secure attachment has not been consistently linked to intelligence or specific cognitive skills, although insecure-disorganized children have been found to have the lowest grades or performances on tests of cognitive skills.

Attachment quality may be related to a child's view of the self in that securely attached children who experience sensitive and responsive care are likely to view themselves as worthy of the care of others. Securely attached children are also predicted to have an open and balanced view of the self in that they can recognize their own limitations. Consistent with this hypothesis, securely attached children tend to report higher self-esteem and are reported by teachers to have

higher self-confidence. Securely attached children also tend to have positive views of the self and others. These linkages may be explained by the fact that secure children know that their attachment figure will be available if needed, and they view the self as worthy of care. By contrast, insecurely attached children may view their attachment figure as unavailable, unhelpful, and even hurtful, and they view the self as unworthy of care.

Emotion Regulation and Peer Competence

Emotion regulation is related in meaningful ways to Attachment Theory. Securely attached children use their attachment figure as a safe haven when distressed. Emotional distress is handled effectively in a secure attachment relationship, and eventually securely attached children may internalize effective emotion regulation strategies. Studies show that securely attached children do tend to use more constructive coping strategies such as support seeking or problem solving. Secure attachment is also related to more positive and less negative mood in daily interactions. Insecure-disorganized children are especially likely to show problems with emotion-regulation skills.

Attachment quality is also hypothesized to predict the quality of children's relationships with their peers. One reason is that a history of secure attachment is associated with the confidence to explore new environments, including environments involving peers. Another reason is that securely attached children learn how to behave in relationships through interactions with their caregivers. Additionally, as mentioned above, securely attached children have more effective emotion-regulation capabilities that are important for maintaining peer relationships. In empirical studies, securely attached children have been found to experience higher quality friendships and have higher peer competence. In terms of the relations of attachment to peer competence, insecure-avoidant children tend to victimize their peers while insecure-ambivalent children tend to be victims.

Behavior Problems

One of the most extensively studied propositions regarding the behavioral correlates of

differences in security of attachment is that a secure attachment relationship lays a healthy, solid foundation for development, while an insecure attachment relationship is associated with behavior problems. The results for internalizing and externalizing behavior problems are mixed, however. Although several studies have found that secure attachments are related to lower levels of internalizing and externalizing behavior problems, it is less clear how the specific forms of insecurity are related to behavior problems. Researchers predicted that internalizing behavior problems would be most related to insecure-ambivalent attachment, but studies have found that internalizing behavior problems are linked to insecure-avoidant, insecure-ambivalent, and insecure-disorganized attachment. Similarly, externalizing behavior problems have been linked to both avoidant and disorganized attachments.

Measurement

Initially, parent–child attachment was studied with infants, and measures were developed that could describe a child’s attachment behavior in relation to a particular parent. For example, some measures such as Mary Ainsworth’s Strange Situation procedures used separation-reunion procedures to assess attachment behavior. As researchers became more interested in studying attachment in older children, newer attachment measures were developed to assess attachment representations, which are scripts or schemas that capture children’s ideas about their relationship with an attachment figure. Representation measures include storytelling tasks or autobiographical interviews. Because of the developmental changes taking place throughout early and middle childhood, different measures may be more appropriate at different ages. For example, autobiographical approaches may be too cognitively demanding for a 6-year-old, while separation-reunion measures may not sufficiently stress an older child to invoke attachment behavior.

During infancy, there are validated measures of attachment, including the Strange Situation and the Attachment Q-sort that assess parent–child attachment by describing a child’s secure base behavior in relation to a parent either at home or

in the laboratory. In early and middle childhood there is not yet a single standard for measuring attachment. Behavioral observations (separation-reunion procedures) are most common for 3-to-6-year-olds. Story stem techniques (i.e., asking children to complete attachment-themed stories) are most common for 3-to-12-year-olds. Questionnaires that assess security, avoidance, or ambivalence are common for 9-to-18-year-olds. Autobiographical interviews are common for children 11 years or older. None of the measures used after infancy have been validated to the extent of the Strange Situation. However, there is some evidence for validity for these measures as behavioral observations of 3-to-6-year-olds have been found to be related to earlier Strange Situation assessments, and observational measures of attachment in early childhood are related to representation measures of attachment in early childhood and middle childhood.

Current Directions

As is evident from the measurement section, there is a great need to give more consideration to how the manifestations of attachment change over time. Relatively little research has documented age-related changes in attachment, especially beyond early childhood. Across childhood and adolescence, individuals experience multiple attachment relationships. Adolescent children are thought to have the ability to form generalized representations of attachment, or to have a state of mind in regard to attachment. It is not yet known how experiences in individual relationships come to be integrated into a generalized representation. One’s conceptualization of attachment also has implications for which form of measurement is appropriate. With the recent proliferation of measures, it is important to evaluate specific evidence that any measure labeled as *attachment* is in fact valid for assessing the phenomena specified in Attachment Theory.

One important limitation of attachment research is that most studies to date have focused only on mother–child attachment. Only a few studies have demonstrated that fathers contribute a unique, rather than a redundant, role in children’s development. To fully understand how parent–child

attachment influences developmental outcomes, however, it may be necessary to examine both mother–child and father–child attachment across childhood. In addition, more information is needed about the little studied role and importance of nonparental attachment figures such as siblings and grandparents.

Additionally, it is important to remember that attachment is just one source of influence on child development. More research should examine how attachment, in combination with other aspects of social experience, influences children's development. For example, the finding that attachment influences peer relationships should inspire research on how early attachment history and previous peer experience work together to influence children's later peer relationships. Another direction is to examine variables that may explain the links between attachment and peer relationships.

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See also Adult Attachment, Individual Differences; Adult Attachment Interview; Attachment Theory; Emotion Regulation, Developmental Influences; Parent–Child Relationships; Parenting; Strange Situation

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ATTRACTION, SEXUAL

Sexual attraction is a feeling of attraction to another person on the basis of sexual desire. Sexual attraction differs from other types of attraction such as friendship attraction in that it involves a component that is specifically sexual. For example, research has shown that there are two general types of love: passionate love, which is an intense feeling of longing for union with another, and companionate love, which is a warm feeling of affection and tenderness for those with whom people's lives are deeply connected. Sexual attraction is a particularly important aspect of passionate love but is much less relevant to companionate love.

There are several ways that researchers measure people's feelings of sexual attraction to another person: *sexual desire* (a motivational component that refers to a wish, need, or drive to seek out sexual objects or to engage in sexual activities), *sexual behavior* (a behavioral component, often assessed by determining how frequently couples engage in various sexual behaviors such as kissing, petting, and intercourse), and *sexual feelings* (an evaluative component including feelings of satisfaction, intimacy, and pleasure). Although sexual desire, sexual behavior, and sexual feelings often co-occur within a given sexual interaction, they are considered separate and distinct phenomena. For example, people can engage in sexual activity when they have little or no sexual desire, a phenomenon called *sexual compliance* or *consensual unwanted sex*. Similarly, people can experience sexual desire

and engage in sexual behavior but not find their experiences to be particularly pleasurable or satisfying. This entry examines the factors that influence sexual attraction, the features people are sexually attracted to, the people found to be sexually attractive, the reasons people engage in sex when they are sexually attracted, and the ways sexual attraction changes over the course of relationships.

What Influences Sexual Attraction?

Several theories attempt to explain the factors that influence sexual attraction. Social context theories focus on the proximal influences of sexual attraction, such as the social and cultural environments. According to these theories, sociocultural scripts guide people's attitudes, behaviors, and experiences with sexuality, including the factors that people perceive as sexually attractive. For example, in contemporary Western cultures, it is not viewed as acceptable to desire individuals much younger than oneself, especially those who are not yet socially considered to be adults. However, in other cultures, individuals, especially women, enter into marriages when they are in their teens. In contrast to social context theories, evolutionary theory considers the distal influences of sexual attraction, including how natural selection shaped sexual attraction in the time of the hunter-gatherers. Reproduction is an essential part of evolution; therefore, those traits that allowed hunter-gatherers to better survive and reproduce are now viewed as more sexually attractive. According to this theory, traits that signify health and fertility, such as facial symmetry and a fit body, are considered to be more sexually attractive.

Both of these theories attempt to explain why individuals find certain features, such as a beautiful face, to be more sexually attractive than other features. Social context theories consider current influences such as society and culture, allowing for differences in sexual attraction within different environments. Conversely, evolutionary theory attempts to explain the universality of sexual attraction, based on the traits that enhanced survival and reproduction during hunter-gatherer times. Despite their different approaches, both theories focus on gender differences in what is considered to be sexually attractive.

Which Features Do Men and Women Find Sexually Attractive?

Men and women both describe physical attractiveness as an essential part of sexual attraction as it is often an indicator of social success and physical health. Facial symmetry is a specific feature that enhances physical attractiveness. Both men and women who have more symmetrical faces are viewed as more physically attractive than those with less symmetrical faces. Other important features of physical attractiveness are prominent cheekbones, shiny teeth, a wide smile, and baby-like features such as large eyes. In men, a strong chin is also considered physically attractive. Body size is also an important component of physical attractiveness. In Western cultures, people report that thinner or average size individuals are more attractive than individuals with extremely thin or extremely overweight body sizes. For women, a thinner waist and wider hips (with the ideal waist-to-hip ratio being .7) is more attractive, whereas men with straighter hip-to-waist ratios (.8–.9) are viewed as more attractive. Other features that influence sexual attraction in addition to physical attractiveness are cultural success, wealth, personality, and sexual fidelity. Many of these features of sexual attraction are gender-specific. For example, women are more sexually attracted to men who exhibit personal success and have kind and caring personalities. These features, though still influential, are not as important for men. On the other hand, sexual fidelity is an aspect of sexual attractiveness that is more important to men.

Although some components of sexual attraction are thought to be universal, such as facial symmetry and hip-to-waist ratios, it is important to remember that many of the components of sexual attraction are culturally variable. For example, although thinner bodies are reported to be more physically attractive in general, there are certain cultures that view more overweight bodies as more attractive. In these cultures, body size is indicative of wealth, and a heavier body indicates a wealthier status.

To Whom Are People Sexually Attracted?

The majority of people report sexual attractions to members of the other sex, yet a sizable minority of

people report that they are attracted to members of the same sex. Sexual attractions to people of the same sex or the other sex have historically been measured with a Kinsey rating, which ranges between 0 and 6. A rating of 0 represents exclusive other-sex (i.e., heterosexual) attractions, a rating of 6 represents exclusive same-sex (i.e., homosexual) attractions, and a rating of 3 represents equal degrees of same-sex and other-sex attractions. In a nationally representative sample of 18-to-44-year-old men and women, 92 percent of men said that they were attracted only to females, 3.9 percent said mostly to females, and 3.2 percent said to only or mostly to males or to both males and females equally. Eighty-six percent of women said that they were attracted only to males, 10 percent said mostly to males, and 3.4 percent said only or mostly to females or to both females and males equally.

Some people, who later identify as gay or lesbian, report that they were unaware of same-sex attractions in childhood and early adolescence, whereas others report that these attractions were present at an early age. The propensity to experience same-sex attractions is not as stable as once believed, particularly for lesbian women. Lisa Diamond tracked a group of women over a 2-year period and found that half of the women in her study relinquished their initial sexual minority identity (e.g., they originally identified as lesbian or questioning and later identified as heterosexual or bisexual). Women tend to be more flexible in their same-sex attractions over the course of their lives than are men. Although researchers do not yet know why, it is possible that different neural and hormonal processes may underlie the development of sexual orientation in men and women or that rigid gender socialization for boys and men may lead to the suppression of male same-sex sexual desires.

Why Do People Engage in Sex When They Experience Sexual Attraction?

Why people engage in sex when they feel sexually attracted to a partner is referred to as *sexual motives*. People may engage in sex for *self-focused motives* such as to pursue their own physical pleasure or to avoid their own feelings of guilt from turning a partner down. They may engage in sex

for *partner-focused motives* such as pleasing their partner or preventing their partner's disappointment from being turned down. People may also engage in sex for *relationship-focused motives* such as increasing intimacy or avoiding conflict in their relationships. Reasons for engaging in sex can change over the course of sexual interactions. For example, a man may initially pursue sex to experience his own physical pleasure but may become increasingly focused on feeling close to and pleasing his partner over the course of an interaction. People's sexual motives may change across the course of the life span, such as in cases where boys engage in sex to impress their friends during their adolescence but find that this reason loses importance with increased age.

Engaging in sex repeatedly for particular reasons may lead people to develop a particular orientation toward their sexuality. For people who hold a *recreational orientation* to sex, the primary goal is to experience physical pleasure. In contrast, for people who hold a *relational orientation* to sex, the primary goal is to express love and affection for one's partner. There are important differences between men and women in these two relational orientations. Whereas men are more likely than women to adopt a recreational orientation in which no particular emotional relationship is needed as a prerequisite for sex, women are more likely than men to adopt a relational orientation in which sexuality is seen as an integral part of an ongoing relationship. It is important to point out that these male-female differences are the most dramatic during adolescence and young adulthood and may change over the course of time in relationships.

How Does Sexual Attraction Change Over the Course of Relationships?

Feelings of sexual desire or attraction to one's partner are higher and lower at different points in relationships. Sexual attraction plays an especially important role in the beginning stages of romantic relationships as partners are just beginning to fall in love and develop a relationship. In the American Couples Study of married, cohabiting, and gay and lesbian couples, the couples who engaged in sex the most frequently had been together for 2 years or less. In short, sexual desire typically peaks at the beginning of relationships as couples

are just getting to know each other and often decreases over the relationships, with the fastest rate of decline in the first several years. The transition to parenthood is one phase of relationships that involves dramatic life changes and adjustments, including changes in sexual attraction. Women's interest in sexual activity declines during pregnancy, reaching a near zero point during the immediate postpartum period, and then slowly increasing in the months after childbirth. Although male sexual desire does not decrease as dramatically as female desire during pregnancy and shortly after the birth of a child, some men also report decreased interest in sex due to fears of hurting the fetus and to the changing body of their partners.

Men's and women's sexual interests continue later in life but may be compromised by factors such as declining health of oneself or one's partner. In the National Survey of Families and Households conducted in 1988, whereas the frequency of marital sex was approximately 12 times a month for couples ages 19 to 24, it declined to 5 times a month for those ages 50 to 54, and 2 times a month for those ages 65 to 69. Despite the fact that they may be engaging in sexual activity less frequently than when they were younger, many older couples still view sex as especially important, meaningful, and satisfying, sometimes even more so than in their younger years.

In conclusion, there is a huge amount of variability in people's feelings of sexual attraction to another person. People can be attracted to different sorts of physical or personal features, people can desire partners of the same or other sex (or both), and people can engage in sex for a variety of reasons that change over the course of their lives and relationships.

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See also Love, Companionate and Passionate; Lust; Marriage and Sex; Sex and Love

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ATTRIBUTION PROCESSES IN RELATIONSHIPS

General research on attribution addresses a wide range of judgments and cognitions that occur during person perception and social interactions. Fritz Heider's seminal work on person perception, "The Psychology of Interpersonal Relations," provided the impetus for decades of research on how people explain the behaviors of others, a body of work that has fallen under the broad label of *attribution*. The most common use of the term within the research literature refers to judgments about the perceived causes of human behavior, emphasizing how laypeople generate common-sense explanations for the behaviors of others or themselves. The traditional focus of research within attribution work, then, is determining how people go about answering the question of "Why?" when they attempt to explain human behavior. Such explanations consist of potentially innumerable causes, consequences, and contexts. The following entry first summarizes the nature of general attribution work within the field of social psychology. The focus then shifts to attributions as they relate to the study of relationship

processes. A final section briefly notes a challenge facing attribution theory in general and within relationship research specifically.

General Attribution Research: Judgments of Cause

Attribution researchers recognize that individuals' judgments of cause may be accurate to varying degrees. However, regardless of their accuracy in any objective sense, such causal explanations are ubiquitous in social interaction and have significant consequences for a wide range of social phenomena, including social relationships.

As a judgment of cause, attributions are frequently classified as either internal or external to an actor. This classification is also sometimes referred to as the distinction between dispositional or situational attributions, respectively. For example, within the context of relationships, one partner's apparently irritable mood may be explained by the other as resulting from a general disposition toward irritability, an internal or personal cause. Alternatively, the partner may more charitably explain this behavior with reference to some outside stressor, such as an unusually challenging day at work, an external or situational cause. Although the specific attribution may be more or less accurate in that given episode, the attribution generated by the partner can potentially influence the emotional reaction toward the other person, as well as subsequent behavioral interactions. The irritable mood explained away as the result of a "bad day" can be quickly forgotten and even excused. However, the irritable mood that is interpreted as symptomatic of a faulty or inherently difficult personality is less likely to be so quickly dismissed or excused. That particular attribution can potentially affect subsequent interactions between the couple or even engender doubt about whether the relationship should be maintained.

In addition to explaining a partner's specific behavior, the internal versus external (i.e., personal versus situation) distinction may also apply to judgments regarding an overall appraisal of the relationship's status. When evaluating one's relationship in a global sense, its apparent failure (or success) may be attributed to stable factors internal to a partner, such as flawed personality, or

to factors external to the partner, such as stress brought on by economic challenges. This act of explanation has numerous potential consequences for a relationship in terms of the individuals' interpretation of a particular interaction, their emotional and behavioral reactions to that interaction, and their expectations for future interactions. These lay attributions of cause are therefore central to understanding the psychological processes that characterize relationships.

Following Heider's analysis, many lines of inquiry emerged that ultimately helped guide research on interpersonal relationships. An influential model of correspondent inference proposed by Edward Jones and Keith Davis suggests that perceivers typically use information about another's behavior to draw inferences about that person's overall personality. Hence, a person's generous behaviors are frequently interpreted by others as evidence of a generous personality, and a risky behavior can be used to infer a generally risky disposition. The task of identifying the conditions under which perceivers make such personality inferences and how they may take into account external situational factors has been a prominent theme within attribution theory. Other approaches to understanding how people ascribe causal influence include Harold Kelley's model of covariation, which asserts that when attempting to explain another's behavior, people compare an actor's present behavior to past behavior, behavior in other similar situations, and the behavior of other people. Essentially, Kelley suggested that perceivers often have a wide range of information from which to infer the causes of another person's behavior. This model assumes that knowledge of the actor's behavior on multiple previous occasions is available, as would be the case for partners in an ongoing relationship who have interacted with each other in multiple contexts.

In addition to the internal versus external distinction, further dimensions of causal attribution have been identified, including perceived controllability, stability, and globality, with much of this work examining the emotional and behavioral consequences of particular attributions. For example, if an individual fails to obtain a desired promotion at work, that person's spouse could attribute that failure to factors under the person's control (e.g., lack of effort) or to factors outside

the person's control (e.g., lack of ability). Although the failure in and of itself is disappointing, a person will likely be judged more harshly by a spouse if the cause of that failure was seen as controllable (and hence avoidable). In aggregate, an impressive body of knowledge has accumulated regarding how individuals' judgments of causality predict social judgments in domains such as achievement, failure, aggression, helping, and reactions to stigmatized others. The richness of attribution theory ultimately provides a useful framework for research on the specific topic of relationship processes.

Attributions, Relationship Satisfaction, and Relationship Maintenance

In relationships, the mutual exchange of thoughts, emotions, and behaviors between two partners presents a complex, dynamic set of constructs, with attributions serving as one component within this network. Investigators have sought to identify whether the attributions generated within relationships predict a variety of outcomes. Perhaps the most widely studied of these is relationship satisfaction, and a large body of work has confirmed the general association between attributions and relationship satisfaction. Essentially, the types of explanations individuals offer for their partner's behaviors predict the quality of that relationship, as individuals in satisfying relationships tend to attribute negative relationship events to causes external to the partner, and attribute positive events to the internal, enduring aspects of the partner. In less satisfying relationships, the pattern is often reversed, with negative relationship events more likely to be attributed to enduring, stable characteristics of the partner. Furthermore, attributions and behavior may show a vicious cycle in such situations. Negative attributions to a partner can contribute to a partner's dissatisfaction, which in turn contribute to additional negative relationship behavior. The opposite cycle may be facilitated by positive, relationship-enhancing attributions.

Attributions and Emotions Within Relationships

Recent research has explored more precisely the various roles attributions play in the maintenance of relationship satisfaction. Of particular concern

is identifying how specific attributions relate to other cognitions and emotions that influence, and are influenced by, relationship satisfaction. Scholars are beginning to illuminate the specific roles attributions may play within relationship maintenance, with particular attention to emotions. For instance, recent work suggests that when an individual has a generally positive evaluation of a partner, certain kinds of attributions may specifically serve to maintain that overall good feeling during those occasions when the partner does something objectionable. For example, a husband who does not complete a household chore as promised may have his behavior explained by his wife in terms that could either maintain or threaten her overall positive regard for her husband. An attribution of "he's just having a particularly busy day and must have forgotten" can help protect the overall positive view of him, as it generates an emotion such as sympathy in response to the present transgression. In contrast, an attribution of "he's not doing what he promised because he is selfish" not only explains the immediate behavior in a negative way that can generate anger or frustration, but also it can potentially contribute to a more negative overall view of the partner. Attributions may therefore provide not only an explanation for a partner's particular behavior, but also help alleviate perceived inconsistency between how a person feels about a partner in general and how that partner is evaluated in a particular moment.

Attributions may also be influenced by the overall satisfaction and emotional environment of the relationship, suggesting bidirectional influences of attributions and emotions. For example, some evidence indicates that during a highly emotional interaction, the specific attributions one makes regarding a partner's intentions are partially influenced by one's overall relationship satisfaction. If the relationship is generally dissatisfying, negative attributions for a current, specific behavior become more likely. Hence, an individual's unwillingness to spend money for a home improvement may be interpreted by a partner as "trying to control all our money and trying to control me." In contrast, a relationship with less overall discord will enable more charitable attributions for the same behavior, such as "he [or she] is trying to be reasonably frugal but is just overdoing it in this case." Furthermore, emotional events external to the

relationship may also influence an attribution for a specific relationship event. Thus, stress originally caused by relationships with other family members or from difficulties in the workplace can contribute to an emotional environment in which relationship-threatening attributions generally become more likely as that negative emotion begins to permeate specific partner interactions. In sum, the explanations partners offer for each other's behavior can be both cause and consequence of the overall emotion that characterizes a relationship.

Attributions and Expectations Within Relationships

Certainly, an attribution's content is influenced by the particular, immediate behavior that is to be explained, the relationship context in which it occurs, and the emotional elements of the relationship. But attributions are also influenced by the relationship-relevant mental representations, expectations, and beliefs that people possess regarding the causes of others' behaviors. In a relationship, such expectations result in part from previous interactions with a partner and make the attribution process more efficient, helping to generate an explanation when the meaning of a partner's behavior may be ambiguous. However, such expectations and beliefs may also be due to factors external to the history of the specific present relationship. Attachment Theory describes one possible source of these factors and how they affect relationship cognition and attributions in particular.

Attachment Theory proposes that mental models (i.e., working models) of adult close relationships are influenced by people's previous experiences with childhood caregivers, experiences that can help build a general approach toward adult relationships. Such approaches, or adult attachment styles, may be broadly distinguished as secure versus insecure. Individuals with a secure adult attachment style typically approach relationships with trust and generally expect their partners to be dependable, providing comfort and support when needed. In contrast, individuals with one of several insecure attachment styles tend to view partners with less trust, elevated anxiety, and in some cases, dismissiveness. Such approaches can frame the kinds of attributions individuals make for their partners' behaviors, with securely attached people more likely

to make relationship-enhancing attributions for a partner's negative or ambiguous behavior, and insecurely attached individuals generating explanations that could threaten the relationship. Thus, a securely attached person can more readily explain a partner's lunch date with a group of friends in a benign fashion, construing it simply as an innocent event. In contrast, an insecurely attached individual with high levels of anxiety may view the same activity with suspicion or even dread, interpreting it to mean that the partner prefers to spend time with other people and that it may indicate larger long-term problems for the overall relationship. Attachment Theory highlights how the attributions that people make for their partners' behaviors are not just a function of the immediate information they have available but are also potentially affected by expectations developed as children.

Expectations that influence relationship attributions may also derive from the story-like narratives, or accounts, that people develop for the major events in their lives. Although people often create accounts for many life phenomena such as losses and accomplishments, relationship-focused accounts are particularly important, as people generate relatively organized narratives to explain relationship successes and failures. Accounts of past relationships can frame expectations for future relationships and thereby influence the attributions made in those relationships. A person who believes that a failed past romance progressed too quickly may resolve to take a current relationship more slowly and be hesitant to attribute the present partner's seemingly affectionate behavior to a loving and trustworthy orientation to oneself. Such hesitation may be threatening to the present relationship if the partner interprets it as a lack of interest or commitment. As with the influence of attachment styles, relationship-relevant expectations are not isolated from the past and can influence present attributions.

Conceptual Challenges Within Attribution Research on Relationships

Even though the term attribution typically refers to judgments of cause, research conducted under the umbrella of attribution has included numerous

types of inferences—the sheer number of which reflects the complexity of relationship-relevant cognition. Nonetheless, as numerous scholars have noted, the volume of interrelated constructs such as cause, intention, responsibility, and blame presents a challenge for the study of attribution. The term *cause*, as noted previously, broadly refers to the degree to which a person's behavior is explained by factors internal to that person or by factors external to that person. *Intention* refers to whether a person's behavior was undertaken purposefully or not, such that an angry outburst could be viewed as a momentary, involuntary loss of control, or as a deliberate, knowing attempt to intimidate a partner. *Responsibility* may be thought of as the degree to which a person may be held accountable for his or her actions, while *blame* is more akin to a moral judgment indicating condemnation for negative or harmful behaviors.

As relationship research on attributions has progressed, greater attention has been paid to such distinctions and has proven useful in some contexts. For example, responsibility and causal attributions do not necessarily predict other aspects of relationships in identical fashion, as evidence suggests that judgments of responsibility and intention, rather than causality, are more strongly associated with emotional reactions to a partner's transgressions. Hence, when explaining a partner's intentional act such as buying an expensive gift, judgments regarding that partner's state of mind (i.e., "She [or he] just wants me to be happy" versus "She [or he] might be feeling guilty for something I don't know about yet") may be more important than judgments of cause, *per se*. Future research is necessary to refine these distinctions between attributions of causality and responsibility and states of mind and how knowledge of such attributions and other cognitions enhance the prediction and understanding of satisfaction, emotion, behavior, and other outcomes within the domain of relationships.

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See also Accounts; Adult Attachment, Individual Differences; Attachment Theory; Cognitive Processes in Relationships; Dissolution of Relationships, Processes;

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AUNTS AND UNCLES, RELATIONSHIPS WITH

Family scholars are only recently beginning to understand the roles of aunts and uncles in families, when and how their relationships with nieces and nephews develop, and how these relationships spill over to influence other family members. Three broad issues are presented here: a summary of the factors that influence the development of relationships among aunts and uncles with nieces and nephews, a summary of the common ways such relationships emerge and their importance to families, and a summary of differences between aunts and uncles.

How Active Are Aunts and Uncles?

Uncles and aunts vary widely in the depth of their relationships with nieces and nephews. Some maintain close and long-standing relationships; some do not. The relative proportions of each are unknown. The closeness of adult siblings is an important determinant of the closeness of relationships among aunts and uncles with nieces and nephews. When adult siblings experience close relationships, they are more likely to develop and maintain relationships with each other's children, and when the relationships of adult siblings are estranged, their relationships with nieces and nephews are limited. As is often the case in families, women act as the primary kinkeepers and are often responsible for encouraging ties between their adult siblings and their children. The relationships of sisters are typically closer, relative to brothers. Sisters provide more help to family members, a wider range of help, and are more willing to engage in practical tasks like providing supplemental childcare when needed (i.e., *aunting*), and their willingness to send cards and gifts creates and maintains a familial sense of place, meaning, and ritual.

A variety of additional factors are central in influencing the relationships of aunts and uncles with nieces and nephews. Geographic distance can limit the development of their relationships, while on the other hand, living in close proximity can encourage such developments. But simplistic equations are not terribly insightful or predictive of the course of

personal relationships among kin. Contemporary mediums such as cell phones, personal or family Web pages, and e-mail can and do ameliorate the challenges of maintaining long-distance relationships by offering a convenient means by which family members can observe frequent contact and keep informed of one another's daily lives. In many cases, social distance—or how close or distant family members feel to one another—trumps geographic distance as an influential factor. Other factors like time-intensive careers and family obligations can impede the development of relationships among aunts, uncles, and children. On the other hand, less intensive personal obligations permit developing closer relationships. Childless aunts and uncles seem to become more involved with nieces and nephews relative to those adult siblings who become parents. Childless aunts and uncles indicate they have more time available for children as well as an expressed interest in mentoring children. For some, relationships with nieces and nephews may be their only opportunity to become involved with children. The experience of parental separation and divorce complicates relationships, and in such cases, aunts and uncles can serve as important confidants for both parents and children.

Generally, closer relationships among aunts, uncles, nieces, and nephews emerge when adult siblings are engaged in one another's lives, when they share similar values that emphasize maintaining family relationships, when aunts and uncles experience a sense of personal commitment to their nieces and nephews, and when they simply like one another because of similar dispositions and interests. If they happen to live near one another, all the better, but it is neither necessary nor essential.

With regard to race or ethnic differences in *aunting* and *unclying* among North Americans, little is known. Black Americans relative to Whites have somewhat different patterns of kin support and involvement, and these differences largely apply to comparisons of women. Black men and White men are similar in their involvement with kin and adult siblings. Black women are more involved in practical support such as help with transportation, household work and childcare, and Whites report more involvement in financial support and emotional support with kin. However, much of the difference is accounted for by differences in class

standing and income rather than cultural differences, and this seems to be the case for other ethnic groups as well. Generally, White, Black, and Hispanic families of similar income have similar levels of involvement with kin.

Regardless of race or ethnic backgrounds, kin invoke a strong sense of normative obligation to visit one another, exchange gifts on special occasions, and provide financial aid in a crisis. This does not mean all kin are viewed identically. People generally feel a greater sense of obligation to parents and to children and somewhat less to a core of additional kin members including grandparents, grandchildren, aunts, and uncles. Along with a general expectation to provide aid to nieces and nephews, there is also a parallel expectation to provide uncles and aunts with aid when needed. Finally, kin relationships vary in terms of the flexibility of the norms ascribed to them. For instance, people expect parents to support their children with very few exceptions. For collateral kin (i.e., aunts, uncles, nieces, and nephews), there is significant variation with some people reporting a much greater sense of obligation and others a much lower sense of obligation.

Basic Aunting and Uncling

Common themes in the family work of aunts and uncles include providing support and companionship, acting as confidants, and modeling alternative family or career choices. Aunts and uncles can supplement the work of parents in virtually all areas of the lives of their nieces and nephews. Their relationships change and adapt with the development of children and the needs of parents. During the labor-intensive years of infancy and early childhood, they can provide parents with supplemental childcare. During adolescence when issues of identity development are primary, they can ease or mediate conflicts between parents and teens, and just as importantly, they provide support for parents and act as their confidants. They can and do often become critical sources of support in times of special need such as with the death of a family member or in cases of separation and divorce. Aunts and uncles can mentor their nieces and nephews in spiritual or religious

matters, although the more formal role of godparent is understudied and largely unknown in its possible significance.

Under some circumstances, aunts and uncles replace absent parents or otherwise enact significant parental roles, and they are treated as such by their nieces and nephews. Aunts and uncles become surrogate parents for one of three reasons. Those aunts who live in extended family units sharing one home or neighboring homes in the presence of a sibling, and perhaps a sibling's spouse and children, may act as surrogate parents for the children. In other circumstances, aunts and uncles serve as parental figures when a parent, and usually a father, of a niece or nephew is absent, typically due to a divorce or problems related to substance abuse. Finally, some aunts, uncles, nieces, and nephews describe close relationships that seemed to be based upon opportunity (they see each other often and easily) and on personal preference in that they simply like one another. For many of these nieces and nephews, a favored relationship with an aunt or uncle supplements strong, positive relationships with parents, and they describe such kin as *like a dad* or *like a second mom*. For others, a conflict-habituated relationship with a parent is paired with an intimate relationship with an aunt or uncle who is considered in ways similar to a parent. In all of these cases, aunts and uncles intervene at times to provide housing for their nieces or nephews, sometimes temporary and sometimes on a more permanent basis.

In a variety of ways, aunts and uncles enrich the lives of their nieces and nephews. Their contributions are often highly valued, considered irreplaceable and unique, and derivative of the longevity of their relationships, knowledge of family members, and ostensibly more objective perspectives. At the same time, aunts and uncles are often deeply affected by their experience and sometimes mentored by the very children for whom they are responsible.

For an unknown population of nieces and nephews, relationships with uncles can be potentially abusive. Uncles, and more rarely nephews, relative to other family members, are a common perpetrator of the sexual abuse of nieces, and this condition appears to hold across cultures.

Gender Differences

Throughout the literature on parenting, friendship, and kinship, there is a consistent finding that the relationships of women are more expressive, relative to men. As is often the case in gender-based comparisons, the distributions are overlapping. Aunts and uncles share many similarities in their styles of mentoring and subjects of their concerns. Both aunts and uncles provide their nieces and nephews with advice regarding school and careers, as well as relationships with peers, parents, and other family members. And on occasion, they are critical about the choices or actions of their nieces and nephews. Nieces and nephews value similar features in their favored aunts and uncles, with displays of support and active listening with minimal judgment being chief among the most valued qualities. Differences in the mentoring styles of aunts and uncles appear, but often they are rather superficial.

In two areas, aunts and uncles do differ in important ways. Aunts and nieces talk more about relationship issues and, particularly, the intimate relationships of nieces. In this regard, aunts seem to know more about their nieces' relational lives than uncles do about nephews. Aunts offer their evaluations of the relational partners of nieces; they voice concerns about sexual activity, safety, health, and unplanned pregnancies. Aunts share their concerns about controlling and potentially abusive partners, often relating their personal experiences with such men. On the other hand, uncles do serve as role models, sometimes modeling positive relationships with other adults and children and sometimes rather negative relationships (as do aunts). Aunts simply become more knowledgeable about nieces' intimate relationships, and they express more concerns about issues of health and safety.

Aunts and uncles also differ in their perspectives on issues of personal development and the balance of work and family life. For aunts and nieces, the issue is critically important and often discussed. Aunts freely share their experiences of having

children while maintaining a career, or of working in fields typically dominated by men, and the challenges that face women in seeking a balance of personal, professional, and family lives. Uncles and nephews do not seem to discuss such issues with any regularity, or at least not as directly.

As aunts and uncles actively engage in the lives of their nieces and nephews, they also actively mentor parents. They do so by sharing their perspectives and their experiences or by otherwise serving as counselors, advisors, or supportive friends uniquely positioned because of their insider's knowledge and long-standing relationships with all family members.

In summary, the relationships of aunts and uncles with their nieces and nephews can be significant, influential, and of long duration. They are for an unknown proportion of families, and perhaps a substantial number, central figures mentoring children.

Robert M. Milardo

See also Abuse and Violence in Relationships; Grandparent–Grandchild Relationship; Kinkeeping; Kin Relationships; Sibling Relationships

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B

BANK ACCOUNT MODEL

Nearly everyone is familiar in theory, if not in practice, with the function of financial savings accounts. Money that is not required for day-to-day existence or an occasional indulgence is deposited into a savings account for a rainy day. Thus, depending on one's current financial situation, the account's balance continually shifts up and down. In the same way that one's savings vary, so too do romantic relationships. In some cases, relationships flow smoothly with both partners supporting each other and sometimes sacrificing for the good of the relationship. However, partners may on occasion behave badly, at times engaging in actions that endanger the relationships' strength and longevity. How can relationships persist when relational rainy days are unavoidable? One proposal comes from marital researcher John Gottman, who suggests that relationships may have accounts that function much like financial bank accounts.

According to the Bank Account Model of relationships, couples have an account that tracks their positive and negative interactions. Deposits are made when partners sacrifice self-interest to make the relationship a priority, show their love for each other, and pay attention to each other's interests. Withdrawals are made when partners are insensitive, inconsiderate, or put forth little or no effort to demonstrate the importance of the relationship. According to research, romantic partners who attend to and care for one another experience

the relationship more positively. For instance, if Jane casually mentions that she would like to learn more about wine and her husband John signs them up for a wine tasting class despite his own lack of interest in wine, John demonstrates that he cares about the things that matter to her and that he is putting the relationship first. Likewise, if Jane beams at John after hearing about his successful project at work, Jane's pride and adoration makes John feel loved and respected. Such actions lead to a deposit in the relational bank account. If, however, John allowed Jane's desire to learn about wine to slip by unnoticed or if Jane pointed out that John's success was not very important, withdrawals from the bank account would result.

Research demonstrates that a partner who supports the individual's ideal self (e.g., encouraging the individual to strive for a desired goal, finding ways to bring out the individual's desired qualities) leads to greater satisfaction in the relationship. For instance, if John considers himself shy but wants to become more outgoing, Jane might facilitate this by hosting a dinner party and bringing up topics of special interest for John to share with their guests. Over time, Jane's demonstrations of responsiveness and support can accumulate into a surplus or a credit in the relationship bank account. This abundance of positivity may lead individuals to think the best of their partners, seeing each other through rose-colored glasses. This generosity in perceiving the partner, called *positive sentiment override* by many researchers, may improve conflict resolution perhaps because partners are aware that they love and respect one another in spite of the current relationship difficulty and want

to maintain the relationship. If Jane blows up at John for no apparent reason, John may stifle a nasty retort because previous positive interactions have built credit in their relationship bank account. Instead, John makes an effort to understand Jane's frustration so that they can work through it. In this way, deposits to the bank account contribute to long-lasting, healthy relationships.

Support for the concept of positive sentiment override comes from research conducted by Sandra Murray and her colleagues. This work shows that when relationships are going well and partners are satisfied, they tend to see more positivity in their interaction than might otherwise be assumed. In other words, when credits accrue in the relationship bank account due to a large ratio of positive to negative interactions, partners perceive each other in ways that enhance their affection and commitment. This process is necessary given that romantic relationships inevitably have conflicts and other threats to relational stability. Credit in the relational account helps defend against the inevitable disagreements and insecurities, bolstering confidence in the integrity of one's partner.

Just as positive interactions add to the relationship bank account, negative interactions can produce negative balances, which may be detrimental for the relationship in the long run. If John tells Jane that her interest in wine is pointless or if Jane points out that John's work-related accomplishment will only cause his bosses to expect more from him, their hurtful acts will withdraw credit from the account. Deficits in the relationship bank account endanger the relationship because they leave the couple with less incentive to work out their current difficulty. When a new relational problem develops, such as Jane's unprovoked blow-up at John, partners have no reason to be compassionate and understanding. Instead, negativity may escalate; one partner's harmful conduct leads in turn to negativity from the other partner, and the problem goes unresolved. Furthermore, research has shown that negative interactions are relatively more influential than positive interactions. John Gottman and his colleagues observed that couples who have more than one negative interaction for every five positive interactions tend to be dissatisfied, creating distance in the relationship. In short, negatives may have greater impact on the relationship bank account than positives.

Individual differences may also affect the relationship bank account. Not all people are equally good at recognizing the deposits their partners have made. For example, those who are low in self-esteem or high in insecurity often perceive that their partners feel less positively about them than the partners actually report. One reason this may occur is that individuals with low self-esteem do not value themselves very highly and expect others to feel the same way. Individuals with low self-esteem may effectively make it difficult or impossible for their partners to build up credit in the relational bank account, while also interpreting neutral activity as withdrawals from the account. On the other hand, individuals high in agreeableness may be more prone to focus on their partner's deposits, paying less heed to withdrawals.

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See also Dissolution of Relationships, Causes; Responsiveness; Satisfaction in Relationships; Security in Relationships; Self-Esteem, Effects on Relationships

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BARRIER FORCES TO RELATIONSHIP DISSOLUTION

This entry explores the social-psychological concept of barriers to ending a romantic relationship. Barriers are personal and social factors that make it more difficult to leave a relationship. The internal

kinds of barriers are mostly psychological in nature and include commitment, religious beliefs, self-identity, irretrievable personal investments, and children. The external kinds of barriers are more structural and draw their force from elements outside the relationship and from societal functions. Key external barriers include legal, financial, and social forces. Barriers are also considered a desirable developmental goal for couples seeking greater closeness and relationship stability. Recent societal-level changes have resulted in the weakening of some barrier forces.

Internal Psychological Barriers

Commitment and Obligations to the Marital Bond

Professing commitment to continuing the relationship is associated with greater future stability of premarital dating couples. Believing that divorce is morally wrong is also associated with greater commitment to the marriage and with staying married over longer periods of time. Conversely, past experiences with failure to uphold marital vows (either with one's own past divorce or with parental divorce) is linked to relationship instability.

Religious Beliefs

Many organized religions encourage marital union and do not support divorce. Thus, it is not surprising that the greater one's commitment to religion, the greater one's commitment is to maintaining a marriage. Those who report consistent regular participation in religious activities (such as attending church) often have lower rates of divorce than those who report no religious affiliation.

Self-Identity

Individuals in a romantic relationship are often attracted not only to each other but also to some aspects of the social roles they experience from being in the relationship. What it means to be a husband or wife can be a powerful source of pride and self-fulfillment. The more that one's sense of self-identity incorporates the relationship and the attributes of the partner, the more difficult it is to end the relationship.

Irretrievable Personal Investments

There are many ways that partners can make personal investments in their relationship. The more the two partners share their time and activities, the more they become emotionally linked together. Spending time together often generates greater positive emotional expressions and opportunities for personal self-disclosure. These kinds of intangible experiences can function as emotional investments made in the relationship that one cannot get back if the relationship were to end.

Children

Having a child is a significant barrier to marital relationship dissolution. The lowest rate of divorce is usually found during the first year after a baby is born. Conversely, couples with no children in the home have the highest divorce rate. If leaving the relationship with one's partner also entails changing or losing contact with one's children, it can be a force to keep the relationship alive. And yet having children in a relationship is by itself not a strong enough factor to prevent marital dissolution.

External Structural Barriers

Legal Barriers

The legal status of a marriage can serve as a barrier to relationship dissolution. The costs associated with obtaining a divorce are often far greater than the costs of dissolving other kinds of relationships lacking a formal legal status. Interestingly, it is often found that couples who live together but who do not marry tend to break up sooner than those who live together as a married couple.

Financial Barriers

There are often physical items of value that couples accumulate over time. Many marital couples eventually own a house or residence together and contribute to other major investments. The difficulty of dividing a couple's shared assets can be a restraining force to a breakup. There are also legal fees and other financial consequences of a divorce that can dilute the economic net value of each partner. Even more of a barrier to breakup is

the level of financial self-sufficiency each partner possesses. If one were to leave the relationship, could one financially afford to live independently of one's partner?

Social Barriers

Often the family and friends of one or both of the partners exert some form of influence on the relationship partners through their participation as members of the couples' shared social network. Not only do others offer emotional support to a couple, but also they can offer economic and practical assistance that is valued by the relationship partners. This kind of relational social support could be lessened or lost altogether if the couple were to break up.

The Positive Role of Barriers in Relationship Development

George Levinger's original conceptual model of marital dissolution examines the components involved in the decision to end a relationship. In his model, barriers only become relevant when one partner is dissatisfied with the relationship and feels that the alternatives to the relationship are better than what the current relationship provides. However, more recent perspectives on barriers include their role when one is still happy with the relationship. Having some barriers and making them stronger can demonstrate the growing intimacy between partners. Moving in together, getting engaged, marrying, buying a home, having children, and sharing friends and family are all factors that most couples see as positive events that represent a close and meaningful relationship. Thus, a desire for stronger barriers to dissolution can paradoxically—but accurately—be a sign of attraction to the relationship.

The Decline of Barriers in Modern Society

Past decades have witnessed gradual societal changes in almost all kinds of barriers. Concerning the internal barriers, surveys have shown declines in the belief in lifelong marital commitment, organized religious practices have decreased in popularity, and couples are having fewer children or none

at all. Concerning the external barriers, no-fault divorce laws have reduced legal barriers, the financial self-sufficiency barrier for many female partners has lessened due to the general economic progress made by women, and there is less social stigma attached to divorce and single parenting. The cumulative effect of these changes is twofold. For the happy couples, it makes it harder to build the barriers to dissolution they so desire. Conversely, for the unhappy couples, it makes it easier to actually break up because the costs to leave are lower. This shift toward weaker barriers may have contributed to the higher divorce rates experienced in the United States over the last 50 years.

Mark Attridge

See also Closeness; Commitment, Predictors and Outcomes; Commitment, Theories and Typologies; Dissolution of Relationships, Processes; Divorce, Prevalence and Trends; Investment Model; Social Exchange Theory

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BATTERERS

Battering refers to aggression perpetrated against an intimate relationship partner. Intimate partner violence (IPV) includes a heterogeneous set of behaviors. At one extreme is severe or frequent aggression that includes physical violence and may be accompanied by emotional abuse and sexual violence. Such violence is likely to cause fear and carries a high risk of injury for the partner. At the other extreme is mild violence that usually does

not occur frequently. Such aggression may be mutual and is assumed to emerge in the context of escalating conflict that is poorly controlled by both partners. This entry describes issues in conceptualizing, assessing, and treating IPV.

Assessment of IPV

In extreme cases, IPV may reach the attention of others through calls to domestic violence hotlines or law enforcement agencies. More typically, IPV is a private affair, occurring in the home with the only witnesses being the two partners and their children. Most researchers rely on partners' self-reports to identify the occurrence and extent of IPV. Many couples experiencing IPV do not label the behavior as violence, abuse, or battering. There are also potential problems of social desirability (e.g., Will someone admit to a socially sanctioned behavior such as violence?) and fear (e.g., Will a battered woman choose not to reveal her abuse out of fear of retaliatory violence from her partner?). Given such issues, some researchers rely on interviews, believing that clinical sensitivity is needed to detect violence.

The most widely used questionnaires are behavioral checklists (such as the Conflict Tactics Scale by Murray Straus and colleagues) that directly ask if particular behaviors have ever occurred, thus avoiding the problem of labeling such behaviors as violence or abuse. Such checklists ask whether each partner has engaged in a variety of behaviors (e.g., "pushed," "threatened with a knife or gun") in the context of relationship conflict. Other questionnaire measures of related constructs (e.g., emotional abuse, sexual abuse) may also be used to supplement questions about physical aggression. Regardless of method used (interview or questionnaires), partners should complete such measures independently to minimize concerns of one partner pressuring the other to answer in certain ways.

Partners may not agree on the occurrence, nature, or extent of violence. This discrepancy may reflect a trend for perpetrators to be less likely to report their own use of violence than victims to report their partner's aggression. In addition, for both perpetration and victimization, women are more likely to report IPV than men. Many experts assume that batterers in legal trouble or in

court-referred treatment are likely to minimize and deny their perpetration of violence. Given such factors, it is best to ask both partners about their own and their partner's relationship violence. Because the risks of failing to detect violence when it is occurring are generally considered greater than the risks of assuming violence is occurring when it may not be, the standard practice is to assume the occurrence of violence if either partner reports it.

Although behavioral checklists have proven reliable, they may not fully assess the context of the violence. For example, behavioral checklists consistently demonstrate that men and women engage in violence at similar prevalence rates, but such data do not allow one to equate male and female violence, as the questionnaires do not thoroughly assess consequences (e.g., women are more likely than men to be injured; fear of the partner) or context (e.g., initiation of violence to control the partner versus self-defense). Thus, many researchers and clinicians advocate that once violence is identified, more detailed questionnaires or interviews should be administered to better understand the qualitative aspects of the aggression that is occurring and its impact on both partners.

Correlates and Predictors of Battering

Societal Correlates

Feminists and battered women's advocates often focus on societal causes of IPV. They consider factors such as legal protection of women, indicators of gender inequality in resources and power, societal messages about male-to-female violence, and resources for female survivors of IPV. In the limited amount of social science research conducted from this perspective, such factors as the male's attitudes toward women and male peer support for IPV are examined.

Individual Differences

Social scientists often focus on personal variables and individual differences, considering the question of why some men engage in IPV, whereas others do not. The implicit assumption in such work is that batterers have some problem that exists within them that is activated in the context

of an intimate relationship. Another implicit assumption is that the risk of violence may be carried forward into new relationships so that a man may be at risk for perpetrating violence in multiple relationships with different women over time. Studies of such factors often involve comparing batterers to a comparison sample of nonviolent men on variables of interest or correlating levels of a variable of interest to the level of violence perpetrated among a group of study participants. More recent research is longitudinal in nature, examining earlier predictors of later onset or continuation of IPV.

In general, such work has demonstrated that batterers are more likely than nonviolent men to have grown up in a violent home, witnessed interparental violence, and been rejected or abused themselves as children. There are multiple theories to explain this intergenerational transmission of violence: genetics, social learning (e.g., men growing up in a violent home, never learning competent responses to interpersonal conflict and instead acquiring pro-aggression attitudes), and trauma (e.g., post-traumatic stress disorder leading to social information processing deficits). Outside of the home, batterers also may have been exposed to more community violence and may have associated with more deviant, delinquent, or aggressive peers while growing up.

Such research has also examined the notion that violent men have more psychological difficulties than nonviolent men. For example, violent men are at higher risk than nonviolent men for particular kinds of psychological problems, which include substance abuse, antisociality (e.g., criminal behavior), depression, and difficulties dealing with interpersonal relationships (e.g., attachment problems, dependency, jealousy). Other psychological factors, including some that might help to explain the link between psychopathology and the use of violence in a relationship, have also been studied. For example, relative to nonviolent men, batterers have been found to have fewer social skills. Thus, relative to a nonviolent man, a violent man is more likely to assume that his partner is acting with hostile intent but is less likely to be able to generate competent responses to hypothetical marital conflict situations. Violent men also report and express more anger and hostility, both toward others in general and toward their partner.

Dyadic Factors

Some argue that relationship violence may be less a product of individual problems and more a reflection of dyadic processes within particular relationships—that couple-level factors (e.g., poor communication, mismatched attachment styles) may help to explain violence. Research from this perspective may compare couples experiencing violence to nonviolent couples. For example, observation of couples discussing a relationship problem reveals that relative to nonviolent spouses, both partners in violent relationships engage in high levels of hostility (e.g., belligerence, contempt) and demanding and withdrawing behaviors. In addition, relationship satisfaction level is negatively related to risk for IPV. Violence levels are higher among cohabiting couples than among married couples, suggesting that relationship factors (e.g., lack of legal commitment and related jealousy) are related to violence among cohabiting couples.

This perspective implicitly assumes that the causes of relationship violence lie within the dyadic situation and that an individual may be violent in one relationship but not in others. A criticism of this perspective is that by examining the potential role of both partners in violent episodes, battered women may be blamed for their own victimization, and differences in male and female violence will be misunderstood.

Multivariate Approaches and Batterer Typologies

Increasingly, theorists realize that all of these approaches have merit, and newer theoretical models of battering acknowledge societal, individual, dyadic, and situational or contextual factors as all playing a role in IPV. Different types of violence may be differentially related to differing causes and correlates. For example, more severe violence may be driven primarily by individual issues (a batterer will be violent toward many romantic partners, given his own problems), whereas less severe and mutual violence may be driven by dyadic factors (for any individual, low levels of violence may emerge in the context of a problematic relationship with a particular partner but may not systematically characterize future relationships). More research is needed to test such ideas.

Treatment of IPV

In the past 20 years, increasing concern about IPV and the widespread adoption of pro-arrest policies (i.e., police being encouraged to make an arrest when intervening in cases of domestic violence) have led to the establishment of IPV treatment programs. The use of couple therapy for violent relationships is quite controversial and covered in another entry. In addition, programs for battered women were developed through earlier grassroots efforts and, although offered to women, are not mandated by courts or police. Among available programs for male batterers, the most common intervention involves group psychoeducational programs.

Historically, there have been two major theoretical approaches to such programs. One is derived from a feminist perspective. Such programs emphasize male violence as only one problematic outcome from male attitudes toward women and ask men to examine the multiple other ways in which they abuse and control women. The other approach is behavioral-cognitive. These programs focus on changing reinforcers and on building skills to help men decrease their use of violence (e.g., anger management, time-outs, communication skills). Many existing batterer programs combine both approaches. In addition, both approaches share fundamental elements, for example, helping men accept responsibility for their violence and agree to become nonviolent.

Whether such programs are effective is a heavily debated issue. Major studies, reviews, and recent meta-analyses suggest that these programs do not work. The good news is that as many as two thirds of men in such programs stop being violent, at least over the course of the relatively short-term follow-ups used in these studies. The bad news is that this rate of violence desistance is not significantly different from the rate of violence cessation among men arrested but not sent to therapy or among men arrested but given other interventions (e.g., intensive probation supervision). Thus, it is not clear that batterer psychoeducational programs add to more basic criminal and legal interventions. Because the number of high-quality studies of batterer treatment outcome is limited, many argue that it would be premature to abandon such programs.

Such findings have led clinicians and researchers to consider how interventions for batterers can be improved. Indeed, this juncture in the field seems to be an opportunity for generating new approaches to treating batterers, including treatment of related substance abuse issues, the development of culturally sensitive interventions, using motivational interviewing approaches to help batterers decide to change, and using individual therapy (rather than group interventions) to tailor treatment to the various needs of batterers.

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See also Abuse and Violence in Relationships; Anger in Relationships; Intergenerational Transmission of Abuse; Intervention Programs, Domestic Violence; Relational Aggression

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BEHAVIORAL COUPLE THERAPY

Behavioral Couple Therapy (BCT) has been used with married, cohabiting, and dating heterosexual and homosexual couples presenting with relationship dissatisfaction and a range of life experiences (e.g., parenting difficulties or illness) that may have contributed to relationship problems. The approach originated with published case studies by Robert Weiss, Gerald Patterson, and Richard Stuart. In 1979, Neil Jacobson and Gayla Margolin published a book that is recognized as the treatment manual for BCT. As the first empirically supported couple therapy, BCT has now been evaluated in five countries and frequently serves as the comparison treatment to beat in empirical investigations of other treatment approaches. This entry describes defining characteristics, implementation, supporting evidence, and new directions in BCT.

Defining Characteristics

BCT is distinct from other couple interventions because of its primary focus on observable relationship events and its grounding in social learning principles. BCT seeks to alleviate relationship distress by increasing the range and frequency of positive relationship events and reducing aversive relationship events. A beneficial ratio of relationship rewards to costs is considered an important condition for relationship satisfaction. BCT also reduces relationship distress through teaching relationship skills, particularly related to effective communication and problem solving. With relationship disagreements anticipated in all intimate relationships, partners need skills to resolve their differences before disagreements turn into serious conflicts or lead to emotional withdrawal.

The social learning perspective on couple relationships assumes that the behavior of each partner is shaped by environmental events, particularly

those coming from the other partner. The partners thus have important influences on one another's behavior and relationship satisfaction. Identifying the ways that partners contribute to the behaviors that they find troublesome is accomplished through functional analysis—that is, the thorough examination of antecedents and consequences of important behaviors. It is then possible to develop hypotheses about how to alter the problem behavior through changes in these conditions. BCT steadfastly focuses on uniform and specific treatment components, that is, behavioral exchange and communication training, but the issues addressed and interactions modified are informed by a couple's individualized functional analysis.

Implementation

Behavioral exchange interventions often start with infusions of pleasing behaviors, for example, through homework assignments such as expressing appreciation on a daily basis, planning a special evening for the partner, engaging in a mutually enjoyable activity, or taking over some burdensome responsibility from the partner. The therapist assigns these activities after carefully assessing what partners find lacking in their current relationship (e.g., appreciation) and what the couple is capable of doing without resorting to conflict or criticism. These activities can be powerful reminders of each partner's ability to have a positive impact on the other and can serve as incentives for working on more difficult relationship topics.

Communication and problem-solving training generally includes two sets of skills—one to foster understanding and the other to facilitate change. Empathy and listening skills reduce negative interactions by limiting the speaker to short, clear statements and by having the listener restate the content or reflect the emotional message. The listener's demonstration of understanding builds rapport and circumvents disagreements due to misinterpretation.

Once a problem is understood, a decision can be made about whether to generate a plan for change. Problem solving follows a structured format that begins with defining the problem in a way that is nonblaming and specific and acknowledges one's own contribution. The partners brainstorm solutions to a particular problem, generating as

many solutions as possible without concern for the quality or feasibility of solutions. With all solutions written down, partners then rate and discuss each proposed idea until one or more solutions emerge as a potential option. Jacobson and Margolin provide a manual for couples that details guidelines for effective problem solving.

Supporting Evidence

The American Psychological Association's Division 12 Society of Clinical Psychology designates BCT as an empirically supported treatment for relationship distress. BCT is significantly more effective than receiving no treatment, according to a 2005 meta-analysis by William Shadish and Scott Baldwin that examined 30 studies. Andrew Christensen and colleagues recently compared BCT and Integrative Behavioral Couple Therapy and did not show the superiority of either approach; however, they did find different patterns of improvement, with positive effects from BCT peaking earlier and then plateauing.

New Directions

Despite BCT's effectiveness, Jacobson and colleagues highlight that there is room for more clinically meaningful change—only approximately 50 percent to 60 percent of couples improve with BCT and about one third of improved couples experience relapse over the next 2 years. Statistics such as these have spurred transformations of BCT. One wave of changes by Donald Baucom and Norman Epstein recognized the need for attention to cognitive processes (interpretations and evaluations of behaviors) and affective processes (experiencing and expressing emotions, and regulating emotional responses). Christensen and Jacobson developed integrative behavior couple therapy to incorporate acceptance interventions with the change-promoting interventions used in BCT. Another enhancement is adaptation of BCT for individual psychiatric problems, such as alcoholism and depression. Timothy O'Farrell and William Fals-Stewart, for example, provide a comprehensive guide for BCT for individuals with alcohol and substance abuse problems and for their intimate partners. As the field of couple

therapy advances, BCT remains a strong component of these new directions.

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See also Assessment of Couples; Communication Skills; Conflict, Marital; Couple Therapy; Couple Therapy for Substance Abuse; Integrative Behavioral Couple Therapy; Social Learning Theory

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BEHAVIORAL PARENT TRAINING

The concept of behavioral parent training, which can be traced back to the early 1960s, refers to the teaching and deployment of parents as therapeutic agents in the treatment of troubled children or of children in need of special assistance. Psychologists and other mental health professionals realized that children's social, emotional, and behavioral problems were not effectively addressed by meeting with a therapist for 1 or 2 hours per week. Children's behavior is heavily influenced by the immediate environment around them, including interactions with parents, siblings, peers, teachers, and others. The idea behind parenting training is that parents are often in a better position than anyone else to alter the environmental conditions and situations impinging on their children's behavior and thereby can promote better child adjustment. Training a parent to be a "therapist" of sorts is a potentially more effective treatment

strategy than one-on-one professional counseling or therapy with a young child in part because of the countless hours each week that children spend with their parents and because talking with a child may not in and of itself change the child's behavior. This entry addresses theoretical foundations of behavioral parent training, summarizes early approaches to parent training, and then describes more recent parent-training interventions.

Theoretical Foundations

Behavioral parent training is grounded in psychological principles of learning, which are readily accessible by parents, teachers, and others who interact with children. The field of behavioral learning has produced a complex body of knowledge about the moment-to-moment interactions between individuals and their environments, which affect observed behavior. Learning principles have been translated into methods of behavior change that professionals could teach to parents and apply to a variety of child problems. Basically, parenting-training methods are used to promote healthy and positive child behaviors, to replace or prevent unhealthy or problematic behaviors, and to teach specific skills with a variety of child populations.

Early Forms of Parent Training

The first forays into behavioral parent training focused on discrete child problems such as frequent and destructive tantrums or abnormally fearful responses. This work with individual parents was part of the budding field of applied behavior analysis in which children's behavior was observed in social and environmental contexts. The observations were part of what is called *functional analysis of behavior* to determine which environmental cues and events were maintaining or exacerbating the problematic behavior. A parent participating in behavioral parent training would first keep track of specific events and child behavior, as well as their own behavior, and use the records to help plan the next steps. Parents learned specific child-management techniques that they applied at home while they continued to keep track of progress.

One guiding principle for behavioral parent training is that specific occurrences of behavior are affected by the immediate environmental consequences or events. For parents this means that child behaviors that result in immediate attention from people tend to get strengthened or repeated. For example, behaviors such as tantrums or showing off, which are attempts to gain an audience, get rewarded or "paid off" in a sense by the responses of others. In behavioral parenting training, parents first learn how to observe these kinds of contingent relationships between child behavior and social-environmental response and then how to alter the contingencies for more positive outcomes. For example, parents might be encouraged momentarily to ignore attention-seeking behaviors or to remove their child from situations in which the child could elicit attention from others.

A second guiding principle in behavioral parent training is the concept of differential reinforcement of other behavior (DRO). With DRO, parents and other significant individuals in a child's world try to respond consistently and positively to constructive behaviors that are incompatible with problematic behavior that needs to be diminished. For example, speaking nicely to siblings and sharing toys and activities with others are behaviors that are incompatible with fighting and bossy behavior and are thus good candidates for the use of DRO by parents. Parents are taught to reinforce such behaviors by commenting positively to the child, publicly recording such instances on a recognition chart, or following episodes of these behaviors with immediate positive consequences (e.g., fun activity, a treat, or another pleasant event).

Other common elements of behavioral parent training include giving clear instructions, using successive approximations to teach or "shape" new child skills, prompting where necessary, and "fading the prompt" to encourage self-reliance in children.

Some of the earliest forms of behavioral parent training focused on the addressing of single problem behaviors in children such as tantrums, mealtime difficulties, fighting with other children, and lack of cooperation with parental instructions. Other early efforts focused on the specific needs of special populations such as developmental disabilities and autism. Behavioral parent training, which augmented other intensive interventions for

these populations, addressed the promotion of basic skills such as speech, social interaction, and self-care, and the reduction of problem behaviors such as self-destructive and self-stimulatory acts.

More Recent Forms of Parent Training

Over a 40-year period, behavioral parent training has evolved into a more sophisticated array of parenting interventions that are useful in a number of contexts. Some of the more recent forms of parent training go beyond learning theory and draw on a variety of practical theories about parental cognitions and beliefs, child development, family dynamics, and relationships. The newer versions of behavioral parenting training address a wider array of problems, involve more goal setting and assessment by parents, make use of a greater variety of delivery formats (parent groups, individual family sessions, telephone consultation, video-DVD instruction), and take a more comprehensive approach to family functioning and intervention.

Behavioral parenting training programs and interventions that have proven to be effective have several attributes in common:

- Action focused: More than just talk, parents actually do things during the program and carry out activities at home.
- Problem-solving oriented: Specific challenges faced by parents are addressed; they work toward solutions to the identified problems and build on child and family strengths.
- Specific parenting strategies: Strategies are specific, concrete, and practical so that parents can add to their repertoire of parenting practices.
- Collaborative goal setting: Parents set the child and family goals; the intervention professional provides guidance but works collaboratively.
- Consultative rather than prescriptive: Intervention professional is a consultant rather than a “boss.”
- Adoption of positive frame: Program is nonjudgmental about the parent, looks to build on parent and child competencies, emphasizes expanding positive child behaviors to displace problematic behaviors, and is optimistic, encouraging, and patient in its delivery.

Although these attributes reflect considerable commonality across programs and interventions, there is also some variability in approach by different behavioral parent training programs. Two well-known programs, each with impressive evidence of effectiveness, illustrate some of the variation. The first is Parent-Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT), which was developed by Sheila Eyberg and colleagues at the University of Florida. PCIT is a clinic-based therapy program for parents of children ages 3 through 8 with oppositional defiant disorder and related problems. In PCIT, parents learn how to become more positive in the use of praise and differential attending (responding to desirable child behaviors and ignoring undesirable behaviors) and in the avoidance of counterproductive criticism. Parents also learn how to manage misconduct situations better. From behind a one-way mirror, therapists watch parents interacting with children and coach them through the use of electronic communications (e.g., bug-in-the-ear, a receiver that is put in the parent’s ear into which the therapist provides instructions and tips so that the parent can hear it, but the kid cannot). Parents participating in PCIT receive intensive practice and coaching in the clinic and then carry out specific procedures at home with their children. PCIT offers a cogent method of helping parents who are faced with challenging child behaviors.

For example, PCIT has all parents go through the same two procedures no matter what their concerns are. The first procedure is a play situation in which the parents orient towards child-directed activity. During the child-directed procedure, parents cannot make requests or ask questions but instead must focus solely on attending to and describing-praising any nonnegative behaviors on the part of the child. The second procedure is a parent-directed situation in which the parent is seeking to have the child do something the parent is requesting. This parent-directed activity provides an opportunity for the therapist to coach the parent in how to administer clear instructions and includes calm, straightforward steps for handling noncompliance and promoting cooperation.

A very different approach to parenting intervention, which builds on behavioral parent training, can be found in the Triple P—Positive Parenting Program. Developed by Matthew Sanders and colleagues at the University of Queensland, Triple P is

actually a system or suite of parenting programs organized in multiple levels of increasing intensity to match the varying needs of families. Triple P is applicable to both the prevention and the treatment of children with social, emotional, and behavioral problems. This approach was designed for reaching the larger population of parents via many settings (e.g., schools, health centers, clinics, home visiting, daycare centers, preschools, churches, community centers) and formats (e.g., brief consultation, parent groups, intensive intervention with an individual family, mass media). Triple P covers a wide variety of common developmental and behavioral topics (e.g., mealtime, bedtime, tantrums, fears, separation anxiety, homework, etc.) and more serious problems (e.g., aggression-violence, bedwetting, bullying, depression). The main interventions within the Triple P system focus on parents of children birth to 12 years throughout the population, and other variants of Triple P are intended for parents of young children with developmental disabilities, parents who are at elevated risk to engage in abusive parenting, and parents of teenagers.

For example, Triple P parent training is organized around the specific goals that parents wish to achieve with their children. Together, the service provider and the parent figure out what is maintaining any problem behaviors or what is interfering with healthy child development and then craft a parenting strategy. The Triple P provider exposes the parent to a broad array of evidence-based parenting strategies and then helps the parent choose the strategy or strategies that fit the parent's style preference, the child's developmental level, and the particulars of the presenting situation.

Variants of behavioral parent training have been applied to many areas and problems including but not limited to developmental disorders (e.g., autism, Asperger syndrome, Down syndrome), childhood aggression, attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder, bedwetting, adolescent substance abuse, childhood anxiety problems, school refusal, early-childhood preparation for school, families going through divorce, families dealing with bereavement, chronically ill children, parents who have engaged in child abuse, foster parent preparation, and issues faced by newly formed stepfamilies. In the area of child mental health treatment, behavioral parent training represents

the single most successful modality in terms of efficacy and benefits. Overall, behavioral parent training has made considerable strides in 50 years to prove useful to many families across a wide variety of settings and contexts.

Ron Prinz

See also Assessment of Families; Child Abuse and Neglect; Communication Skills; Family Therapy for ADHD in Children and Adolescents; Parent-Child Relationships; Parenting

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BELIEFS, DESTINY VERSUS GROWTH

People often bring their own assumptions and beliefs about how relationships function when they enter a romantic relationship. What people believe about relationships guides their goals and motivations in developing relationships. Carol Dweck distinguished between the belief that attributes such as intelligence are fixed versus flexible.

The concept of destiny and growth beliefs is derived from applying this more general distinction to the specific case of romantic relationships. Destiny and growth beliefs reflect assumptions about how one can initiate and maintain relationships. Destiny belief concerns the stability of one's early impressions about relationships and reflects the belief that potential relationship partners are either compatible or not. Independently, growth belief concerns the maintenance and development of relationships and reflects the belief that relationships improve with effort and that challenges can be overcome. Together, these beliefs guide how people orient toward and interpret events as the relationship develops. These beliefs help guide how events and situations are interpreted within one's relationship.

People who believe more strongly in destiny attempt to determine the compatibility of their partner and the future potential of the relationship based on minimal information. They place high value on determining whether a relationship is meant to be and tend to diagnose the potential of the relationship based on specific events. Indeed, relationship survival is linked to initial satisfaction for those who believe more strongly in destiny. When those who hold stronger destiny beliefs initially feel more satisfied, their relationships last particularly long; whereas when they initially feel less satisfied, their relationships end quickly. A stronger belief in destiny is associated with a more judgmental approach to relationships so that flaws of character or initial awkwardness are thought to be permanent. Thus, when problems arise, those higher in destiny belief are more likely to view the problem as a sign that the relationship is not meant to be. Indeed, destiny belief tends to be associated with disengaging from the relationship when there is a problem.

Those who believe more strongly in growth are primarily interested in developing the relationship and believe that relationships can be improved with effort and maintenance. They believe that successful relationships are developed by conquering obstacles and growing closer. Indeed, growth belief predicts fewer one-night stands during the first month of college and dating a particular person for a longer period of time. Moreover, when there are problems, growth belief predicts a greater number of attempts to maintain the relationship by using a variety of coping strategies.

Independence of Destiny and Growth

Destiny and growth beliefs tend to be independent so that individuals can endorse both or neither, as well as the typical extreme combinations (higher on one and lower on the other). It is fairly common for individuals to believe that fate brings potential partners together but that every relationship takes work to maintain. Both destiny and growth beliefs can be optimistic and hopeful about romance, and both beliefs are positively related to more traditional romantic beliefs.

The independence of destiny and growth beliefs suggests that each dimension can contribute uniquely to predicting and explaining relationship perceptions, cognitions, and behaviors. It also suggests, however, that particular combinations of destiny and growth may be especially relevant. An evaluation orientation captures those with the combination of a higher destiny belief and a lower growth belief. These people believe that relationships can be easily diagnosed and evaluated but that they cannot be considerably improved. When evaluating, a person's goal becomes the diagnosis of one's partner and relationship in an effort to determine whether the relationship would seem to have immediate promise without attempting to improve the relationship. In contrast, a cultivation orientation captures those with the combination of a higher growth belief and a lower destiny belief. These people believe that relationships evolve through development, confrontation, and efforts to maintain and improve the relationship, and they are less focused on diagnosing the future potential of relationships. When cultivating, one's goal becomes the development and maintenance of the relationship without inferring grand meaning from otherwise minor differences.

Loving One's Partner, Flaws and All

Destiny and growth beliefs have been found to moderate or qualify several important processes. For example, viewing one's partner optimistically (e.g., through rose-colored glasses) is not necessary when one is higher in growth and lower in destiny beliefs. When one has this cultivation orientation, differences and disagreements that would otherwise seem threatening are instead viewed as

challenges and opportunities to better understand one's partner and to develop the relationship. Thus, when one has a cultivation orientation, the perception that a partner falls short of one's ideal is not linked to feeling less happy with the relationship. Similarly, whereas disagreements are often followed by feeling less committed to relationships, this is less so when one is higher in growth belief. Further, during disagreements, whereas an evaluation orientation tends to produce more hostility, a cultivation orientation tends to produce more positivity.

C. Raymond Knee and Helen Lee Lin

See also Beliefs About Relationships; First Impressions; Idealization; Initiation of Relationships; Romanticism

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BELIEFS ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS

Beliefs about relationships are an important guide and organizing principle for social lives. They are mental schemas, like images, representations, or scripts that are usually in unconscious thoughts. They influence what people expect from certain types of relationships in subtle ways. For example, relationship beliefs help people organize their relationships into types, such as “just friends” rather

than “dating partners” based on sexual attraction and/or involvement. They also tell people how to act in relationships and what to expect from others in those relationships. For example, people expect that siblings may argue sometimes but be there to support each other in times of stress. People expect close friends to keep their secrets and to never speak badly about them behind their backs. People expect a store clerk to say, “Have a nice day” as a routine comment when they leave the store but would be surprised (and perhaps hurt) if a close friend uttered the same words at the end of a deeply personal conversation. In sum, relationship beliefs help people categorize their relationships, guide their behaviors, tell them what to expect from others, and even explain the emotions they sometimes have when their expectations are not met.

Of particular interest to scholars who study human relationships are the beliefs people hold about romantic relationships. These relationships are a special category of social relationships because, unlike family relationships, they are voluntary and self-selected. Also, unlike friendships, people tend to have just one, exclusive romantic relationship. In fact, the dating process is guided by assumptions regarding who would be an ideal mate if people plan to marry and whether the relationship people have measures up to the standards they hold for a romantic relationship. When a partner or a relationship does not measure up to the ideals people hold, they may change their expectations, change the relationship definition (e.g., let's just be friends), or terminate the relationship. If a dating relationship leads to marriage, scholars report that some relationship beliefs facilitate a stable and satisfying marriage, while other beliefs lead to problematic communication patterns and relational dissatisfaction.

The goal of this entry is to describe more specifically the relationship beliefs associated with romantic relationships, both dating relationships and marriage. This entry will present two approaches to romantic relationship beliefs and summarize the findings from research done in these areas. The first approach conceptualizes relationship beliefs as an ideology about the nature of romantic relationships in general—a sort of romantic ideal of true love. The second approach, which is influenced by the experiences of marriage

counselors who work with distressed couples, focuses on relationship beliefs that are unrealistic and on dysfunctional expectations and standards for romantic relationships.

Romantic Ideology

Scholars working in this perspective view relationship beliefs as preexisting expectations about romantic relationships. Although seldom present in conscious awareness, they provide the ideal against which past, present, and potential relationships are compared. When romantic relationships are consistent with these expectations, positive emotions such as liking and love are experienced; when they are inconsistent, negative emotions such as disappointment and sadness are experienced. Although these beliefs may change somewhat over time, they are actually developed very early in childhood as people observe their parents' relationship, see depictions in movies, and watch television dramas and sitcoms that present romantic relationships.

Scholars differ somewhat on the specific factors that constitute these belief structures. Raymond Knee proposes two dimensions: *destiny* and *growth*. The destiny dimension assesses the extent to which people agree with the general idea that potential partners are either meant for each other or not. It is measured by asking people to rate how much they agree or disagree with such statements as, "Potential relationship partners are either compatible or they are not." The growth dimension assesses the extent to which people agree with the general idea that successful relationships are developed by overcoming the obstacles that are likely to arise. It is measured by asking people to rate how much they agree or disagree with such statements as, "A successful relationship evolves through hard work and resolution of incompatibilities." As people might expect, research indicates that when people believe successful relationships must be developed through hard work (growth), they tend to have longer and more satisfying relationships, fewer one-night stands, and more productive responses to conflict (e.g., feel comfortable and not hostile after they discuss differences in how they view the relationship). Thus, it appears that belief in growth (rather than in destiny) facilitates a

couple's willingness to acknowledge challenges to the relationship and to deal with them through open communication rather than to avoid them or simply dissolve the relationship.

Other scholars identify somewhat different dimensions constituting relationship beliefs, but they are theoretically consistent with growth and destiny beliefs. The Romantic Beliefs Scale, constructed by Susan Sprecher and Sandra Metts, provides evidence for four types of romantic beliefs: *Love Finds a Way* (believing that love makes it possible to overcome all obstacles in a relationship), *One and Only* (believing that there is only one true love for every person and to be truly in love is to be in love forever), *Idealization* (believing that one's partner and relationship will be perfect when truly in love), and *Love at First Sight* (believing that it is possible to fall in love almost immediately when the right person comes along). Research using these four dimensions indicates that romantic beliefs are positively associated with love, satisfaction, and commitment in romantic relationships. That is, the more "romantic" people are, the more they love their partner, are satisfied in the relationship, and want to stay committed to the relationship over time. In addition, and perhaps surprising to some readers, men typically score higher on total romantic beliefs and especially on Idealization compared to women. Some scholars suggest that this strong belief in the romantic ideal partially explains why some men report greater distress when imagining that a partner had committed emotional infidelity compared to imagining that a partner had committed a sexual infidelity.

Research employing the Romantic Beliefs Scale also confirms the framing effect of culture on romantic ideology. For example, one study found that American and Russian respondents endorsed romantic beliefs more strongly than did Japanese respondents. Also, a comparison of Chinese and North American samples indicated that the Chinese respondents scored higher on the combined Romantic Beliefs Scale as well as on two specific dimensions: One and Only and Idealization. In addition, within the American culture, research indicates that differences exist among ethnic groups. In a comparison of European-American and African-American samples, researchers found that the African-American respondents viewed

Idealization and One and Only as the same belief (i.e., both combined into a dimension labeled *One Perfect Love*) rather than as two separate beliefs.

A third model of romantic relationship beliefs has been developed and tested by Garth Fletcher and his colleagues. The conceptualization of romantic ideology is similar to the perspectives described above but includes somewhat different dimensions than the previous scales. These differences stem, in part, from its origin. The Relationship Beliefs Scale was derived from the elements that dating and married adults listed in response to the question, "What would contribute to a successful intimate relationship?" These elements included various content areas (e.g., communication, sex, and friends) that respondents believed would influence both the quality (e.g., happiness and satisfaction) and process (e.g., conflict and stability) of intimate sexual relationships. Four dimensions emerged from these lists. *Intimacy* focuses on beliefs about interpersonal attitudes and interaction that facilitate closeness (e.g., trust, respect, communication, support, acceptance, love, friendship, and compromise). *External Factors* focuses on beliefs related to the importance of issues or problems external to the relationship (e.g., important others, finances, commonality, and children). *Passion* focuses on elements of the sexual relationship and its vitality (e.g., the importance of satisfying sex). Finally, *Individuality* focuses on independence and equity (e.g., rights to personal privacy).

Research using the Relationship Beliefs Scale reveals that these romantic beliefs are not directly related to relationship satisfaction but that they are indirectly related. That is, when people felt strongly, for example, that good relationships require respect, communication, and compromise (i.e., Intimacy), they were more likely to listen to their partners, express their feelings, provide support when their partners needed it, and made sacrifices for the sake of their partner or the relationship. These behaviors, then, influenced the positive feelings of the partner, feelings that enhanced the quality of the relationship, which enhanced the couple's overall level of satisfaction. Interestingly, as will be evident below, a similar pattern occurs in reverse when romantic partners express strong agreement with dysfunctional relationship beliefs.

Dysfunctional Relationship Beliefs

The second general approach to beliefs about relationships stems initially from an interest in the contributions that dysfunctional beliefs play in marital distress. The most widely used measure in this area, the Relationship Belief Inventory (RBI), was developed by Roy Eidelson and Norman Epstein based on surveys completed by marital therapists who described attitudes and expectations they felt contributed to marital problems. The RBI consists of five belief domains: *Disagreement Is Destructive* (e.g., "If your partner expresses disagreement with your ideas, s/he probably does not think highly of you"), *Mindreading Is Expected* (e.g., "A partner should know what you are thinking or feeling without you having to tell him/her"), *Partners Cannot Change* (e.g., "Partners cannot change themselves; relationship/damages done early in a relationship probably cannot be reversed"), *Sexual Perfectionism* (e.g., "I get upset if I think I have not completely satisfied my partner sexually"), and the *Sexes Are Different* (e.g., "There are differences between males' and females' personalities and relationship needs; you can't really understand someone of the opposite sex").

Research has confirmed the utility of the RBI for clinicians and relationship researchers. However, before reviewing that research, it is important to note that scholars have also critiqued the RBI and offered suggestions for improvement. For example, research has indicated that the Sexes are Different dimension is actually two categories rather than one. These two categories represent (1) differences between men and women in their needs and (2) the difficulty (even impossibility) in understanding the opposite sex. In addition, because the original scale tends to blend relationship-specific beliefs (e.g., "I cannot accept it when my partner disagrees with me") with more abstract cognitions about the way relationships in general should be (e.g., "Partners should sense each other's moods"), a revised version of the RBI has been introduced to include parallel sets of relationship-specific and relationship-general dysfunctional beliefs.

Despite these concerns, research using the original and revised versions of the RBI indicates logical connections between dysfunctional beliefs and relationship maladjustment, particularly those

aspects related to problematic communication. For example, to the extent that young adults in dating couples believe that disagreement is destructive and that partners cannot change, they are more likely to respond to relational problems by simply leaving the relationship or avoiding important issues rather than openly discussing them. In married couples, spouses who endorse higher levels of dysfunctional beliefs are more likely to exhibit destructive communication behavior (e.g., interrupting, getting off topic, blaming) during conflict interactions. Moreover, husbands who endorse dysfunctional beliefs are even more likely than their wives to reciprocate negative behaviors rather than to ignore them. Although married couples are not as likely as dating couples to break up, as might be expected, these patterns do contribute to lower levels of relational satisfaction. There seems to be a prevailing sense of futility for those couples who believe that disagreement is bad, that they can never understand each other, and that they cannot change anyway.

Research has also examined how dysfunctional relationship beliefs fit within larger models of relationship stability such as with the Investment Model. According to the Investment Model, people feel greater satisfaction in their relationships when they receive more rewards than costs and when the relationship is better than their previous ones or other people's relationships (i.e., closer to their ideal). Furthermore, when they have made investments (of time, money, or other resources) into the relationship and when they do not think they have another alternative (e.g., being alone or finding another partner), they are highly committed to the relationship and it is likely to be stable and enduring. Using this model along with measures of relationship beliefs, scholars have found that when people believe strongly that the sexes are different in emotional, psychological, and relational needs and that men and women can never fully understand each other, they are less willing to commit fully to a relationship. This pattern is especially true for women. However, the lower commitment is not the direct result of dysfunctional relationship beliefs. Rather, women who believe the sexes are inherently different perceive greater costs than rewards in their relationships, are more likely to consider possible alternatives to their relationship, and are less likely to feel that their current relationship matches

up to an ideal comparison level. As a result, these women are less likely to feel satisfied, less likely to invest in the relationship, and therefore, feel less commitment to their partner or the relationship.

Finally, research indicates that in much the same way that romantic ideals are shaped by culture, so too are dysfunctional relationship beliefs. In a comparison of samples from three countries—Georgia, Hungary, and Russia—dysfunctional beliefs were most strongly endorsed in Georgia and least in Hungary. In all three countries, dysfunctional beliefs were associated with lower relationship quality, although the strength of the association varied by country. In Hungary, the most individualistic culture, the association was very high, and the Hungarian sample was less likely to believe that the Sexes are Different and that Disagreement is Destructive, but they were also more willing to believe that Mindreading is Expected.

It is interesting to speculate whether the exporting of Western popular culture may eventually influence other cultural views of romantic relationships. American samples indicate a positive correlation between media exposure (e.g., men's and women's magazines, tabloids, television sitcoms and dramas, movies, romance novels, and popular music) and unrealistic relationship beliefs. For example, listening to rock music and reading psychology self-help books are associated with Sexual Perfectionism. In addition, high television viewing is associated with the belief that the Sexes are Different, and heavy soap-opera viewing is associated with the belief that Mindreading is Expected.

Although dysfunctional relational beliefs may eventually lead to disappointment and frustration for people actually involved in maintaining romantic relationships, this does not mean that all irrational beliefs about what is possible for a romantic relationship are necessarily dysfunctional. As Jeffery DeBord and John Romans argue, some relationship beliefs that appear to be irrational can be advantageous if they motivate efforts to bring one's relationship as close as possible to the ideal. In other words, relationship beliefs (even when they seem unrealistic) can be used as an ideal standard or goal that both partners agree is worth trying to achieve rather than being used as a standard that means failure if not consistently or fully met. These researchers developed the Relationship Belief Questionnaire (RBQ) to measure the types of

irrational beliefs that people might hold regarding their current relationship: (a) "We should be completely open and honest with each other at all times," (b) "We should be able to read each other's minds," (c) "We should do everything together," (d) "We should be able to meet all of each other's needs," (e) "We should be willing and able to change for each other," (f) "Things should always be perfect between us," (g) "Good relationships should be easy to maintain," (h) "One can never be complete without being involved in a romantic relationship," and (i) "Romantic idealism." Responses on the RBQ from married and cohabiting couples indicate that these irrational beliefs about one's own current relationship (relationship-specific beliefs) are associated with higher levels of relationship satisfaction and adjustment. Although well-adjusted couples may simply be more likely to believe that these goals are attainable in their relationship, it is also possible that these belief systems motivate positive relationship behaviors that are then reciprocated by partner. In this sense, irrational beliefs act as a type of positive illusion that allows partners to interpret each other's behaviors in the best possible light and to respond to problems constructively.

Summary

Past research has identified a variety of beliefs about romantic relationships and has documented how these beliefs influence individuals and their relationships. Thus far, scholars have focused on two major approaches to beliefs about relationships. The first perspective examines beliefs that constitute the romantic ideal, while the second approach examines beliefs about what relationships in general and one's own relationship must be. Although some beliefs about relationships are unrealistic and even dysfunctional, research shows that some degree of idealistic expectations for romantic relationships may motivate individuals to strive to bring their relationships as close as possible to their idea of the "perfect" relationship.

Directions for Future Research

A useful direction for future research is to examine tensions in beliefs about relationships through the

lens of Dialectical Theory. That is, scholars should examine how individuals and couples manage the competing and contradicting tensions between their realistic and emergent relationship expectations and their idealized and preexisting expectations. As with any dialectical tension (e.g., openness vs. closedness, novelty vs. predictability), the satisfied couple somehow finds a way to manage these contradictions. The understanding of relationship quality and stability would be enhanced by a fuller understanding of this process.

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See also: Love, Companionate and Passionate; Love, Prototype Approach; Love, Typologies; Marriage, Expectations About; Mate Selection; Romanticism

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BELONGING, NEED FOR

The need for belonging (also called the need to belong, belongingness motivation, or the need for relatedness) refers to the fundamental and universal human motivation to develop and maintain stable and caring interpersonal relationships. This notion has deep roots—Aristotle, John Locke, and Charles Darwin, among many others, argued that humans are social animals. More recently, social scientists have collected and reviewed substantial evidence supporting the fundamental nature of belongingness in humans. This entry discusses the nature of the need for belonging, why it qualifies as a fundamental motivation or basic psychological need, and consequences of satisfying and thwarting the need.

Evidence for the Need for Belonging

Several theoretical approaches have addressed the fact that humans are motivated to form and maintain social connections. Many early approaches did not afford any special status to belongingness motives, listing them among sometimes lengthy catalogs of other motives. In contrast, more recent approaches have argued that belongingness is not merely one motive among many, but rather that it is a fundamental motivation and a basic psychological need. Although definitions of psychological need differ between theories, there is wide agreement on several criteria.

Basic needs are believed to involve strong emotional responses that alert an individual when a need is not being met and motivate behavior to meet the need. In addition, basic psychological needs are believed to lead more generally to overall well-being when satisfied and to severe negative

consequences (beyond momentary psychological distress) when thwarted. Some theories argue that basic psychological needs are essential for optimal functioning, just as certain nutrients are necessary for the optimal growth of plants and animals. Consistent with these theories, research shows that fulfillment of the need for belonging is associated with greater subjective well-being, positive affect, life satisfaction, and physical health. Even on a day-to-day basis, individuals tend to report greater well-being on days characterized by close interactions with others. Conversely, when the need for belonging is blocked through rejection, isolation, loss, or unsatisfying social relationships, individuals are likely to experience greater negative emotions such as anxiety, sadness, and hurt feelings. Some negative emotions, such as shame, guilt, loneliness, and embarrassment, seem to be uniquely social in nature and may have evolved primarily to alert individuals about threats to social bonds and motivate socially adaptive responses, presumably in service of the need for belonging. In addition to negative emotions, social isolation is associated with greater stress and psychopathology, lowered self-esteem, diminished self-regulation, and impaired immune system function. Over time, isolation may lead to loneliness and depression and is associated with an increased risk of suicide.

Further evidence that belongingness is a fundamental need comes from the powerful effects of relationship concerns on cognitive processing. Much of most individuals' thoughts and conversations revolve around their social relationships. There are also specific cognitive processes that focus on making sense of the social world, such as forming attributions and inferences about others' behavior. For example, people spontaneously use social relationships to classify information about individuals and tend to store information about relationship partners (e.g., a married couple) together in memory. Evidence also suggests that people process information about others in different ways depending on their relationship with the target. Many of the cognitive biases that normally favor the self are extended to close relationship partners. For instance, people tend to give more favorable explanations for the successes and failures of close relationship partners than they would for strangers.

Evolutionary Origins and Developmental Changes

There is strong evidence that the need for belonging is a cultural universal. Although specific patterns of relationship formation and maintenance differ somewhat across cultures (such as the existence of arranged marriages), humans universally seek out and maintain social relationships—friendship, family, and social groups in general exist in all known cultures. Humans everywhere seem to form relationships spontaneously, work to maintain their bonds, and express distress when their relationships end. Although there are clear cultural differences in specific patterns of relationships, there are no known societies where people fail to seek out the companionship of others.

The universal nature of the need for belonging has led several authors to theorize that the need for belonging is an innate adaptation with an evolutionary basis. For early humans, living in groups would have conferred numerous survival and reproductive benefits. Group living provided greater access to food and other resources and protection from predators and the environment. Some theorists have gone so far as to propose that small group living was the primary survival strategy of early humans. Because of the survival and reproductive benefits conferred by social relationships, human ancestors who were motivated to form, monitor, and maintain their social relationships would have been more likely to survive and reproduce. Recent research has also discovered specific neurological and neurochemical pathways that contribute to forming and maintaining social bonds, including the neurochemicals vasopressin and oxytocin.

Although the need for belonging is believed to operate from infancy, targets of belongingness and ways in which the need is met may change over time, as one's social focus shifts from parents to peers to romantic partners. Infants form emotional bonds and seek proximity with their caregivers. Adolescents tend to spend progressively less time with family and instead shift to a focus on developing friendships and eventually romantic partnerships. Early adulthood is similarly characterized by a focus on broadening one's social network. Older adults, presumably because they perceive their

time as limited, tend to focus more on emotionally close social bonds and less on acquaintances and new relationships, as shown by research on Socioemotional Selectivity Theory.

Individual Differences

Although the need for belonging appears to be universal and innate, there are individual differences in the intensity of the desire for belongingness that predict theoretically meaningful outcomes. For instance, one study found that individuals reporting a relatively strong need for belonging were more likely to cooperate with others in a large group setting. Individuals with a strong need to belong tend to seek a larger number of social relationships, worry more about acceptance, and react more negatively to exclusion. They are also generally more attentive to social cues, such as facial expressions and vocal tones. In addition to differences in chronic levels of the need to belong, the desire for belongingness is sensitive to context and can change over time and in different situations. For instance, situational threats such as being ignored by a friend can temporarily increase the strength of an individual's need for belonging, which may motivate him or her to attend more to social cues.

Although both men and women are believed to have a fundamental need for belonging, some findings suggest gender differences in the strength of this need. For instance, women tend to spend more time thinking about their relationships and show more ingratiating behaviors, such as smiling and attending to others in social situations. In laboratory experiments, women also tend to react more negatively to social rejection than men. Others, however, have proposed the alternative explanation that men and women are equally motivated by the need for belonging, yet they differ in how the need is met. In particular, evidence suggests that women tend to invest in a smaller number of close relationships, whereas men are more oriented toward social groups. For instance, whereas women are more likely than men to describe themselves in terms of their close relationships, men are more likely to use collective descriptors, such as group memberships.

Satisfying the Need for Belonging

Belonging does not merely refer to being liked or accepted, nor does it simply refer to any social contact. Mere affiliation (repeated contact with uncaring others) is not sufficient to satisfy the need for belonging and does not seem to enhance well-being. Rather, the need for belonging is satisfied most fully when an individual's social life is characterized by both frequent, pleasant social interactions and close, mutually caring relationships.

Some evidence suggests that the need for belonging, like the basic needs for food and water, operates according to a principle of satiation, in which fulfilling the need temporarily decreases its motivational power. People are most likely to seek out and develop additional relationships when they lack an adequate amount of belonging. In contrast, some studies have found that in some situations, social contact does not lead to satiation but rather to an increased desire for additional social contact. Further research is needed to identify the conditions under which each of these effects is likely to occur.

Some authors have argued that relationships are somewhat substitutable in terms of satisfying the need for belonging in that different relationships can satisfy the same underlying need. For instance, although moving from one location to another is often associated with temporary distress due to the loss of existing relationships, new friends usually fill the gaps left by former friends after some time. This does not mean that all types of relationships are essentially the same. In addition to a general need for belonging, individuals may also be motivated to form specific types of relationships, such as friendships and romantic partnerships, each with its own purpose. Although different types of relationships may all contribute to satisfying the need for belonging, they may also provide unique benefits unavailable in other types of relationships.

Responding to Threats to Belonging

When the need to belong is thwarted by social rejection or exclusion, individuals sometimes respond with anger and aggression, particularly toward the source of rejection. Social exclusion, however, also tends to motivate behavior that may ultimately enhance one's belongingness. Research

participants experiencing social exclusion in the laboratory have expressed greater interest in developing new friendships and in working with others. They exhibit greater generosity and conformity and expend more effort on group tasks. Exclusion also seems to make people more sensitive to social cues in the environment. For instance, recently rejected individuals are more likely to remember information regarding others' social relationships and group memberships. They are also more attentive to and accurate in decoding facial expressions and other subtle social cues, which may help them respond appropriately in social interactions. When others are not available, individuals often respond to threats to belonging by symbolically reaffirming their belongingness. For instance, research has shown that rejection makes one's social identities and group memberships come to mind more easily and leads people to think of their groups as more meaningful and cohesive. These reactions seem to buffer against the negative effects of rejection on self-esteem.

Not all behaviors enacted in the service of the need for belonging are prosocial, and people sometimes act in antisocial, aggressive ways in the service of belonging. For instance, one study found that boys in elementary school who wanted to be accepted by antisocial peers were more likely to bully other boys. In fact, some children admit that they go along with bullying because they do not want to feel left out of the group. Even though this behavior alienates victims of bullying, it may increase acceptance among antisocial peers. Similarly, some social groups, such as gangs, may pressure group members to commit criminal acts to avoid rejection from the group.

Given the fundamental importance of belonging, one might expect humans to have evolved psychological mechanisms to monitor and respond to changes in their social inclusion. Sociometer Theory argues that this is precisely the function served by self-esteem, which represents the output of a sociometer system that automatically monitors the environment for cues relevant to social inclusion or rejection and provides feedback regarding one's social acceptability. Research has confirmed that self-esteem is particularly reactive to experiences of social inclusion and rejection. Cues that imply the possibility of rejection or exclusion lower self-esteem, signaling the risk of

rejection and motivating behavior likely to restore social inclusion.

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See also Affiliation; Affiliation in Nonhuman Animals; Attachment Theory; Loneliness; Ostracism; Rejection; Socioemotional Selectivity Theory; Sociometer Theory

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to terms with the loss of a relationship through death has much to do with the nature of the foregoing bond between the deceased and surviving person. Furthermore, just as current relationships with others (e.g., friends, parents, colleagues, siblings, neighbors, partners) influence virtually all aspects of everyday existence, so can the deaths of significant persons have profound impact on many domains of one’s life. Thus, it becomes important to determine precisely how and in what respect death of a loved one affects people and to identify subgroups for whom the impact is extreme. These issues are addressed in the first part of this entry. In the second part, theoretical approaches to understanding the identified manifestations of bereavement are outlined. Because bereavement has fundamentally to do with human relationships—not the forming or maintaining, but with the ending of a relationship—it stands to reason that a relationship theory could have much to offer in terms of scientific understanding and generation of theory-guided empirical research. One such theory, Attachment Theory, focuses on reactions to separation from a significant person and can be applied to the situation of separation when an attachment figure dies. Thus, particular attention is given to this theoretical approach. Finally, the impact of other human relationships in assisting the bereaved, both informally (through social support) and professionally (counseling and therapy), is summarized.

First, three basic terms need to be defined in the ways they are used in the contemporary scientific literature. *Bereavement* is the objective situation of a person who has recently experienced the loss of someone significant through that person’s death. *Grief* refers to the primarily emotional (affective) reaction to bereavement. It incorporates diverse psychological (cognitive, social-behavioral) and physical (physiological-somatic) manifestations. Grief is generally distinguished from *mourning*, which involves the public display, social expressions, or acts expressive of grief that are shaped by (religious) beliefs and practices of a given society or cultural group (e.g., mourning rituals). Some researchers and practitioners (e.g., those adhering to the psychoanalytic tradition) use the terms grief and mourning interchangeably.

BEREAVEMENT

It is frequently claimed that grief is the price one has to pay for love. Indeed, the way people come

Health Consequences of Bereavement

Mortality

The popular expression that she or he died of a broken heart has been subject to considerable empirical examination. Researchers have conducted well-controlled longitudinal investigations comparing bereaved and nonbereaved counterparts to establish whether bereavement is associated with higher rates of mortality. Most have focused on spousal loss. Excess risk of mortality among bereaved samples has been reported quite consistently for the early months of bereavement, with some investigators reporting persisting elevated risk beyond 6 months. Subgroup differences have been identified. Widowers appear to be relatively more vulnerable than widows. Death of a child, a highly impactful type of loss, has been shown to have a greater mortality effect on mothers than on fathers. Mortality excesses among the bereaved are due to various causes, with suicide being a significant risk. In one large-scale study conducted in Finland, mortality in a group of bereaved persons was found to be very high for accidental and violent causes, moderate for chronic ischemic heart disease and lung cancer, and lower for other causes.

There are good reasons to attribute the mortality excesses for the bereaved at least in large part to a “broken heart” effect if researchers understand this term to refer to psychological distress due to the loss, such as loneliness, and to secondary consequences of the loss, such as changes in social ties, eating habits, and economic support. Nevertheless, it must be remembered that in terms of absolute numbers, few bereaved people die (e.g., a study in England showed that within 6 months of bereavement, 5 percent of widowers vs. 3 percent of married men ages 54 plus would be expected to die).

Physical Health Consequences

Not surprisingly, given the mortality patterns just described, bereaved people are more likely to suffer physical health problems; again, this expectancy applies particularly to the recently bereaved. Rates of disability, use of medication, and hospitalization are elevated compared to nonbereaved controls. Widowed persons (and possibly other

bereaved subgroups on which there is less research) in general consult medical practitioners more frequently than their still-married counterparts. There are indications that this tendency is frequently due to symptoms of anxiety and tension. And yet, findings also suggest that many bereaved persons suffering from intense grief fail to consult their doctors when they need to, neglecting their own health. Clearly, patterns of physical health are intricately related to psychological symptoms and health.

Psychological Health Consequences

Bereaved people are susceptible to various psychological reactions-symptoms, causing bereavement researchers to regard grief as a complex emotional syndrome. Psychological effects also range from mild and comparatively short-lived, to severe and long-lasting over the months or even years following a loss. Psychological reactions are diverse not only between individuals but also across cultures and ethnic groups, with some differences attributable to religious beliefs. Nevertheless, there are reasons to believe that fundamental manifestations of grief are universal.

Bereavement is a harrowing experience that is frequently accompanied by loneliness, insomnia, distress, somatic symptoms, anxiety, and social withdrawal. For most people, the experience is tolerable and abates over time. For a minority, suffering is intense and prolonged. Depression or anxiety can, for example, reach levels that become clinically important (e.g., researchers have reported that 25–45 percent of recently bereaved samples suffer from mild levels of depressive symptoms and 10–20 percent from clinical levels). There is also risk of post-traumatic stress disorder, particularly when the nature of death was horrific. Comorbidity can occur; for example, a combination of such disorders as post-traumatic stress and a major depressive disorder may greatly complicate the grieving process. In line with such findings, bereaved persons have higher rates of psychiatric morbidity and psychiatric admission.

In some cases, the grieving process itself may become disturbed, leading to what has been termed *complicated* (or *prolonged*) *grief*. Complicated grief refers to a deviation from the (cultural) norm (i.e., that could be expected, according to the

nature of the particular bereavement event) in (1) the time course or intensity of specific or general symptoms of grief and/or (2) level of impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning. Subtypes of complicated grief have been described in terms of *absent*, *delayed* or *inhibited* (characterized by nonappearance of symptoms typical of grief), or *chronic* (long-lasting presence of symptoms of intense grief, absence of progress in coming to terms with loss) grief. There are discrepancies between studies in estimates of the occurrence of complicated forms of grief. For example, in one report among bereaved adults, 9 percent were found to experience chronic grief, while in another investigation it was reported that 20 percent suffered from complicated grief.

Risk Factors

Why do some bereaved people suffer from extreme or lasting effects while others do not? One step toward finding an answer lies in the identification of *risk factors*. The term risk factor denotes the situational and intra- and interpersonal characteristics associated with increased vulnerability to the range of bereavement outcomes outlined above. It seems useful in the case of bereavement to extend the concept to include protective factors that promote resilience and lower risk and coping processes that can impede or facilitate adaptation.

A complex combination of personal and situational factors contributes to bereavement outcome. For example, expected death is typically assumed to be easier to deal with than unexpected loss, but results are not always clear-cut. In one study, an interaction was found between personality and circumstances of death: Those who suffered a sudden loss but believed that in general they were in control of their own fate adapted better than those not holding such beliefs (and comparably with expected-loss survivors). Furthermore, discrepancies in findings make it difficult to establish patterns. For example, earlier research on the impact of good versus poor quality of a marital relationship associated ambivalence or dependency with poor consequent bereavement outcome, while good relationships were associated with better outcomes. More recent research has yielded less clear patterns. Further investigation (e.g., to distinguish overdependency from typical dependency, lack of

harmony from autonomy) is necessary to clarify inconsistencies. Nevertheless, research on attachment strongly supports the position that security in terms of attachment style is crucial to outcome.

With respect to intrapersonal resources and protective factors, there is evidence that personality characteristics are related to adjustment. For example, neuroticism (a dimension of personality relating to emotional instability, anxiety-proneness, and negative affectivity) is associated with poor bereavement outcome. A personal history of mental or physical health problems is associated with increased risk of ill-health effects during bereavement. Of interpersonal factors, although it has generally been assumed that social support assists the bereaved, evidence of a “buffering” (bereavement-specific protective) effect is weak.

Finally, the way a person goes about coping with bereavement makes a difference to adjustment. Ruminative coping (which involves repeatedly focusing on one’s symptoms of distress, such as asking oneself why one feels so bad) is associated with poor outcomes, whereas positive (re)-appraisal (a process whereby a person tries to also perceive some positive aspects in what is happening) is associated with good outcomes. Other factors have not always been well supported empirically: Analyses of the impact of confronting-working through grief or of disclosure and sharing of grief have failed to confirm that these factors are related to different (i.e., better vs. worse) outcomes, as had often been assumed by bereavement researchers. Similarly, the negative impact of denial has been called into question. By contrast, there are good reasons to claim that regulation of emotions (confrontation-avoidance, positive-negative appraisals) in grieving is likely to be beneficial.

Theories of Grief

Some theories are designed to explain manifestations and processes of grief in general, while others are specific to coping with bereavement. Both types are illustrated next.

Psychoanalytic Theory

Theoretical explanation of the phenomena and manifestations of bereavement has been influenced

by psychoanalytic theory, particularly Sigmund Freud's (1917) formulation in "Mourning and Melancholia." According to this perspective, when a loved one dies, the bereaved person is faced with the task of struggling to sever ties with the deceased person and to detach the energy invested in him or her. The psychological function of grief is to free the individual of ties to the deceased, achieving a gradual detachment by means of a process of *grief work* (confronting the reality of loss, going over events, working toward detachment). This notion that one has to work through grief has been central in subsequent formulations and in principles of counseling and therapy (notably, John Bowlby's identification of phases of grief and William Worden's Task Model, which assumes that the bereaved person has to perform four tasks to adjust to bereavement: accepting the reality of loss, experiencing the pain of grief, adjusting to an environment without the deceased, and "relocating" the deceased emotionally). The main cause of complicated grief, according to Freud, is the existence of ambivalence in the relationship with the deceased, preventing the normal transference of libido from that person to a new object.

Cognitive Stress Theory

The basic assumption of cognitive stress theories, notably that of Richard Lazarus and Susan Folkman, is that stressful life events play an important role in the etiology of various somatic and psychiatric disorders. A stressful life event may precipitate the onset of a physical or mental disorder, particularly if the person is predisposed to such disorder. The experienced distress depends on the extent to which the perceived demands of the situation tax or exceed the person's coping resources, given that failure to cope leads to negative outcomes. Coping may be directed toward managing and altering the problem that is causing the distress (*problem-focused coping*) or at managing the emotional response (*emotion-focused coping*). This theory provides a theoretical basis for the *buffering hypothesis*, which suggests that social support (a coping resource) protects the individual against the negative impact of stress on health. Research has identified neurophysiological mechanisms linking stress to the immune, gastrointestinal, and cardiovascular systems.

Attachment Theory

Bowlby's Attachment Theory places emphasis on the biological function of grieving, namely, to regain proximity to the attachment figure, separation from whom has caused anxiety. In the case of death, reunion cannot be achieved, and this searching response is dysfunctional; protest and despair result. Actively working through the loss is considered necessary, to rearrange representations of the lost person and the self (which become internalized attachment working models of self and others) and enables detachment-reorganization and adjustment to the physical absence of the deceased. Working through takes place through a sequence of overlapping, flexibly occurring phases (shock, yearning-protest, despair, and recovery).

According to Bowlby, individuals with negative models of self and others, and who suffer from chronic attachment insecurities, are likely to have special difficulties grieving. Anxiously attached individuals have difficulty inhibiting painful thoughts and feelings relating to the deceased (relating to chronic grief). By contrast, avoidant ones will be unwilling or unable to experience such things (relating to absence of grief, denial, and inhibition). In both cases, difficulties coming to terms with the loss and moving on (to form new attachments) ensue, while secure attachment facilitates adjustment during bereavement.

The Dual Process Model (DPM)

The DPM was developed by Margaret Stroebe and Henk Schut to clarify differences between adaptive and maladaptive coping with bereavement and to specify cognitive processes (beyond grief work) that would be associated with these outcomes. It distinguishes between two types of stressor, namely *loss-oriented* (focusing on the deceased and death events, including grief work) and *restoration-oriented* (dealing with secondary stressors—e.g., finances, changes in other relationships—resulting from the death). Both need to be dealt with during adjustment, leading to a dynamic process called *oscillation*: Adaptive grieving not only involves grief work but also confrontation-avoidance of positive-negative emotions and cognitions associated with loss itself and its consequences for ongoing life. For example, in addition to confronting the reality of loss through reminiscing about the deceased, visiting

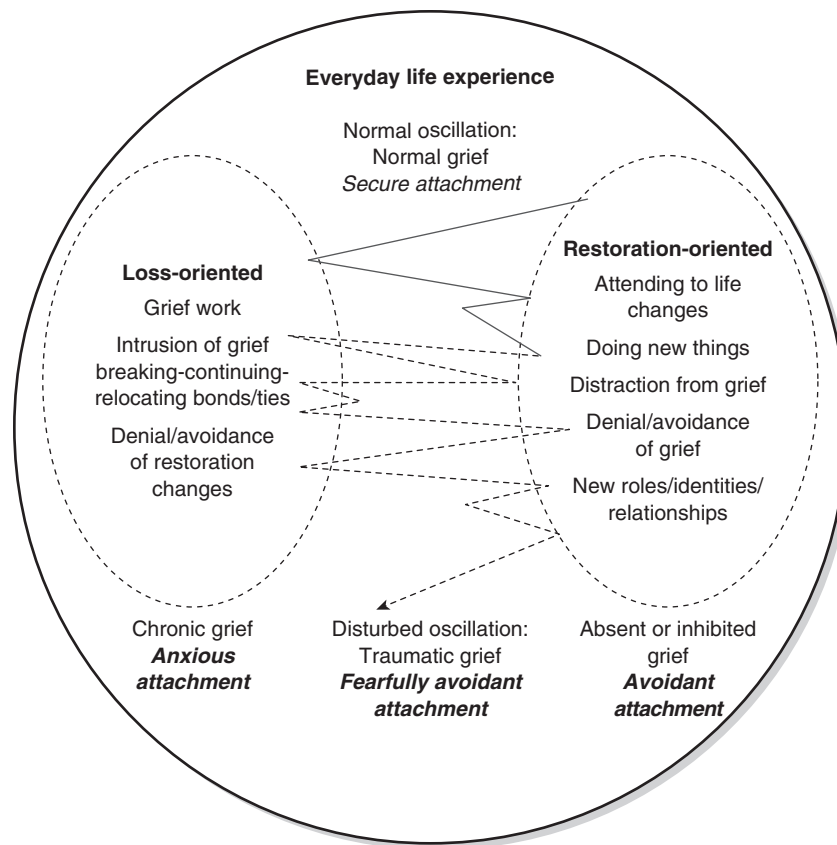


Figure 1 Complicated Grief in the Dual Process Model (DPM): A Theoretical Model of the Process of Grieving

Source: Stroebe, M., & Schut, H. (1999). The Dual Process Model of Coping with Bereavement: Rationale and description. *Death Studies*, 23, 197–224. Reproduced with permission.

the grave, and so on, a bereaved spouse may have to deal with matters that the deceased had taken care of (e.g., the family finances). Lack of experience and skills in the latter domain could cause additional anxiety, distress, and feelings of incompetence.

The DPM is compatible with both cognitive-stress and Attachment theories. Put simply, securely attached individuals would be expected to oscillate more easily between loss-orientation and restoration-orientation and would not suffer complications in their grieving. Insecure persons high on the anxiety dimension would tend to be more exclusively loss-oriented and display more chronic forms of grieving. Avoidant individuals would tend to be the most restoration-oriented, delaying or inhibiting their grief, while fearfully anxious persons would have a more disturbed, less coherent manner of oscillating between these orientations. These patterns are depicted in Figure 1.

Role of Others in Alleviating Suffering

It is commonly believed that others play an important role in helping the bereaved come to terms with their loss. However, scientific research suggests the need for caution in drawing such general conclusions and for further investigation to determine what precisely is helpful and for whom.

Informal Social Support

Nearly everyone who has been through bereavement talks about how good it is to have friends and family around. Rituals and procedures that surround the bereaved person with friends and family are characteristic of most (though not all) cultures. Nevertheless, the assumption that social support from others (family, friends, neighbors, etc.) buffers individuals against the negative health outcomes has not been well supported empirically.

Research so far has shown that inadequate social support is a general risk factor; it affects the health and well-being of nonbereaved persons as much as the bereaved. In the case of bereavement, it appears that others cannot easily make up for, or take the place of, the deceased. Support is perceived as helpful, and is helpful, but not in the sense that bereaved persons who perceive themselves to be highly supported by others are relatively more protected or adjust relatively more quickly to the loss than those without such perceptions. Others do not seem to be able to compensate for—or reduce the level of grief due to—the loss of a special attachment figure.

Formal Intervention

According to Worden, professional intervention for bereaved persons encompasses *counseling* (facilitation of the process, tasks of normal, uncomplicated grieving to alleviate suffering) and *therapy* (specialized techniques to guide complicated grief reactions toward a normal coping process). To evaluate the efficacy of interventions, Schut and Stroebe distinguished three types of program: *Primary preventive interventions* are those where professional help is available to all bereaved persons, irrespective of whether intervention is indicated. *Secondary preventive interventions* are designed for bereaved individuals who, through screening or assessment, can be regarded as vulnerable to the risks of bereavement. *Tertiary preventive interventions* are those providing therapy for complicated grief, grief-related depression, or post-traumatic stress disorders.

There is no evidence that a referral to counseling is necessary or helpful for all bereaved people: Suffering from bereavement is not grounds enough for routine referral, although many bereaved persons choose to participate in support groups (i.e., encompassing both primary and secondary intervention). Primary intervention can be helpful if the bereaved person takes the initiative to receive it (indicating a personal desire or need). Secondary preventive intervention obtains somewhat better results; but to improve these results further, better identification of risk factors is necessary. Tertiary preventive interventions, incorporating a wide variety of treatment modalities, are generally quite effective.

Conclusions

Loss of a loved one causes deep suffering and is associated with costs to mental and physical health, justifying scientific study and theoretical understanding. Nevertheless, it is important to remember that grief is a natural—albeit for many persons harrowing—process after bereavement. Most people get by without the aid of professional help. For the comparatively small number of persons for whom complications develop, specific intervention programs have been designed that help reduce extreme consequences and restore grieving to a normal course, which in time (which varies between persons and cultures and may not be limited to a calendar year, as often expected) evolves toward adjustment to life without the loved person.

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See also Attachment Theory; Loneliness; Loss; Security in Relationships; Social Isolation

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BETRAYAL

Although relationships with family, friends, and romantic partners can bring people some of their greatest joys, they are also the source of some of their most painful hurts. When individuals enter into relationships with friends, family members, coworkers, team members, authority figures, romantic partners, and others, they bring to those relationships beliefs or expectations about what they can expect from those relationships. For example, people expect friends to be loyal, romantic partners to be faithful, family members to be truthful, and authority figures to be fair. In spite of these expectations, however, people in relationships often engage in relational or interpersonal transgressions whereby they violate the rules or expectations that exist in those relationships. Such breaches of relationship expectations are referred to as betrayals. No one is immune to the experience of betrayal. Everyone has experienced minor and major forms of betrayal, and almost everyone has, at some point, betrayed others. The pain behind a betrayal arises from the fact that not only has someone violated relational expectations but also a trusted individual has lied, cheated, or broken implicit and explicit agreements. This entry provides an overview of what the field knows about betrayal, with particular attention paid to variations in responses to betrayal and its consequences.

Conceptualizing Betrayal

Although many people equate betrayal with instances of marital infidelity, betrayal is a much broader term that includes lying, criticism, broken promises, intentional embarrassment, humiliation, belittlement, and gossip. Any aversive event that involves violations of expectations, trust, and commitment can be considered a betrayal. As this list of exemplars of betrayal implies, betrayals lie along a continuum of severity from minor infractions (e.g., telling a little white lie) to more severe breaches of trust (e.g., cheating on one's spouse). Even minor betrayals, such as a white lie or a forgotten birthday, when repeated over time can produce significant damage in a relationship.

Betrayals can be accidental or intentional. With accidental betrayals, the perpetrator unintentionally violates the rules of a relationship without meaning to do so; for example, he or she may disclose a secret, not realizing that the target of the secret did not mean the secret to be shared. Intentional betrayals include a myriad of different types of behaviors. Some intentional betrayals are premeditated and involve actions that are designed explicitly to betray (e.g., for revenge). Another class of intentional betrayals involves actions that are perpetrated for other reasons (e.g., people have affairs because they fall in love with someone other than their spouse). In this case, the betrayal is a side effect of, rather than the objective of, the behavior. Yet another class of intentional betrayal, opportunistic betrayals, occurs without planning and thus, does not always involve a reward-cost analysis.

Regardless of the specific type of betrayal, all forms of betrayal result in loss: loss of trust; loss of a relationship or friendship; loss of a sense of security and predictability, loss of time, energy, and effort devoted to that relationship or friendship; loss of integrity; and loss of self-esteem. Ultimately, all forms of betrayal signify rejection and relational devaluation. People who are betrayed feel that the betrayer does not value his or her relationship with them as much as he or she once did. Victims feel, often correctly, that the betrayer has put his or her own needs or desires above their own. Given the potency of the need to belong, the strength of aversive reactions to the rejection and devaluation inherent in betrayal is not surprising.

Betrayals occur in all types of relationships, including those involving romantic partners, friends, family, and colleagues. Whether a particular behavior constitutes a betrayal depends on the rules and expectations understood to exist in a particular relationship. In most marriages, for example, the two individuals agree that they will be intimate with only each other. Should one partner have an extramarital affair, the other individual will perceive that the betrayer has violated the implicit rules and expectations of monogamy. On the other hand, marital partners who have agreed to an open marriage will be unlikely to feel betrayed because they do not define sexual infidelity as betrayal.

People betray others for a wide range of reasons that vary somewhat with the type of betrayal being

discussed. On the positive side, they may betray a friend's secret (e.g., revealing that a friend has an eating disorder) to get needed help for the friend. On the negative side, people may betray others to hurt them, to seek a reward or an experience for themselves without regard for its impact on others, or to seek revenge. For example, a spouse may lie about an affair so that he or she can continue to maintain both relationships. A friend may break a confidence in order to hurt the target of the secret. Not surprisingly, positive motives for betrayal are generally other-focused, whereas negative motives for betrayal are self-focused. However, both positive and negative betrayals may produce negative feelings and reactions in the victim. The confidence revealed out of concern for a friend will likely produce similar reactions, at least initially, as the confidence revealed in an effort to hurt a friend or to damage that friend's reputation.

Responses to and Consequences of Betrayal

People who have been betrayed report feeling a number of emotions including anger, anxiety, depression, jealousy, hopelessness, sadness, bitterness, and hurt feelings. They report feeling "let down," and they begin to search for meaning behind the betrayer's behavior. Many people who have been betrayed experience lowered self-esteem and shattered identities, particularly if their identity was closely tied to the person who betrayed them. The range of emotions experienced and the depth of these emotions following a betrayal depend on characteristics of the victim and the perpetrator as well as the relationship between the two. They also depend on the seriousness of the norm violation. A white lie is much easier for most people to overcome than marital infidelity. The emotional reactions also vary with the attributions that the victim makes for the betrayer's actions. If the victim views the betrayal as accidental or as a "slip-up" that is unlikely to happen again, then his or her affective response will be attenuated relative to a victim who views the betrayal as an intentional, premeditated, selfish act.

Victims of betrayals, particularly major betrayals, often have difficulty letting go of the negative emotions that follow the betrayal and not surprisingly, often find it difficult to trust not only the betrayer again but also others. This lack of trust

often leads them to make negative attributions for the betrayer's future behavior, even when that behavior is innocent. Victims experience relational devaluation, feeling as if their friend, family member, or relationship partner no longer values them as much as they once did or as much as they would like them to.

The type of emotion experienced following a betrayal determines the response offered. For example, people who feel dejected following a betrayal may withdraw from the betrayer, whereas those who feel hatred may lash out in anger. Surprisingly, although anger is often a prominent emotion following a betrayal, few people retaliate in response to being betrayed. Acts of revenge, although frequently fantasized about, are rarely enacted. More common responses range from forgiving the betrayer to distancing oneself from him or her. The response of the betrayed person is influenced, in part, by the willingness of the betrayer to apologize and atone for his or her actions. However, forgiveness does not always directly follow an apology. The longer the period of time between the offense and the apology, the less likely a victim is to forgive. Forgiveness also varies with the sincerity of the apology and with the number of betrayal episodes for which apologies are sought. In other words, betrayals can exert a cumulative damaging effect such that a victim may be willing to forgive one indiscretion but not more. Relatedly, one reason people find serious betrayals such as infidelity difficult to forgive is because they involve multiple forms of betrayal. On the one hand, the betrayer has broken the rules of sexual and emotional exclusivity inherent in the relationship. Second, the betrayer has likely gone to great lengths to keep the betrayal a secret, so multiple lies have been told. Third, the revelation of the secret is often news to the partner but often not to others, resulting in embarrassment and humiliation.

Perpetrators, too, may experience a range of negative emotions, including sadness, guilt, and shame. Because perpetrators tend to view their behavior less negatively than victims do and see it as having fewer long-term consequences, they may experience anger as the continued mistrust and negativity of the victim. Shame and guilt play interesting roles with betrayal. Feelings of guilt may motivate a betrayer to confess his or her betrayal as

a means of alleviating the guilt. Alternatively, guilt experienced as a result of empathy with the hurt experienced by the betrayed may motivate efforts to seek forgiveness and reconciliation. Shame, similarly, can produce divergent behaviors. Betrayers who feel shame may either withdraw from the betrayed person or may lash out in anger at that person, perhaps blaming him or her for causing the betrayal. For example, a man who feels ashamed for having cheated on his wife may blame her for the affair, saying that he would not have strayed if she had been a better wife.

Whether relationships end as a result of betrayal depends on the type of betrayal, the commitment to and investment in the relationship of the individuals involved, the repetitiveness of the offense, the contrition of the betrayer, and the willingness to forgive, to name a few factors. Individuals in long-term, committed relationships in which they have a significant investment (e.g., time, money, children) are less likely to end their relationships, particularly following a single betrayal, than people in less committed relationships. Furthermore, in some instances, friends and relationship partners report improved relations following a betrayal. The act of betrayal may bring to the forefront issues in the relationship that had been simmering beneath the surface. Once these issues are brought out into the open and dealt with, some relationships improve. Not surprisingly, perpetrators are more likely than victims to report improvements in relationships.

Robin Marie Kowalski

See also Anger in Relationships; Dark Side of Relationships; Deception and Lying; Forgiveness; Hurt Feelings; Rejection; Rules of Relationships

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BIOLOGICAL SYSTEMS FOR COURTSHIP, MATING, REPRODUCTION, AND PARENTING

Recently, social psychologists, neuroscientists, and physiologists have begun to explore the biological systems that are involved in love and sexual desire, courtship, mating, reproduction, and parenting. In *Why We Love*, Helen Fisher argues that people possess a trio of primary brain systems designed to deal with these aspects of close intimate relationships. These are attraction (passionate love), lust (sexual desire), and attachment (companionate love). Presumably, these diverse systems evolved during humankind's long evolutionary history; each plays a critical role in courtship, mating, reproduction, and parenting. In theory, attraction evolved to persuade our ancestors to focus attention on a single favored courtship partner. Sexual desire evolved to motivate young people to seek a range of appropriate mates and sexual partners. Attachment evolved to ensure that parents would remain together for the first few crucial years of a child's life and for parents and children to form secure attachments. This

entry reviews what scholars have learned about these complex brain systems, which have been found to interact in a myriad of ways.

Love, Sexual Desire, Courtship, and Mating

According to Fisher, attraction (passionate love) is characterized by a yearning to win a preferred mating partner. She observes that the attraction brain system is primarily associated with increased dopamine in the reward centers. There is also increased activity of central norepinephrine and decreased activity of central serotonin. Other brain systems also contribute to produce the range of cognitions, emotions, motivations, and behaviors central to romantic love.

Sexual desire (lust), on the other hand, is typified by a general craving for sexual gratification and may be directed toward many potential partners. In men and women, the androgens, particularly testosterone, are central to sparking sexual desire.

Many neuroscientists contend that passionate love and sexual desire are in fact tightly linked. Andreas Bartels and Semir Zeki, for example, (using functional magnetic imaging [fMRI] techniques) attempted to identify the brain regions associated with passionate love and sexual desire. They put up posters around London, advertising for men and women who were “truly, deeply, and madly in love.” Seventy young men and women from 11 countries and several ethnic groups responded. Those who scored highest on the *Passionate Love Scale (PLS)* were selected for study. These people were placed in an fMRI scanner. This high-tech scanner constructs an image of the brain in which changes in blood flow (induced by brain activity) are represented as color-coded pixels. Bartels and Zeki gave each person a photograph of their beloved to gaze at, alternating the beloved’s picture with pictures of other casual friends. They then digitally compared the scans taken while the participants viewed their beloved’s picture to those taken while they viewed a friend’s picture, creating images that represented the brain regions that became more (or less) active when people viewed their beloved’s picture. These images, the researchers argued, revealed the brain regions involved when a person experiences passionate love and/or sexual desire.

Bartels and Zeki discovered that passion sparked increased activity in the brain areas associated with euphoria and reward and decreased activity in the areas associated with sadness, anxiety, and fear. Activity seemed to be restricted to foci in the medial insula and the anterior cingulate cortex and, subcortically, in the caudate nucleus, and the putamen, all bilaterally. Most of the regions that were activated during the experience of romantic love are those that are active when people are under the influence of euphoria-inducing drugs such as opiates or cocaine. Apparently, both passionate love and those drugs activate a “blissed-out” circuit in the brain. The anterior cingulate cortex has also been shown to be active when people view sexually arousing material. This makes sense since passionate love and sexual desire are generally assumed to be tightly linked constructs.

Among the regions where activity decreased during the experience of love were zones previously implicated in the areas of the brain controlling critical thought (i.e., the sort of mental activity involved in making social judgments and in mentalizing—that is, in the assessment of other people’s intentions and emotions) and in the experience of painful emotions such as sadness, anger, and fear. The authors argue that once we fall in love with someone, we feel less need to critically assess their character and personality. (In that sense, love may indeed be “blind.”) Deactivations were also observed in the posterior cingulate gyrus and in the amygdala and were right-lateralized in the prefrontal, parietal, and middle temporal cortices. Once again, the authors found passionate love and sexual arousal to be tightly linked.

This is only one-half of the equation, of course. Love is often unrequited. What kind of brain activity occurs when passionate lovers are rejected?

Fisher and her colleagues studied 15 men and women who had just been jilted by their beloved. The authors followed much the same protocol as that utilized in happily-in-love participants: They asked participants to alternately view a photograph of their one-time beloved and a photograph of a familiar, emotionally neutral individual. The authors found that when contemplating their beloved, rejected lovers displayed greater activity in the right nucleus accumbens/ventral putamen/pallidum, lateral orbitofrontal cortex and anterior insular/operculum cortex than they did when contemplating

neutral images. In short, jilted lovers' brains "lit up" in the areas associated with anxiety, pain, and attempts at controlling anger as well as addiction, risk taking, and obsessive-compulsive behaviors. Jilted lovers appear to experience a storm of passion—passionate love, sexual desire, plus anguish, rejection, rage, emptiness, and despair.

Other neuroscientists who have studied the fMRI responses of lovers who are actively grieving over a recent romantic breakup secured slightly different results. Fisher speculates that such differences are probably due to the fact that while she and her colleagues study young people who are actively grieving the loss of love, her critics have focused on men and women who broke up some time ago and have presumably adapted to their losses. Instead of at the grief stage, they may have been at a subsequent stage in the grieving process—experiencing resignation and despair. The use of fMRI techniques are, of course, very new and definitive answers as to the precise nature of love and sexual desire will have to await further research.

Attachment, Reproduction, and Parenting

According to Fisher, attachment (which she also labels *companionate love*) is comprised of feelings of calm, social comfort, emotional union, and the security felt in the presence of a long-term mate. It sparks affiliative behaviors, the maintenance of close proximity, separation anxiety when closeness disappears, and a willingness to participate in shared parental chores. Animal studies suggest that this brain system is primarily associated with oxytocin and vasopressin in the nucleus accumbens and ventral pallidum.

Currently, researchers provide some support for Fisher's contentions. Sue Carter and her colleagues, for example, set out to investigate the neurobiology of monogamy and pair-bonding. In mammals, monogamy is characterized by close pair-bonds (often for life), both parents' participation in care of offspring, reproduction regulated by social stimuli, incest avoidance, and selective aggression against outside rivals. Nonmonogamous mammals would, of course, be lacking in these characteristics. To study the antecedents of pair-bonding-nonpairbonding, scholars selected two prototypic rodents: prairie voles and meadow and montane

voles. Prairie voles inhabit the grasslands of midwestern North America. These voles are highly social and monogamous. A breeding pair lives in a communal family, with male and female breeders and their offspring. Pair-bonded males are highly aggressive following mating and often patrol the perimeter of the nest. The pair-bonds may last until "death do them part." Their counterparts, the meadow voles and montane voles, are less social, do not form pair-bonds, are nonmonogamous, and the fathers do not participate in the rearing of infants.

Over the decades, ethnologists and neurobiologists have amassed a great deal of information about the nature of pair-bonding in the various types of voles. During the course of these observations and experiments, scientists have identified a number of substances that facilitate pair-bonding, monogamy, and parental behavior. First and foremost, a number of peptides, including oxytocin and vasopressin, which are released during mating, have been found to facilitate pair-bonding, social affiliation, and maternal behavior. In fact, neurobiologists generally refer to oxytocin as the "affiliative neuropeptide." In male prairie voles, stress and vasopressin stimulate territoriality and defensive behaviors. Another class of brain neurotransmitters, called *opioids*, also appears to play a crucial role in facilitating pair-bonding and affiliative behavior. (Opioids are naturally occurring compounds that act in the brain much like opium, morphine, or heroin.) It is speculated that such opioids facilitate mother-child bonding and maternal care.

Interestingly, both Sue Carter and Shelley Taylor point out that social and environmental factors may play a critical role in shaping prairie vole monogamy. The hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenocortical axis (HPA) is sensitive to the social and physical environment and is exceptionally active in prairie voles. Thus, they speculate, HPA hormones (including various peptides and steroids) may be a mechanism through which social factors can influence pair-bonding and monogamy in prairie voles.

The Interaction Between Various Systems

Nature is parsimonious. Some neuroscientists and neurobiologists point out that in mankind's

affectional system, the triune structures that Fisher discusses, are in fact tightly linked. Bartels and Zeki, for example, point out that passionate love and maternal love are both highly rewarding experiences—both are closely linked to the perpetuation of the species. When these scientists compared the fMRI brain activity of mothers viewing pictures of their own children versus a variety of more neutral pictures, they discovered that romantic love and maternal love had much in common. Both types of attachment sparked activity in the brain's reward system—the areas that are rich in oxytocin and vasopressin receptors. Both deactivated a common set of regions associated with social judgments, mentalizing, and negative emotions.

End of the Affair

Fisher closes her analysis of the brain systems sparking attraction, lust, and attachment by observing that passionate attachments are by their nature time-bound. She argues that in the course of evolution, ancestors came to be genetically programmed to meet, mate, and move on—a strategy designed to create optimal genetic variety in the young. When she examined the data from 58 human societies selected from the *Demographic Yearbook of the United Nations*, she discovered that in the majority of societies, couples tend to separate and divorce around the fourth year of marriage. Fisher notes that (a) many socially monogamous species form pair-bonds that last only long enough to rear the young through infancy and that (b) in hunting-gathering societies, it generally takes 4 years to rear a child. (Children in such societies join in multiage play groups soon after being weaned, becoming the responsibility of relatives and older siblings.) Thus, she hypothesizes that it may be natural for young couples to meet, court, marry, reproduce, and remain together only long enough to raise a child. After that period, the chemistry of attraction (the stew of increased dopamine, decreased serotonin, and increased norepinephrine) swings into action, and men and women begin to feel the ancient tugs of attraction, sexual desire, and finally attachment yet again.

Elaine Hatfield

See also Arousal and Attraction; Attraction, Sexual; Caregiver Role; Compassionate Love; Evolutionary Perspectives on Women's Romantic Interests; Falling in Love; Lust

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BIRTH CONTROL, RELATIONAL ASPECTS

Effectively using birth control to prevent unintended pregnancy involves a complex array of individual beliefs, attitudes, motives, and competencies. As relationships progress, however, birth control is more about decision making and negotiation at the couple rather than at the individual level, so relationship characteristics become increasingly important. Moreover, the motivation for using birth control can be complex; many long-term couples desire a pregnancy eventually, so an unintended pregnancy may not be entirely unwanted. Understanding couples' birth control behavior, therefore, requires understanding the couple's relationship, their motivation to use contraception, and the ways they discuss and negotiate the possibility of pregnancy.

Birth Control by Relationship Characteristics

The method of birth control used by a couple varies as a function of relationship length and type.

Because couples protect against both pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STIs), condoms are the preferred contraceptive method with casual sexual partners and in the early stages of relationships. Among heterosexual couples, a small proportion (about 10 percent) use both condoms and other hormonal methods (e.g., the Pill or contraceptive injections) at the beginning of a relationship. Many, however, initially rely solely on condoms to protect against both unintended pregnancy and STIs until the relationship becomes serious at which point they switch to other methods, often the Pill.

The decision to make this switch is typically taken as a function of sexual frequency and on the strength of one's feelings of commitment rather than on any actual evaluation of STI risk. Commitment refers to one's attachment to the relationship and to the decision to maintain the relationship into the future. High levels of commitment predict perceiving that one's partner is safe and thus deciding to adopt more effective, hormonal, birth control methods. However, commitment does not necessarily predict more consistent use of these methods.

Motivation to Use Birth Control

Commitment to the relationship can reduce one's motivation to avoid pregnancy. The motivation to avoid pregnancy influences how consistently and regularly a couple uses contraceptives, as well as the efficacy of the methods used. In established couples, the motivation to avoid pregnancy varies over the stages of the relationship and characteristics of the relationship. Motivation to avoid pregnancy tends to be lower if a couple is living together, has fewer children at home, and has a long-standing relationship.

Couples in highly committed relationships may be less motivated to avoid pregnancy because they are less concerned about an unplanned pregnancy. They may feel more confident in their partner's support should an unintended pregnancy occur and in their ability to deal with the consequences. In some cases, pregnancy, or the willingness to risk pregnancy, is offered as evidence of commitment even though a pregnancy is not explicitly intended. Feelings of commitment may therefore have a

complicated relationship to birth control use and in some relationships, may be associated with decreased birth control use.

In established and married couples, individuals' own motives to avoid pregnancy are strongly influenced by their partner's motivation to avoid having children. The motivation of both members of the couple then predicts the regularity of the couple's contraceptive use. Perceived partner preferences regarding specific contraceptive methods also strongly influences the type of method preferred when couples consider changing contraceptive methods. Partner dissatisfaction and discomfort with a contraceptive method is often reported as a reason why individuals switch methods of contraception or use contraception inconsistently. Individuals are therefore influenced by their partners and their relationships not only in their motivation to avoid pregnancy but also in their motivation to use specific methods of contraception.

Negotiating Birth Control Use

Whereas commitment can reduce contraceptive use, intimacy supports more reliable contraceptive behavior. Intimacy refers to feeling a close connection with one's partner, to mutual self-disclosure, and to open communication. Couples reporting more intimacy are consistently found to report more regular and effective birth control use. The link between intimacy and contraceptive behavior appears to be due to communication. Couples in more intimate relationships are more likely to communicate with their partners about everything, including birth control and their motivation to avoid pregnancy. This relationship goes both ways; successfully discussing and negotiating contraceptive behavior can also increase a couple's sense of intimacy.

Poor communication can lead to misperceptions of partner pregnancy motives and method preferences, which can lead to conflict and unreliable contraceptive behavior. Poor communication is particularly problematic for couples who decide to permanently terminate childbearing through either male or female sterilization. Although approximately 30 to 40 percent of married couples using contraception in North America choose sterilization, it has been reported that as many as

10 percent of individuals regret being sterilized. Regret is more likely if the decision was dominated or pressured by the nonsterilizing spouse or made without adequate spousal communication.

Power dynamics in relationships are also critical in birth control use. When one partner controls more emotional or physical resources in a relationship, his or her knowledge and motivation to use birth control determines the couple's behavior, including the choice of who gets sterilized. Several studies have found that women have more power in contraceptive decision making in dating couples perhaps because contraception is seen as a woman's issue. Among adult and married couples, however, contraceptive decision making may be more strongly related to general decision-making power. Power is particularly relevant with respect to condoms. In a relationship with unequal power, ensuring condom use against a partner's wishes can be difficult and at its most extreme, dangerous. Relationships marked by physical and/or verbal abuse are associated with higher levels of unprotected intercourse, STIs, and unintended pregnancies.

Summary

Although a couple's birth control behavior is a product of their individual motivations and preferences, these motivations and preferences are highly influenced by their interactions with and perceptions of their partner. Of particular importance is the couple's ability to communicate about their needs, preferences and goals. The association between relationship variables and birth control use emphasizes that sexual behavior exists in the context of interpersonal relationships and highlights the importance of considering both members of a couple when promoting effective contraceptive use.

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See also Communication Skills; Pregnancy and Relationships; Sexuality

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BODY IMAGE, RELATIONSHIP IMPLICATIONS

First impressions are substantially based on readily apparent physical features, and in this process, physically attractive people are perceived to possess more socially desirable personality characteristics than physically unattractive individuals. Due to this physical attractiveness stereotype, matching attractiveness standards is an important personal goal for many people, and it significantly shapes self-perceptions. Body image, which is also referred to as body concept, is a person's perception of her or his physical self. A person's evaluation of her or his body image is referred to as body esteem. Body image is an essential component of both personal and social relationships, and it varies between the sexes and across cultures and situations.

Although social scientists once assumed that people perceive and evaluate their bodies as a unified whole, research conducted beginning in the 1980s revealed that body image is multidimensional. For many women in North American culture, the most important dimension of body image is weight concern, while for men upper body strength is a defining dimension of the physical self.

Physical attractiveness has historically been a more important quality for women than for men to possess. Given the high value placed on female physical attractiveness, women frequently express concerns about being rejected based on their appearance. Starting at a very young age, females are taught that their body as an object is a significant factor in how others judge their overall value. In contrast, males are taught to view their bodies

as dynamic instruments of action, and they are judged more positively if they engage in physical activities. For boys, their ability to adeptly move their bodies through physical space is an important contributor to their overall self-esteem. In adulthood, power and function are important aspects of male body image, and the male body-as-object is judged more positively if it is muscular.

In romantic relationships, although physical attractiveness is a more valued commodity for women than for men, this relationship is reversed in homosexual romantic relationships: Physical attractiveness is a more important quality for gay men than it is for lesbians. This finding suggests that men, regardless of their sexual orientation, place greater value on the physical appearance of a potential romantic partner than do either lesbians or heterosexual women. The greater scrutiny of the physical self received by men's romantic partners than women's romantic partners may well explain why heterosexual women and gay men respectively judge their own bodies more negatively than do lesbians and heterosexual men.

Among heterosexual adults, the gender difference in placing importance on physical attractiveness is most apparent when people are contemplating long-term romantic relationships rather than casual short-term sexual encounters. When considering partners for casual short-term sexual relationships, women, like men, place relatively high value on physical attractiveness. Although men place more importance on physical attractiveness than women when evaluating potential long-term romantic partners, there is some evidence that this gender difference may be diminishing due to women achieving more economic equality in their careers. In other words, as heterosexual women achieve more financial independence, they may look for more beauty in men similarly to the historical manner in which men have emphasized beauty in their romantic partners.

Through the process of social comparison, popular culture plays an important role in shaping the body image and body esteem of both children and adults. In North American culture, print and electronic media convey difficult-to-attain standards of feminine beauty, especially related to weight. This focus on the feminine body ideal has a lasting negative impact on female body image. Beginning in late childhood and early adolescence,

not only do girls experience more dissatisfaction with their bodies than boys, but also they experience a steady increase in this dissatisfaction over time. By adulthood, negative affect is a pervasive quality of female body esteem. Compared to men, women are more likely to habitually experience social physique anxiety, which is anxiety about others observing or evaluating their bodies.

There is evidence that African-American women feel less pressure to conform to the unrealistic feminine thinness standards of North American culture. This ethnic difference is a likely explanation for the more positive body esteem that African-American women have compared to White, Latino, and Asian-American women. Despite this healthier body image, African-American women are still more dissatisfied with their bodies than African-American men. The only American young adults who do not exhibit gender differences in body esteem are first-generation citizens whose families previously lived in countries with limited exposure to American culture. The lack of gender differences among these new immigrants is likely due to their relatively low internalization of cultural beauty norms related to thinness.

Although men generally have more positive body esteem than women, their negative body attitudes are often linked to muscular masculine body standards. Recent studies of American college students indicate that over 90 percent of men desire more muscularity. This desire for muscles is not a new phenomenon, nor is it unique to North American culture. However, heightened media and cultural attention to this masculine body ideal is playing a role in the increasing trend of male body dissatisfaction in a number of industrialized countries. In an attempt to reach this hypermuscular male standard, an increasing number of teenage boys and young men are taking anabolic steroids and untested dietary supplements, which can cause a variety of health problems.

Finally, besides these broad-based cultural influences, body image and body esteem is often temporarily altered by situational cues. In the act of comparing themselves to others, individuals of average physical appearance feel prettier or more handsome after seeing same-sex persons who fall well below conventional beauty standards. Similarly, these same individuals feel less attractive

after comparing themselves to same-sex persons who more closely match the “perfect 10” physical standards. People who are most affected by such comparisons are individuals who place high importance on their own physical appearance.

Stephen L. Franzoi and Katherine Kern

See also Gender Roles in Relationships; Physical Attractiveness, Defining Characteristics; Physical Attractiveness, Role in Relationships; Physical Attractiveness Stereotype; Social Comparison, Effects on Relationships

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BOGUS STRANGER PARADIGM

The bogus stranger paradigm was developed by the social psychologist Donn Byrne to study the role of attitude similarity and dissimilarity in interpersonal attraction. The method was originally devised to allow experimenters to vary the degree of agreement and disagreement between a hypothetical (bogus) other and a participant in order to examine their effects on liking and disliking. Since then, it has been adapted to examine a variety of other factors in attraction as well.

The bogus stranger paradigm used an experimental approach. The purpose was to examine the causal effect of similarity-dissimilarity on attraction. In the basic study, degree of similarity was the manipulated independent variable and liking

expressed for the bogus other was the dependent variable. The original procedure involved administration of a survey of opinions to a large psychology class at the beginning of the semester. On an item concerning political parties, for example, one can indicate that one is “a strong supporter of,” “prefers,” or has “a slight preference for the Democratic Party” or has “a slight preference for,” “prefers,” or “is a strong supporter of the Republican Party.” Later in the semester, some of these same students signed up for a “first impressions” study, and the experimenter, unknown to the participants, filled in the survey for the bogus stranger to express views that were between 0 and 100 percent similar to those of the participant. Participants then indicated their impression of the person on the Interpersonal Judgment Scale. The scale includes ratings of the stranger’s intelligence, knowledge of current events, adjustment, morality, and their liking and desire to work with the stranger. The “liking” and “work with” items are added together to measure attraction. Experiments found a linear relationship between the proportion of similar attitudes and interpersonal attraction, sometimes referred to as the *Law of Attraction*.

The basic paradigm is easily adapted. For example, the method has been used to examine voter reactions to the opinions expressed by political candidates about whom additional information was also varied. Many different kinds of similarities have been studied, including similarity of economic status, academic ability, and teaching expertise, among others. Beyond similarities, the paradigm has also been used to examine the importance of such factors as gender, expressiveness, physical attractiveness, earning potential, reciprocal liking, and so on. The technique provides a standardized context within which to compare the effectiveness of virtually any interpersonal characteristic on attraction and dislike. For example, a meta-analysis of studies varying physical attractiveness of opposite-sex bogus strangers found that women valued attitude similarity in men significantly more than physical attractiveness, whereas men tended to emphasize a woman’s physical attractiveness more than her attitude similarity. In another study, high earning potential was liked in women who were also attractive. In men it was generally liked, but especially when men were unattractive. Such results indicate that

despite limitations regarding realism, the bogus stranger paradigm is capable of uncovering some of the complexities of interpersonal attraction.

The initial effect of attitude similarity on attraction was explained by Donna Byrne using Leon Festinger's observation that attitudes have no objective criterion of correctness so that people must depend on consensual validation. He later invoked the concept of effectance motivation, proposing that agreement may satisfy people's basic desires to be effective. As a test, experiments involving a "crazy movie" intended to temporarily arouse this motive found that moderate levels of confusion did amplify the role of attitude similarity in interpersonal attraction.

Various alternative explanations have also been proposed for the relationship between similarity and attraction, including that dissimilarity rather than similarity is responsible for the effect, that it depends on inferences about reciprocal liking, and/or that it depends on inferred beliefs about the stranger's desirable traits. Although many factors can play a role, attraction to similarity and rejection of dissimilarity appears to be a very basic biological and psychological principle, evident all the way from the cellular level in the immune system to the level of human social groups.

The flexibility of the method and its ease of use have made it a popular procedure in several different fields. One limitation is its lack of ecological validity since bogus strangers can be created with combinations of attributes that do not occur naturally. It also lacks realism so that research participants' ratings may reflect information about persons rather than experience with them. However, the results often go beyond people's implicit theories of attraction. For example, in a study in which physical attractiveness was found to be quite important, participants believed that it had been the least important factor in their ratings.

In contrast to these limitations, the paradigm has several advantages. Chief among these is the versatility and experimental control it provides. Such standardization holds out the promise of replicable and cumulative findings. In addition, the method affords quantitative treatments of the independent variable of attitude similarity and of the dependent variable of attraction. As a result, quantitative modeling can be done to test competing models of attraction.

When the method was developed, research on liking mainly involved impression formation experiments focused on the likability of combinations of trait adjectives. In the bogus stranger paradigm, by contrast, people believed they were actually seeing another person's expression of opinion, often with background information about them. This minimal realism could thus elicit affective as well as intellectual reactions to the bogus stranger. On this basis, accounts of attraction were increasingly framed in terms of affect and emotion, factors that had little presence in social psychology at the time.

The fact that interpersonal attraction involves emotion now seems clear; but in the 1970s, explanations focused on the role of beliefs rather than feelings about attitude objects. Indeed, it was another decade before the successor to the attraction model, the affect-as-information approach, appeared on the scene. It was stimulated by earlier bogus stranger experiments that included mood induction procedures for the first time in social psychology. Investigators could then manipulate affect independently of cognition by using films and other mood inductions, procedures that have become staples in contemporary social psychology.

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See also Interpersonal Attraction; Liking; Proximity and Attraction; Quantitative Methods in Relationship Research

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BORDERLINE PSYCHOPATHOLOGY IN RELATIONSHIPS

Borderline personality disorder (BPD) is characterized by a pervasive pattern of instability of interpersonal relationships, self-image, and emotions. BPD affects 1 to 2 percent of the population, and core features of the disorder may occur in up to 5 percent of community samples. Because BPD is characterized by extreme and unstable emotions and behaviors, the relationships of people with BPD can similarly be intense and chaotic. This entry summarizes core features of BPD, the impact of these on close relationships, and findings regarding clinical interventions.

Features of BPD

The problems of BPD generally fall into four categories: (1) emotion instability, characterized by emotion sensitivity, emotion reactivity, and a slow return to emotional baseline; (2) behavioral impulsivity (including suicide attempts or threats), particularly when emotionally dysregulated; (3) dichotomous thinking—as in viewing persons as all good or all bad or as holding self-views that are similarly extreme; and (4) problems in relationships, including fears of abandonment, high levels of dependence on others, and high levels of anger. Persons with BPD vary in the kinds of problems they have. Being very emotional describes a common shared characteristic, whereas other features of BPD may vary considerably from person to person. Other problems and psychiatric diagnoses commonly co-occur with BPD—including depression, anxiety disorders, substance abuse problems, post-traumatic stress disorder, and eating disorders.

The causes of BPD are not well established. Although BPD itself is not inherited, certain components of BPD (such as a tendency toward impulsivity) do have a hereditary component. The best evidence seems to suggest that BPD results from a complicated interplay between a person's temperament as a child (e.g., high levels of emotion sensitivity, reactivity, and slow return to equilibrium) and how people in the family and social environment (e.g., peers, teachers) respond to the emotional child over time. In addition, persons with BPD are more

likely than the norm to have been physically or sexually abused as children (although less than 10 percent of abused children go on to develop BPD).

Impact of BPD Problems in Close Relationships

There is more conflict in couples and families in which someone has BPD. Partners, parents, and other family members can be overwhelmed by having a loved one who is impulsive, has intense or unstable negative emotions, and often engages in dangerous behaviors (such as suicide attempts or other self-harm). Family members of someone with BPD report high levels of burden, depression, loss, and grief. Fears of abandonment, rejection sensitivity, and dependency in relationships contribute to demands for attention, commitment, and time together; simultaneously, high levels of impulsivity, shame, anger, depression, and suicidal behavior can push loved ones away. Interpersonal chaos and confusion are common results.

Not only do relationship difficulties result from problems associated with BPD, but also they may also contribute to those problems. For example, the quality of current relationships is a moderate predictor of prognosis. Specifically, invalidation of emotions, beliefs, desires or other expressions by parents, partners, and others can initiate (or exacerbate) emotion dysregulation, which may lead to destructive behaviors (self-harm, aggression, and other impulsive acts). Invalidating responses include criticizing, minimizing, or rejecting the valid feelings and desires of the individual. Moreover, disturbances in relationships (e.g., rejection, severe invalidation) may trigger suicide attempts and other self-harming or impulsive behaviors.

One reason that the relationships of persons with BPD may be more chaotic may have to do with the discrepancies in thinking within their families. Persons with BPD often see themselves as more stable and their relationships more negatively than their partner's and parent's views them. This may be due to distortions on the part of the person with BPD that result from high levels of emotion sensitivity or dysregulation, or it may be due to specific biases or distortions of their loved ones. In either case, their abilities to view their strengths, problems, and interactions in ways that are congruent with

their loved ones' views lead to more conflict and interfere with interpersonal closeness. Although conflict and anger are common in the relationships of people with BPD, having high levels of emotional connection and emotional involvement are beneficial and can be used to create more successful individual and family therapies for people with BPD.

Interpersonal Treatments for Persons with BPD

Evidence-based treatments specific to families having a member with BPD have only recently been developed. Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) for adolescents includes a component for parents and has been adapted for couples having a partner with BPD. These and a variety of other family applications of DBT have been shown to be helpful both to the individual with BPD and to family members. In addition, family skill groups and therapy have been developed from a variety of perspectives and can be added to the treatment mix regardless of what other treatments the individual with BPD might receive. Finally, Family Connections groups (through the National Education Alliance for BPD), led either by professionals or trained family members, have been shown to help family members reduce their experience of burden, grief, and depression and increase their reports of mastery and empowerment.

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See also Conflict, Family; Emotion Regulation in Relationships; Empathic Accuracy and Inaccuracy; Psychopathology, Influence on Family Members; Rejection Sensitivity; Validation in Relationships

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BOREDOM IN RELATIONSHIPS

Relationship boredom refers to a specific type of relationship challenge in which one or both members of a couple feel that the relationship or the partner has become uninteresting, unexciting, and lost all feeling or “spark.” Unlike traditional obstacles in relationships (such as arguments, betrayal, and so on) that focus on the presence of negative emotions and negative relationship processes, relational boredom is best thought of as an absence of both positive and negative affect and an absence of motivation. Although all interpersonal relationships are susceptible to habituation or boredom, it is likely to be most perilous for romantic and marital relationships. Despite its potentially serious impact, there is very little research on boredom specific to relationships. This entry describes current research on relationship boredom, its underlying concepts and definition, potential causes and consequences of relational boredom, and methods for reducing it.

Stephen Vodanovich, a principal researcher on boredom in general (not relationship specific), and his colleagues have defined boredom as a low-arousal, dissatisfying state that is attributed to an inadequately stimulating situation. Boredom may also be viewed as a personality trait, strongly affecting some people but only weakly (or not at

all) affecting others. In the relationship field, Shelly Gable and Harry Reis have situated relational boredom within a two-dimensional framework of relationship processes as representing the low ends of positive and negative relationship processes (affective and motivational). Rather than consisting of a specific affective or motivational state, boredom appears to coincide with a lack of highly affective states and motivational goals. That is, someone feeling bored is unlikely to experience high-arousal emotions (such as rage or exhilaration) or have strong motivation to achieve goals or avoid undesirable consequences.

The account of relational boredom as a lack of something is consistent with current relationship research and with assessments of layperson's conceptions of boredom. For example, self-expansion theory suggests that people are most satisfied in relationships when they are continually expanding their sense of self and their perceptions of the partner and relationship. Early in a relationship, expansion is rapid and associated with feelings of excitement. Eventually, though, as couples become more accustomed to each other, expansion slows and the consequent loss of this rapid self-expansion may result in a loss of excitement, a lack of growth in the relationship, and an onset of boredom. Studies investigating laypersons' concepts of boredom have identified several central features including lack of interest, lack of excitement, loss of newness, feeling nothing, and lack of motivation. In contrast, the presence of negative qualities (e.g., arguing) is not identified as central to relational boredom, suggesting that people characterize boredom as representing a "lack of something," either positive or negative, in their relationship.

Boredom, essentially, may be viewed as an outcome of the process of habituation that occurs when a person becomes accustomed to a given stimulus after repeated exposure, which thereby becomes less interesting or exciting. For romantic relationships, this may be represented as a lack of change or growth in the relationship or as an absence of tending to a partner's needs required for sustaining relationship satisfaction. Partners who routinely engage in the same activities together and who always act (and react) predictably toward each other could become overly comfortable with the repeated habits and end up bored.

It is well documented that satisfaction declines sharply in the early years of marriage; however, research has not found that this drop in satisfaction is necessarily caused by increased conflict. This is notable as, currently, much clinical work emphasizes the presence of negative processes (such as conflict) as the central challenge that couples face. It is not known if boredom is the cause of this decline, but many relationship theorists and therapists have suggested it as a probable candidate. Although some individual differences in boredom proneness have been identified in other areas (e.g., in work and school performance) and there is evidence that relational boredom is associated with increased perception of attractive alternatives, other potential effects of boredom in interpersonal relationship research are much less clear.

Arthur Aron and his colleagues find that couples who engage in novel and challenging shared activities report increased satisfaction and decreased boredom. In contrast, couples who engage in routine, simple, or merely pleasant (rather than exciting) activities with each other do not report such changes. This further suggests that relationship boredom is associated with an absence of highly arousing affect and provides an interesting method for combating habituation in the relationship and reducing boredom. Mihály Csíkszentmihályi's research on the experience of flow introduces another potential relief from boredom based on motivational goals. Put simply, flow is an experience in which a person becomes completely focused on an activity that is challenging and intrinsically rewarding and that causes feelings of great enjoyment and fulfillment. Arguably, a relationship in which each person is intrinsically fulfilled by the other might result in a sort of relationship flow, producing enjoyment and satisfaction for the couple and reducing boredom. Taken together, perhaps the most effective means of alleviating relationship boredom is to focus on increasing positive shared activities between couples that involve novelty and challenge and are intrinsically interesting.

Greg Strong and Cheryl Harasymchuk

See also Change in Romantic Relationships Over Time; Deteriorating Relationships; Disillusionment in Marriage; Fun in Relationships; Self-Expansion Model

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BOSTON COUPLES STUDY

The Boston Couples Study was a pioneering longitudinal study of American dating couples. Launched in 1972, the study initially followed college student couples for 2 years, as they moved toward long-term commitment or breakup. The study was notable for its integrative use of research methods—survey research, psychometric scaling, laboratory experiments, and in-depth interviews. It addressed a wide variety of topics, including the development of love and commitment, power and decision making, sexual attitudes and behavior, and the causes and consequences of breaking up. The study also investigated the interplay of sex-role attitudes and relationship development at a time when the roles of men and women in families and the workplace were being questioned.

The study was directed by Zick Rubin, then an assistant professor in Harvard's Department of Social Relations, and codirected by Anne Peplau and Charles T. Hill, then graduate students in social psychology. Many other graduate students and staff members in social, personality, developmental, and social psychology joined in the research.

The researchers recruited participants by mailing letters to random samples of sophomore and junior men and women attending four diverse colleges in the Boston area and by advertising on one of the campuses. Both members of 231 couples who were "dating" or "going together" independently completed extensive questionnaires about themselves

and their relationship. The questionnaire included sections on the history of the relationship, activities as a couple (including decision making and sexual behavior), and psychological scales—some of them developed by the researchers—of such variables as love for the partner, attitudes about sex roles, and self-disclosure. Some of the couples were interviewed about their relationship, and some took part in laboratory studies of interaction. Follow-up questionnaires assessed the development—or decline—of the relationship over the course of 2 years, and additional follow-up surveys were conducted 15 and 25 years later. Some of the major findings included the following:

- After 2 years, about 19 percent of the couples had married, 34 percent were still dating or going together, and 47 percent had broken up. Couples in which the two partners were equally involved were more likely to stay together than couples in which one of the partners was more involved than the other. Both women's and men's scores on Rubin's Love Scale also predicted the staying power of relationships.
- Among the couples who were not equally involved, the partner who was less invested in the relationship was likely to have more say in decisions made by the couple, illustrating what sociologist Willard Waller had called *the principle of least interest*. The woman's sexual attitudes and experiences were more important than the man's in shaping a couple's sexual behavior.
- The pattern of data supported the generalization that men tended to fall in love more readily than women, but women tended to fall out of love more readily than men. More specifically, women were more cautious than men about entering into romantic relationships, more likely to compare the present relationships to alternatives, more likely to end a relationship that seemed ill-fated, and better able to cope with rejection.
- Fifteen years later, 73 of the 231 couples had married their original partners and 50 of these couples were still married. The best predictor of relationship survival over 15 years was the same as the best predictor of survival over 2 years: Couples who were equally involved in the relationship when they first took part in the study were the most likely to remain together after 15 years.

The Boston Couples Study provided a portrait of American couples located at a particular time, place, and social context. The participants were college students born in the early 1950s. But beyond depicting Northeastern baby boomers, the study has had a significant influence on the presuppositions and methods of subsequent researchers. The study demonstrated the potential value of quantitative longitudinal studies of relationships and provided examples of measurement tools that have been profitably used or subsequently developed by others. The study was also instructive in its emphasis on the interplay of individual variables (individuals' attributes, attitudes, and emotions) and dyadic variables (the couple's patterns of behavior and the unfolding of their relationship).

The Boston Couples Study researchers also paid special attention to probing the impact of the study itself on the participants' relationships. It became clear, for example, that questions about people's relationships may promote discussion, disclosure, and sometimes conflict between the partners. Most participants concluded that any effects of the study on their relationship were for the better—whether it helped to cement the relationship or hastened its dissolution. But at least some of the participants felt that the study affected their relationships in ways that they had not bargained for. For both methodological and ethical reasons, the Boston Couples Study researchers urged future researchers to remain sensitive to the potential effects of their research on the relationships they study.

References for the original study and the 15-year and 25-year follow-up are listed at the following Web site: web.whittier.edu/chill/bcs/BCSrefs.html.

*Zick Rubin, Letitia Anne Peplau,
and Charles T. Hill*

See also Adolescence, Romantic Relationships in; Assessment of Couples; Dating Relationships in Adolescence and Young Adulthood; Dissolution of Relationships, Causes; Physical Attractiveness, Role in Relationships; Power, Predictors of; Sexuality in Adolescent Relationships

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BULLYING

This entry provides a brief yet comprehensive overview of bullying. The point is made that, at root, bullying is a social phenomenon that cannot be understood solely in terms of particular individuals or particular behaviors. Instead, bullying involves a relationship between specific perpetrators of harm (i.e., the bully) and specific, low-power victims. The entry begins by defining bullying and differentiating it from other types of aggression. The next sections then describe bullies and two groups of victims: passive victims and aggressive victims. The final section focuses on the practical implications of the extant research.

What Is Bullying?

Popular conceptualizations of bullying are often misleading. For example, common myths suggest that any use of aggression constitutes bullying, that bullies are either social isolates or members of deviant peer groups, and that bullying only exists within highly individualistic, competitive cultures. A primary goal of this entry is to debunk these and other myths.

First, bullying cannot be defined by a specific group of behaviors such as teasing, threatening, and manipulating social relationships, nor does simply enacting these behaviors make one a bully. To the contrary, bullying is distinct from other, more general categories of aggression in that it is characterized by (a) repetition over time, (b) an imbalance of physical and/or psychological power between the bully and victim, and (c) an intention

to harm the victim. Bullying therefore involves a behavioral interaction and over time, a relationship in which bullies repeatedly inflict harm on specific, lower-power victims.

Second, bullying does not occur in isolation. To the contrary, observational studies show that peers are present in 85 percent of bullying episodes and that peers often play a supporting role in reinforcing some bullies for aggressing against some, but not all, victims. For example, research by David Perry and colleagues shows that classmates' views of bullies depend on who they victimize. Only some victimization is viewed negatively, while aggression against other children is ignored, tolerated, or—at worst—rewarded. For bullies, such support means that targeted victimization may involve only minimal costs and in some cases, substantial benefits in the form of social support and elevated peer status. Ironically, aggressive victims may also accrue some benefit from the bully–victim relationship. Social dominance theory and research by Anthony Pellegrini and colleagues suggests that victims of bullying may themselves target weaker peers to gain status and notoriety among peers. Such findings suggest that status-related contests may underlie cycles of aggression among bullies and victims alike.

Third, bullying is not unique to some cultures. To the contrary, international research shows that bullying is a common and persistent problem around the world, with Japan, Norway, the United States, and the United Kingdom showing no significant differences in the frequency of bullying across urban, suburban, and rural settings. Research also shows that the bullying problem develops according to a similar timeline in different parts of the world, most likely driven by age-related patterns of peer interaction and school organization. Specifically, the bullying problem first emerges in elementary school and then becomes particularly acute, at least in terms of frequency and severity, in middle school or junior high.

Taken together, these findings suggest that bullying cannot be attributed to particular cultural attributes or even to particular demographic settings. Bullies do share some individual qualities that distinguish them from peers, however, and this entry's next section reviews what is known about these characteristics.

Bullies

Bullies represent about 7 to 15 percent of the sampled school-age population. Generally speaking, these individuals represent a subset of proactively aggressive children who tend to formulate instrumental goals (e.g., to intimidate and dominate a peer) and then to choose an aggressive response to achieve that goal. Socialization research suggests that the families of some bullies are conflictual and that parents often use aggression to manage behavior. Following a social learning model, this view suggests that, after consistent exposure to adults using power assertive strategies to solve social problems, some aggressive youth learn that aggression can be used instrumentally in the service of obtaining desired goals, securing reinforcement, and in general, getting things done. For example, older youngsters may use physically assertive behaviors as a public display of dominance or social status over weaker peers. Observational research by Pellegrini and associates supports this claim, showing that preschoolers and early adolescents alike initiate physical and verbally aggressive bouts with peers in an effort to gain status, especially during the start of the school year and following transitions from elementary to middle school.

Peer Acceptance

Bullies' proactive aggression often results in rejection from peers, especially in the absence of concomitant cooperative and other prosocial behaviors. By default, therefore, some bullies tend to be popular with similarly aggressive youth, as individuals sharing similar behaviors, goals, and values tend to belong to the same peer group. Evidence also suggests that, over time, individual members of peer groups become more similar in levels of aggression. For example, Dorothy Espelage and colleagues shows that, among sixth through eighth graders, both male and female peer groups became more similar over a 1-year period in the amount of self-reported bullying. It is important to note, however, that research does not support the myth that all bullies belong to small, low-status groups of deviant peers. To the contrary, research shows that the acceptability of aggression varies widely across individuals and

classrooms alike. For example, a recent study involving some 3,000 children in 134 first-grade classrooms from four U.S. cities showed that peers rated aggressive classmates positively in high-aggression classrooms and negatively in low-aggression classrooms. These findings suggest that group norms affect the acceptability of individual children's aggressive behavior and so doing provide yet another example why bullying represents a social rather than individual phenomenon.

Social Skills

Building on this last point, it is also a mistake to assume that all bullies are physically powerful but intellectually stupid. To the contrary, research reveals significant heterogeneity among aggressive youth, with some actually being high-status, socially central members of the peer ecology. For example, work by Phillip Rodkin and Thomas Farmer shows that, among fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-grade students, two thirds of aggressive boys and one half of aggressive girls belonged to peer groups whose members were mostly (i.e., more than 50 percent) nonaggressive. This and other research suggests that practitioners should not assume that all bullies are socially unskilled. After all, bullies are not indiscriminate in who they target, tending instead to victimize specific children who do not fight back and who do not receive support from peers. This entry's next section reviews what is known about two groups of victims: passive victims and aggressive victims.

Victims

Passive Victims

Typically, about 10 percent of the school-age population may be described as passive victims. These children tend to be physically slight or frail and, as a rule, tend to withdraw from social activities. Compared to nonvictims, passive victims rarely initiate social conversation and, in response to peer influence, are also more submissive. Passive victims of bullying are also at greater risk for subsequent psychological disorders, especially internalizing problems such as anxiety, depression, and loneliness. Importantly, research

also suggests that, in the absence of bullies, passive victims tend to blend into classrooms like other youngsters and that these victims are not typically targets of aggression after leaving school.

Aggressive Victims

Another 6 to 10 percent of the school-age population is considered aggressive victims, at times also described as *bully-victims* and *provocative victims*, terms reflecting the duality of being the target of aggression while at the same time inflicting harm in response to peer provocation. Like passive victims, aggressive victims are systematically bullied by their peers, but they also react aggressively, not instrumentally, to bullying and provocation. Thus, aggressive victims display a hostile style of social interaction and are described by their peers as those who start fights, say mean things, get mad easily and get picked on, teased, and hit or pushed. Given such descriptors, it is perhaps not surprising that aggressive victims are the most rejected members of their peer group and that they are at substantial risk of subsequent psychological disorders in the form of externalizing problems, such as delinquency, truancy, bullying, poor educational achievement, and in extreme cases, suicide. In the extreme, these externalizing problems have been linked to a majority of targeted school violence in the United States from 1974 to 2000, with the Secret Service finding that 71 percent of school shooters report being chronically bullied in school.

The socialization histories of aggressive victims are, like bullies, typified by power-assertive interactions. Aggressive victims also describe their parents as inconsistent, sometimes abusive, and low in warmth and parental management skills—the results of which is that they tend to view the world as a hostile and untrustworthy place. Consequently, aggressive victims also tend to attribute hostile and aggressive intent to peer interaction. Some researchers argue that these biases may, at some level, contribute to a self-fulfilling prophesy of sorts, as aggressive victims attribute hostile and aggressive intent to peer interactions, and some peers (e.g., bullies) in turn target aggressive victims for ridicule and abuse.

Practical Considerations

In summary, given the ubiquity of bullying and the terrible harm it inflicts on children, schools, and communities alike, it is easy to see why it is such an important issue for educators, parents, and anyone concerned with protecting children and optimizing their school experiences. Such concern must be matched with research-based interventions, however, and this last section emphasizes some of the practical implications of existing knowledge about bullying.

First, research emphasizes unequivocal condemnation of bullying among teachers, administrators, parents, and community members alike. As argued by Dan Olweus and others, literally the entire community must be involved at some level to ensure that the status-enhancing facets of bullying are replaced by uniform condemnation. Thus, classrooms and schools must be consistent in their policies and attitudes toward bullying and avoid creating the conditions in which peers' status-related comparisons are emphasized.

Second, research also demonstrates the necessity of adequate adult supervision, especially during unstructured time and in nonacademic areas of the school such as in the cafeteria, hallways, and bathrooms and during recess. Bullies are systematic both in who they target and when, the implication being that adults must maximize the likelihood of negative consequences and minimize the possibility of social reward in the form of peer group visibility. School transitions (e.g., from primary to middle school) and other disruptions of student relationships are particularly risky times for elevated aggression and victimization, as these transitions by definition disrupt existing peer relationships and invite renegotiation of the status-related contests characterizing bullies and victims alike.

Third, practitioners are reminded that evidence-based accounts of bullying hardly conform to popular stereotypes of bullies. Specifically, bullies are not necessarily male, physically powerful, and

intellectually weak. Boys may be identified as bullies more often than girls, but girls are also involved in bullying, either as perpetrators themselves (especially with relational aggression), as bystanders, or as supporters of some aggressive boys. Likewise, bullies are not necessarily rejected by peers nor are they inevitably relegated to low-status, peripheral groups. Adherence to these myths risks overlooking the variety of ways in which bullies integrate and rely on mainstream social networks to target their victims and reap their social rewards. Adhering to these myths also risks perpetuating the terrible harm inflicted on passive and aggressive victims alike. For aggressive victims especially, history suggests that such harm only begets more harm, some of which escalates in horrific scale.

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See also Children's Peer Groups; Loneliness, Children; Peer Report Methods; Popularity; Relational Aggression; Socialization, Role of Peers

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CAPITALIZATION

Many languages and cultures have a proverb that is a variant on the theme, “a joy shared is a joy doubled.” Most people believe that there is something desirable about sharing positive events with others, a belief echoed by researchers who have found that people actively tell other people about these positive events—a process called *capitalization*. This entry discusses the role that capitalization and the responses that others have to capitalization attempts play in personal and relationship processes.

Capitalization in Everyday Life

Several studies on naturally occurring capitalization have asked people to report on the best thing that happened to them each day over a period of time, such as over 2 weeks. More often than not (up to 80 percent of the time), people tell at least one person about the best thing that happened to them that day. Of course, people are more likely to capitalize about important events, but capitalization about minor events is also common. More importantly, these studies also confirm common intuitions that there are benefits to sharing positive events with others. These benefits included increases in positive emotions, greater life satisfaction, increased quality of interpersonal relationships, greater memory for the event itself, and higher value placed on the event. These benefits

occur in addition to the benefits experienced from the event itself.

These benefits are contingent, however, on how the person or persons with whom the event is shared reacts. That is, some responses to capitalization are associated with benefits whereas others are associated with no benefits or even harm. It seems that the responder plays a key role in the capitalization process, but with whom do people share their positive events? Typically, people tell close others; over 90 percent of the time positive events are shared with spouses or romantic partners, friends, roommates, parents, or siblings. Only on occasion do people share positive events with acquaintances or strangers.

Responses to Capitalization

When people attempt to capitalize, the close other with whom they have shared the positive event can respond in various ways. The response can range from active to passive and from constructive (encouraging and supportive) to destructive (critical and unsupportive). In terms of activity versus passivity, the responder can show interest and involvement when the event is shared, or the responder can be reserved and distant. In terms of the constructive versus destructive tone, the responder can be encouraging and supportive or negative and unsupportive. By considering variations along these two dimensions, four prototypes of responses to capitalization attempts can be described: active-constructive, passive-constructive, active-destructive, and passive-destructive.

Active-constructive. An active-constructive response is one that expresses excitement about the positive event and conveys positive regard toward the person who disclosed the event. An active-constructive responder will often ask questions about the event, highlight important aspects of the event, and elaborate on its potential implications. The active-constructive responder expresses enthusiasm, happiness, or pride.

Passive-constructive. A passive-constructive response is one that may seem positive or supportive but is delivered in a tempered and subtle manner. These responses are often pleasant but quiet exchanges involving few questions about the event and little if any elaboration on implications of the event for the capitalizer.

Active-destructive. An active-destructive response is one in which the responder is keenly and energetically involved in the exchange. However, this response minimizes the importance of the event, focusing on potential unfavorable implications of the event or even reinterpreting the event as negative.

Passive-destructive. A passive-destructive response is one in which the responder does not acknowledge the event being disclosed. This response conveys little or no interest in the positive event, and the responder may change the subject completely or talk instead about an event of his or her own.

Consider the following example: Jane returns home from her internship in a law firm and breathlessly tells her husband, Jack, that she was assigned to assist with the firm's case for its most prestigious client. An active-constructive response from Jack might be, "Wonderful news! I knew you had the natural skills and drive to be a great lawyer. This is just the tip of the iceberg; your career is going to be full of days like this. What is the case about, and what is your role in it?" A passive-constructive response might be a pleasant smile followed by, "That's nice, dear." An active-destructive response might be, "Wow, I bet the case is complicated and difficult. Do you feel capable of working on it? I hope you don't screw up. I wonder if none of the other interns wanted to case; it is probably technical and boring. You will probably have to work

even longer hours this month." And a passive-destructive response might be, "You won't believe what happened to me today," or "What movie should we see this weekend?"

Research has shown that only active-constructive responses are beneficial. When listeners respond in an active-constructive manner, the capitalizer experiences more benefits, such as more positive emotion, greater well-being, and increased memory for the event. However, when a person attempts to capitalize and receives a passive or destructive response from others, he or she does not experience these benefits and may instead experience distress and other negative emotions.

Responses to capitalization also play an important role in the quality of the relationship between discloser and responder. Research has shown that the manner in which spouses or dating partners typically respond to each other when one shares a positive event is associated with relationship quality. People who report that their partners typically respond in an active-constructive way also report greater satisfaction, intimacy, trust, and commitment and fewer conflicts than those who report typical passive-constructive, passive-destructive, or active-destructive responses. Research has also shown that the way in which a partner responds to positive event disclosures is distinct from how the partner responds to transgressions, such as when his or her feelings are hurt, and independently predicts relationship quality. In addition, capitalization responses are distinct from how the partner responds to negative-event disclosures (typically referred to as social support). Moreover, capitalization responses predict relationship quality independently, and in some studies, better than social support responses.

This pattern of findings is not limited to self-reports, as observational studies and laboratory experiments have shown. When trained observers code the videotaped behavior of couples or when participants are randomly assigned to receive different types of feedback from experimental confederates, active-constructive responses are associated with personal benefits and better relationship quality. Passive or destructive responses, on the other hand, are associated with negative outcomes for the discloser and for his or her relationship with the responder. The association between active-constructive responding and relationship quality

has also been found in other relationships, such as among parent–child pairs, roommates, and friends.

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See also Accommodation; Emotion in Relationships; Empathy; Intimacy; Responsiveness; Social Support, Nature of

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CAREGIVER ROLE

An increasing number of adults will experience the challenges and benefits of supplying ongoing assistance to others. Individuals who provide care for a sick or frail family member, friend, or neighbor are participating in the caregiver role. This entry reviews the characteristics of individuals who assume the caregiver role, explores the risks and rewards of caregiving, and discusses the implications of caregiving for personal relationships.

Although formal caregivers, typically paid professionals (i.e., nonfamily members), also manage and provide assistance, this entry focuses on informal family caregivers. Informal family caregivers are likely to experience more chances for risks and opportunities for rewards in their personal relationships with care recipients than formal providers do. For example, formal helpers are not likely to have had a previous personal relationship with the care receiver and must begin caregiving as strangers. Further, formal caregivers are paid for their assistance, payment which may create a more distant service provider–consumer type of relationship, at least in the beginning. This does not mean that close bonds are not formed in formal provider–consumer relationships, but the implications of informal

caregiving for family relationships are inherently different from those of formal caregiving relationships because of these situational differences.

Characteristics of Informal Caregivers

Social norms based on a hierarchy of preferences influence who serves as an informal care provider. When spouses are available in this hierarchy of informal caregiving, they are expected to assume responsibilities first, followed by an adult daughter or daughter-in-law, and then other female caregivers (i.e., niece, sister, aunt, or granddaughter). The next relatives in line to assume caregiving responsibilities are sons and other male family members. Although this hierarchy of informal caregivers is well established, recent trends in family interaction patterns indicate that adult children are providing care in greater numbers than ever. Historically, as indicated by the hierarchy of preferences and dictated by traditional definitions of gender roles, females have been more likely than males to assume the informal caregiver role. The difference in life expectancy between males and females, with females living longer than men, is one explanation for this pattern. Another is that many in society have assumed females are better at caregiving and are naturally suited to provide assistance. Recent national caregiving trends indicate, however, that these gender-based expectations have lessened, and emerging evidence points to increasing numbers of men participating in the caregiving role.

The typical caregiver is a middle-aged (i.e., late 40s to late 50s) female who is married and working either full- or part-time. Youth and young adults also assume care-related roles when family circumstances warrant. On average, family helpers complete 20 hours of aid a week and perform a variety of care-related tasks for recipients. Tasks include assisting with activities of daily living (ADLs) and instrumental activities of daily living (IADLs). ADLs include bathing, dressing, eating, and grooming. IADLs include forms of aid such as cooking, cleaning, shopping, transportation, and assisting with finances. Along with completing or assisting with everyday tasks for care recipients, caregivers make decisions about recipients' health and safety. For example, care providers evaluate a recipient's

ability to drive, establish and maintain healthy living environments, and secure proper professional medical aid and financial or legal advice. The amount of time and the specific care-related tasks caregivers provide may increase their chances for experiencing both risks and rewards.

Risks of the Caregiver Role

Risks associated with the caregiver role include negative experiences related to providing aid and harmful impacts on the caregiver–care recipient relationship. Negative experiences consist of caregiver stress and physical, mental, and emotional strain associated with providing help to a family member, friend, or neighbor. In addition, individuals may experience costs associated with their role. For example, financial costs and strains, which include paying for medical expenses and medications and taking time off from work or being distracted during work, are risks of the caregiving role. Further, providing aid to a family member or friend may interfere with maintaining or building other relationships with a spouse or partner, children, other family members, or friends. Other family members and friends may criticize caregivers for their willingness to provide assistance and the way in which they complete care-related tasks for the recipient. Individuals in the caregiving role often feel a sense of burden, stress, and conflict associated with the long hours of caregiving and the demands placed on them to meet the recipient's needs.

Two common experiences of individuals in the caregiving role are caregiver burden and burnout. Caregiver burden is the build-up of stress associated with performing many different tasks under difficult circumstances. Burden experienced by someone in the caregiving role can have multiple sources. For example, a main reason for experiencing stress is the need to balance the competing demands of work, family, and care-related tasks while managing to reserve some time for personal activities. Achieving a balance may be even more complicated when individuals are providing care while they are currently rearing their own children. This situation, often attributed to persons in the “sandwich generation,” can increase the amount of role conflict associated with informal caregiving.

Despite the fact that respite care (i.e., relief from caregiving) is beneficial to the caregiver and the recipient, a second reason why individuals may experience a build-up of stress is that many do not take a break from caregiving. They may feel that getting help from others is too complicated or too disruptive to the recipient's routine, and sometimes recipients resist attempts by anyone but the caregiver to help them. A third reason for care-related stress may be earlier relationship experiences between the provider and the recipient. For example, adult children with a history of difficult interactions with their parents may have continued relational conflict in the informal caregiving situation. Finally, caregiving spouses with unachieved goals for retirement, resentment toward the spouse who needs assistance, and disappointment about how they are spending their time may feel greatly burdened by their role. Regardless of the reasons why individuals experience difficulties, increases in stress and feelings of burden associated with caregiving can have serious implications for the caregiver's health as well as for the quality of the relationship with the recipient.

Caregivers' physical and mental health status may be poorer compared to non-caregiving-aged peers because of the stress and strain experienced in providing ongoing help to a relative or a friend. For example, chronic illness and depression resulting from the emotional turmoil and physical demands of providing assistance are typical experiences of informal caregivers. Female caregivers tend to express more depressive symptoms than male providers. This may result from the tendency for women to approach their role from a more emotional stance, whereas men tend to take a more objective, problem-solving approach to caregiving tasks. Nevertheless, both women and men are susceptible to caregiver burnout.

Caregiver burnout is the physical, mental, and emotional exhaustion that many individuals experience from assisting relatives or friends over a long period of time. As care recipients' functional capacity declines and their need for assistance increases, the demands on informal providers and the risk of caregiver burnout increase. Caregiver burnout is of great concern given the potential health problems (e.g., increase in blood pressure) that individuals may experience and the risk of them becoming unable to continue providing

assistance. When burnout occurs, caregivers' mental and physical health may be worse than that of their care recipients. In this state, they may not be meeting the recipients' needs. As a result, stress associated with caregiver burden, and burnout may lead to abuse, neglect, or even abandonment of care recipients.

Not only are caregivers' physical and mental health in jeopardy, their relationships with their care recipients are likely to be affected as well. The effects depend on the recipients' conditions and the types of aid required. For example, caregivers of persons diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease or a related disorder (ADRD) tend to experience more negative changes in their relationships than helpers of persons with other illnesses. The cognitive decline associated with ADRD not only affects memory in ways that are painful to caregivers (e.g., not recognizing the caregiver or forgetting about their close relationship history), it may also lead to personality changes in the care recipients, inhibit their ability to engage in a meaningful conversation, and produce difficult behavioral problems. This loss of the expected spousal, sibling, parent-child, or friend relationship is extremely stressful for informal caregivers and their care recipients.

Rewards of the Caregiver Role

Focusing on stress associated with the caregiver role, however, represents only one part of caregiving. Providers also report positive experiences and rewards resulting from taking care of a relative or friend. For example, many caregivers enjoy the time spent with recipients and describe their relationships as closer than before intensive caregiving began. Being in the caregiver role may provide opportunities to build or maintain relationships as well as repair damaged relationships and reconnect personal ties that were previously broken or strained. Other rewards associated with providing assistance include knowing the family member or friend is well cared for, seeing the recipient's happiness or contentment, and noticing that the recipient's health has improved or has not declined. In addition, individuals often report gains in their sense of confidence and competence from performing the caregiving role. For example, enhanced

caregiving self-efficacy, or the ability to master new tasks and manage multiple demands, is another reward. Even though some personal care activities (i.e., bathing, grooming, toileting) may be difficult, individuals often find accomplishing them successfully a source of gratification. Many informal caregivers report that they benefit from the rewarding aspects of caregiving. In fact, loss of the caregiver role because of the recipient's improvement or death requires adjustment and reorganization of daily time and activities on the part of the former provider.

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See also Alzheimer's Disease and Relationships; Caregiving Across the Life Span; Elder Abuse and Neglect; Family Relationships in Late Adulthood; Friendships in Late Adulthood; Health and Relationships; Intergenerational Family Relationships; Role Theory and Relationships

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CAREGIVING ACROSS THE LIFE SPAN

In 2004, approximately 28 million people in the United States provided personal care to their family members. With the increase in the older population and a decrease in family size, the likelihood of becoming a caregiver will continue to increase in the future. The purpose of this entry is to review research findings on caregiving across the life span. First, this entry will review common caregiving roles that are enacted over the life course, including caring for children with disabilities, aging parents, an elderly spouse, and grandchildren. Next, the entry will examine subgroup differences in caregiving as well as the social structural context of caregiving. Specifically, the entry focuses on gender and racial/ethnic differences in caregiving and how demographic and social structural changes have affected caregiving arrangements within and across families.

Caregiving Experiences Across the Life Span

Caring for Children With Developmental Disabilities or Mental Illnesses

In early to mid-adulthood, many individuals become parents and take care of their children. Caregiving for children can be particularly challenging if children have chronic conditions such as developmental disabilities or mental health problems. In general, developmental disabilities are diagnosed at the child's birth or in early childhood, whereas mental illnesses tend to be diagnosed during the child's adolescence or early adulthood. Thus, caregiving responsibilities for children with disabilities begin at different stages of parents' lives. However, with the increase in the life expectancy of both parents and adult children with disabilities, it is becoming more common for parents to continue caring for these children even into old age.

Not only do parents of children with developmental disabilities or mental health problems bear the objective burdens of care, such as providing help in daily activities and managing their child's problematic behavior, but also they must deal with other problems associated with children's disabilities, such as additional financial burdens and

emotional stress associated with the stigma of disabilities.

Parenting a child with disabilities takes a toll on parents' health and mental health. Parents of children with developmental disabilities or mental illness experience more physical symptoms and higher levels of depression than parents with non-disabled children. Nonetheless, variations exist in the extent to which children's disabilities lead to poor health and mental health among parents. A child's problematic behavior and poor health of the parent increase caregiving burden, whereas a better parent-child relationship leads to greater caregiving satisfaction.

Recent studies have examined the impact of having a child with disabilities on older parents' well-being, as caring for children with developmental or mental health problems, has become a lifelong responsibility for some older adults. According to Marsha Seltzer and her colleagues, parents in their mid-30s and early-50s of children with developmental disabilities have less frequent contact with friends than parents of the same age of unaffected children, although the difference at the later age is less pronounced. Parents in their mid-30s, but not in their early 50s, of children with mental health problems experience greater physical symptoms as well as elevated levels of depression and alcohol symptoms than parents of the same age of unaffected children in.

Although caring for children with disabilities yields negative health consequences for both young and old parents, compared to younger parents, older parents are less negatively affected by their children's disability in part because they have had time to adapt to the challenges of their child's special needs.

There is a significant within-group variation in parental adaptation to children's disability among older adults. Several factors account for this variation. For example, research by Rachel Pruchno found that caregiving satisfaction increases when care-receivers express higher levels of affection to caregivers. As noted by Pruchno and colleagues, positive appraisal of caregiving increases when the quality of the relationship between the caregiver and care receiver is high, whereas, according to S. A. Pickett and associates, it decreases when the caregiver perceives greater caregiving burden.

Caring for Older Parents With Cognitive Impairment or Chronic Health Problems

Another common caregiving responsibility in midlife is the provision of care to aging parents who have cognitive impairments, chronic health problems, or other age-related diseases or disabilities. After one's spouse, adult children are the most important sources of support when older people are in need. In particular, daughters, especially eldest, are most likely to have the primary responsibility of caregiving for aging parents.

Like other caregiving responsibilities, caring for aging parents is both stressful and rewarding. It is stressful in that adult children have to balance the time they spend caring for their parents with their other responsibilities at the workplace and at home. Caring for elderly parents also tends to bring emotional distress to both care recipients and care providers. Feelings of dependence and the loss of autonomy may be difficult for older parents, and adult children may be stressed about the shift in the kinds and amounts of help exchanged within the parent-child relationship. However, caregiving and receiving relationships may also promote affection, gratitude, companionship, and cooperation between aging parents and their adult children.

Caring for aging parents has implications for caregivers' health and mental health. Family caregivers of cancer patients often experience elevated levels of depression, anxiety, and burden. Compared to demographically similar noncaregivers, caregivers of persons with Alzheimer's disease tend to show greater health risks and poorer self-reported health. They also experience higher levels of depressive symptoms and higher use of psychotropic drugs than noncaregivers.

Despite the negative consequences of caregiving, there are rewards of providing care for elderly parents. Caregiving children report positive feelings, a sense of satisfaction and feelings of growth, and strengthened intergenerational ties. Adult children with a high level of mastery, defined by Leonard Pearlin and colleagues in "The Stress Process" as "the extent to which people see themselves as being in control of the forces that importantly affect their lives" (p. 340), tend to adjust better to the stress of caregiving.

Caring for an Elderly Spouse With Cognitive Impairment or Chronic Illness

With the increased likelihood of experiencing chronic illnesses or degenerative diseases, older adults are more likely to need care than younger adults. Out of the over-10-million Americans who need long-term care, approximately 63 percent are persons ages 65 and older.

One of the most common caregiving arrangements in later life, especially for women, is spousal caregiving. Wives tend to take the caregiving role for a longer period of time than other family members and are less likely than other caregivers to place their husbands into nursing homes. Furthermore, because of the central role of the marital relationship, the impact of caregiving is usually more pronounced for spouses than for adult children. Specifically, wives experience a greater decrease in well-being than daughters after entering the caregiving role, although spouses and adult children in shared households experience similar levels of care-related strain.

Spousal caregiving has a negative impact not only on psychological well-being but also on physical health and mortality. Those who experience greater caregiver strain tend to have poorer perceived health and increased health-risk behaviors. Furthermore, spousal caregivers who experience emotional stress have a higher risk of mortality than noncaregivers their age, after taking into account differences in sociodemographic status. Caregiving strain among spousal caregivers increases with the degree of the care-receiving spouse's impairment, which in turn leads to caregivers' poorer perceived health and increased health-risk behaviors, as well as to increased anxiety and depression.

Grandparents Giving Care to Grandchildren

Many older adults provide important caregiving support for their grandchildren. Approximately 2.4 million people in the United States are primary caregivers for their grandchildren for various reasons, such as the parents' substance abuse, incarceration, mental illness, and illness with HIV/AIDS.

The likelihood of becoming a caregiver for grandchildren varies by race and ethnicity. According to the 2000 Census, 2.5 percent of non-Hispanic Whites, 8.2 percent of African Americans,

8 percent of American Indian and Alaska Natives, 6.4 percent of Asians, and 8.4 percent of Hispanic or Latino adults ages 30 and over lived with their grandchildren. Approximately 30 percent of African-American grandmothers have reported that they have been a primary caregiver for their grandchildren at some point.

Although grandparents' provision of care to their grandchildren is a source of substantial help to vulnerable families, similar to other caregiving experiences, this assistance comes with personal costs. Compared to noncaregiving peers, grandparents who are primary caregivers of their grandchildren experience higher levels of functional limitations and depression as well as lower levels of self-rated health.

Subgroup Differences in Caregiving and Caregivers' Well-Being

Gender Differences

The responsibility of caregiving is often disproportionately distributed between men and women. Wives and daughters spend greater time than husbands and sons providing care to their spouses and parents, even after taking employment status into account. Mothers of children with disabilities provide more hours of care and more types of support than fathers do. According to life course theory, this gender disparity in caregiving is largely due to lifelong gendered patterns of socialization and cultural norms.

Different levels of involvement in caregiving between men and women lead to a gender discrepancy in both objective and subjective levels of caregiving burden. Baila Miller and Lynda Cafasso conducted a meta-analysis of 14 studies of gender differences in caregiving and found that women tend to report higher levels of emotional distress and greater caregiving burden than men. Several other studies have confirmed this conclusion. However, male and female caregivers do not significantly differ in their physical health and long-term emotional health.

Despite gender differences in several caregiving outcomes, the determinants of these outcomes tend to be similar for male and female caregivers. For example, among mothers and fathers of children with disabilities, the living arrangement of the child

with a disability, the parent-child relationship quality, and the type of disability were significant determinants of caregiving burden, satisfaction, depression, and life satisfaction for both mothers and fathers, suggesting that similar mechanisms explain the stress process.

Whereas past research focused on investigating gender differences in key caregiver outcomes and the mechanisms explaining these differences, recent studies illustrate unique challenges that male and female caregivers face. Betty Kramer and Edward Thompson explained that men report more anxiety in handling multiple caregiving demands and are not familiar with using social service agencies. On the other hand, female caregivers often experience difficulties in balancing work and caregiving responsibilities. Men and women are also known to show different coping styles—men tend to use more problem-focused coping, and women tend to use more emotion-focused coping.

Racial and Ethnic Differences

Some caregiving arrangements are more common among certain racial/ethnic groups than others. For example, as noted, grandparent caregiving is more prevalent among African Americans than among non-Hispanic Whites. However, several studies show that caregiving has more negative effects on White caregivers than on African-American caregivers.

Families from different racial/ethnic or cultural backgrounds tend to vary in their functions and norms as well as in their demographic characteristics, such as fertility, mortality, residence, and marriage. These varying demographic or structural characteristics of the family contribute to differential caregiving experiences. For example, according to Pruchno, higher levels of caregiving satisfaction among African-American mothers of children with chronic conditions can be explained in part by racial differences in the rate of coresidence with children. In her study, she found that African-American mothers ages 50 and over were more likely to live with their children with disabilities than White mothers, and those who coresided with their children with chronic conditions provided more help and felt greater caregiving satisfaction.

Different cultural or spiritual resources across various racial/ethnic groups also exert a significant

influence on caregiving experiences. On average, members of ethnic-minority groups are more closely embedded in extended families and report more spiritual or religious resources than White caregivers. These resources can provide various forms of support to caregivers.

In a 20-year review of caregiving research, Peggye Dilworth-Anderson and her colleagues summarized previous studies on racial/ethnic differences in caregiving in four domains: social support, negative effects of caregiving, coping, and cultural influences. According to their review, caregivers from minority groups have more diverse sources of social support than non-Hispanic Whites and use informal support more frequently than formal support services. In terms of negative effects of caregiving, some studies found higher caregiving burden among White caregivers, whereas others did not find significant racial or ethnic differences. Caregivers of different racial/ethnic groups often rely on different coping strategies and cultural resources to cope with the stress of caregiving. Investigating such differences in caregiving resources as well as in coping strategies could provide important information about the implications of cultural diversity in caregiving experiences.

Changing Historical and Demographic Trends in Caregiving

The role of family in providing care is contingent upon historical and social contexts. In prior times, many people died in midlife from acute illnesses. With the epidemiological transition, people on average live longer, but a great number of people spend the later years of their life with disabilities or chronic illness, thus making caregiving an increasingly important social issue.

Demographic changes in the past few decades have also shaped caregiving experiences. With the increase in life expectancy and the decrease in family size due to low fertility, the number of individuals needing care continues to increase, whereas the number of potential caregivers is decreasing. The increased life expectancy of children with developmental disabilities also influences caregiving prevalence; parents of these children now have lifelong caregiving responsibilities.

Social contexts that influence family caregiving include the availability of formal social services for

frail older adults and people with disabilities, the availability and quality of care in institutions and community-based care facilities, and the available assistance for caregiving families. For example, deinstitutionalization of individuals with mental illness in the 1950s and 1960s, along with a dearth of effective community-based services, has led families to assume more caregiving or care management for adults with physical or mental disabilities.

Competing demands associated with multiple roles is another influential factor on caregiver health and well-being. With the increase in dual-earner households, it has become increasingly difficult for families to carry out caregiving responsibilities for persons with illness or disabilities. Coordinating caregiving tasks along with work schedules and family activities is challenging and can be stressful, especially if workers do not have much flexibility in their jobs. Nevertheless, holding multiple roles sometimes helps protect caregivers from negative outcomes through enhancements in social support and self-esteem.

In conclusion, caregiving is an increasingly common social role, but its distribution varies along racial and gender lines and differs according to the type of kinship relationship between the caregiver and the care recipient. Population-level demographic shifts in longevity and family size will continue to increase individuals' probability of becoming a family caregiver during the life course, with a concomitant toll on caregivers' physical and psychological well-being. In order to reduce the toll taken by caregiving on both caregivers and care recipients, more discussion is needed on how social programs and policies can provide better support for family caregivers.

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See also Aging Processes and Relationships; Alzheimer's Disease and Relationships; Caregiver Role; Disabilities, Chronic Illness, and Relationship Functioning; Families, Demographic Trends; Families, Intergenerational Relationships in

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CASUAL SEX

Casual sex is broadly defined as having sex with someone with whom an individual is not in a committed relationship. Some scholars define casual sex as having sex with someone a person had met the same day, whereas other scholars

study casual sex in specific contexts, such as while people are vacationing, and regard it as having sex with someone a person had met at any time during the holiday. At times, casual sex can occur with acquaintances, friends of friends, or people who are admired from a distance. Although references to the activities that constitute casual sex are often vague, in most cases it is assumed that casual sex involves sexual intercourse. Investigation into casual sex has expanded greatly over the past 20 years, prompted by the need to define the scope of unprotected sex and the circumstances that lead to the spread of sexually transmitted infections and unwanted pregnancies.

The vast majority of research on casual sex uses samples of young adults who have just graduated from high school, who are in college, or who are traveling internationally (e.g., backpackers). The typical age range for high school and college student samples is 17 to 24, and the typical age range for traveling samples is 22 to 35. The prevalence of ever having had casual sex in these samples ranges from approximately one quarter to one third, with rates nearly doubling when the parameters of sex are expanded to “fooling around” in the absence of sexual intercourse. In most samples, more males admit to having had casual sex than females. Research also shows that, relative to females, males have more positive attitudes toward casual sex, go to bars or on vacation with the purpose of finding a casual sex partner, report more pressure to engage in casual sex, and report more positive emotional reactions to casual sexual experiences. Casual sex is especially prevalent in university students who go away for spring break, which is attributed to beliefs that casual sex is common and even expected in this setting, that people will not be judged for their behavior, and that people are away from home and relatively anonymous.

A common motivation for engaging in casual sex for both genders is sexual desire. However, males are more likely to indicate that they engage in casual sex to develop sexual prowess and enhance their social status among their peers, whereas females are more likely to indicate that they engage in casual sex with the hope that a longer-term relationship will develop. The most cited reasons for not engaging in casual sex, even if opportunities are available, include lack of privacy, concern about contracting a sexually

transmitted infection, and excessive drunkenness. Females also report that they refrain from engaging in casual sex because they are concerned that they will feel guilty or that they will be physically harmed. Some research suggests that males often make pacts with one another to engage in casual sex, whereas females often make pacts with one another not to engage in casual sex. This pattern suggests that there are important gender differences in intentions to engage in casual sex in situations where it is conducive to do so.

The most common predictors of casual sex include alcohol use, personality traits such as impulsivity and sensation seeking, peer influence, an expectation that one will engage in casual sex, and prior casual sex experience. Scholars who examine casual sex that occurs on spring break have identified a number of environmental variables that increase its probability, such as sensual music that promotes close body contact on the dance floor at bars and clubs and drinking games that facilitate heavy alcohol use. Some research has found that casual sex is more common among people with lower education aspirations, who are not active participants in religious activities, and who consistently drink alcohol and smoke cigarettes, behaviors which might be indicative of a deviant lifestyle.

Up to 90 percent of people who indicate that they have engaged in casual sex admit that they did so without using a condom. In fact, many people who intend to have casual sex carry condoms with them for this purpose but do not ultimately use them. Barriers to using condoms during casual sex include using alcohol or drugs prior to casual sex, making an impulsive decision to have casual sex, being in the “heat of the moment,” and identifying other strategies perceived as appropriate in assessing risk, such as having a discussion of both partners’ sexual histories. Research shows that many people who have had a casual sexual encounter worry about the possibility of having contracted a sexually transmitted infection.

Scholars have identified additional negative consequences of engaging in casual sex. Across several studies, females who had engaged in casual sex reported guilty about their actions and speculated that it lowered their self-esteem. Males, in contrast, often indicated that they realized afterward they would not have pursued a sexual

encounter with the partner had they not been intoxicated (i.e., wearing “beer goggles”) and that they found themselves in a position where they had to address the fact that the sexual partner wanted to build a relationship with them. Some people are in committed relationships at home but have casual sex while on vacation and regret their decision afterward, even if their partner does not find out about it. Research shows that people who have infrequent casual sex view it as emotionally unsatisfying and report that they prefer sex in committed relationships, whereas people who have frequent casual sex find it enjoyable and look forward to future encounters. Thus, the most negative emotional consequences appear to occur in people with less experience in coping with the aftereffects of casual sexual experiences.

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See also Extradyadic Sex; Hooking Up, Hookups

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CHANGE IN ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS OVER TIME

Romantic relationships develop and change over time. Indeed, romantic relationships have been conceptualized to follow developmental trajectories. In the 1950s, a single developmental trajectory would have captured a majority of the pathways that romantic relationships followed and would have been characterized by dating, engagement,

and subsequent marriage. More than halfway through the first decade of the 21st century, this trajectory can take more diverse forms, and it would be difficult to define the most common trajectory because of the wide variety of types of romantic relationships. For instance, relationships still may develop through the traditional stages of dating, engagement, and marriage. But currently, the developmental trajectories of romantic relationships may be characterized by a period of casual sex in which the relationship may or may not be a formal dating relationship, followed by dating, visiting (defined as often spending the night together but maintaining two separate residences), cohabitation (defined as living together prior to marriage and maintaining no separate residence from partner), and perhaps subsequent engagement and marriage. Thus, the change in relationships over time is marked by two processes: first, the developmental progression of individual romantic relationships, and second, changes in romantic relationship partners (and thus romantic relationships) across the life course.

In this entry, the primary focus is on these processes over the individual life course, but changes are noted across historical time when relevant. The focus is also on heterosexual romantic relationships in the United States, though these processes occur and, in some instances, are changing across many cultures. The entry begins with a review of the dating and predating literatures, continuing with a discussion of cohabiting and marital relationships. The entry ends with a discussion of serial monogamy, or the process of individuals changing their partners over time.

Progression of Individual Romantic Relationships

Social norms and scripts for the courtship process have become more varied over time. Many adolescents and young adults may not go through a formal courtship process that includes dating and betrothal. One increasingly common trend is for adolescents and young adults to have relationships that are nonromantic but sexual. The rising prevalence of these relationships has changed the landscape of dating and courtship. Recent estimates from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent

Health have found that 60 percent of sexually active teens have had sex in both romantic and nonromantic contexts. Qualitative work suggests these patterns continue in young adulthood so that college students argue that college campuses are increasingly characterized by a hook-up culture whereby sexual encounters may occur with random people or perhaps with a friend-with-benefits. A friend-with-benefits is a friend with whom a young adult will have multiple and ongoing sexual encounters outside the context of a romantic relationship. Although at any one point in time, a minority of adolescents and young adults may be in these more casual relationships, the percentage that report having experienced them at some point is high. These casual relationships are often a testing ground for both a more intimate relationship with the casual relationship partner and for future relationships as adolescents and young adults mature and learn new skills for making relationships work. For those with relationships that grow out of nonromantic sexual contexts, the transition between friends and dating can be more ambiguous.

Some scholars have argued that relationships that begin in nonromantic contexts have relatively high levels of inequity and more negative consequences in particular for women, while other scholars have argued that they empower women by allowing women to enjoy their sexuality outside the context of a gendered heterosexual relationship. Evidence suggests, however, that women sometimes comply with casual sex because they believe or want the relationship to become a romantic relationship. Thus, women may be more vulnerable in these relationships if they do indeed want it to become romantic. Both nonromantic casual sex relationships and dating relationships are by their nature marked by lower levels of commitment than most coresidential relationships. One way individuals can bolster commitment in their relationship is to increase equity and investments in the relationship. However, in a dating culture where women experience less equity and are in more ambiguous relationships (complicating the ability of women to invest in them), progression to a committed relationship may slow or halt if the woman (or her partner) is able to find more attractive alternatives.

As casual dating relationships develop, couples do move into more committed forms of relationship.

These forms include visiting, cohabiting, engagement, or some combination. Cohabiting relationships in particular affect many adults across the life span. Estimates vary, but among women ages 19 to 44 forming first unions between 1997 and 2001, it has been estimated that nearly 70 percent of first unions were formed through cohabitation rather than through marriage without a preceding period of cohabitation.

Often couples do not have a formal period of engagement prior to moving in together. Indeed, some couples may not discuss the implications of moving in together nor discuss the implications of cohabitation for their commitment to their relationship. Some scholars have argued that most couples slide into cohabitation rather than decide to cohabit. For instance, a couple may be visiting and decide to save money by maintaining a single lease. Many couples may not realize that by moving in together, barriers to leaving the relationship are created. As couples spend more time together in these visiting and cohabiting unions and acquire more joint social and economic capital, they may find it increasingly difficult to leave the relationship, even if it were to be less than satisfactory. Given the pressures to marry that many cohabiting couples experience, as well as the greater likelihood of an unplanned pregnancy, the foundation from which a marriage is built upon may be less solid and more fragile in particular for those couples who begin cohabiting out of convenience and then marry. There is a large body of evidence that links premarital cohabitation to poor marital functioning and stability. On the other hand, couples who cohabit with marriage in mind or because they desire to increase the commitment in their relationship, may build a stronger relationship foundation as they develop strategies for making their relationship work prior to marriage, hence making the transition to marriage easier. Indeed, scholars have also found that spouses who cohabited with plans to marry look similar to those couples who marry without a premarital cohabitation in terms of their marital functioning. Other couples use cohabitation as a testing ground for the relationship to gain a better understanding of the potential of a long-term commitment with their partner, while enjoying lower costs to exiting the relationship should it not work out. Overall, cohabitation does not tend to be a long-term union

for most individuals: about half end within a year, while over 90 percent end within 5 years, and more end by dissolution rather than marriage.

Even though cohabitation rates have risen, marriage is still very much valued in American society. Those couples who do marry tend to enjoy health and social benefits of marriage. Indeed, individuals who are married consistently report higher levels of well-being than unmarried individuals including cohabitators, daters, and single individuals, even taking account of relationship quality. Over time, however, all relationships change, and marital relationships are no exception. Many studies have examined how satisfaction changes across the life course of marriage. Early studies that relied on cross-sectional data found that marital satisfaction declined in the early years of marriage but rebounded after children leave the household; hence, scholars believed marital satisfaction follows a U-shaped curve across the life course. However, more recent work has demonstrated that the U-shaped curve was an artifact of the cross-sectional nature of the data and was driven in part by older cohorts being more satisfied with their marriages than younger cohorts. Thus, more recent work using longitudinal data has found that marital satisfaction declines across the early years of marriage but does not increase following the decline.

Another critique of the research on the change in marital satisfaction over time is that because of its primarily sociological, large-scale nature, little effort was made to find subgroups of married couples who do not experience declines in marital satisfaction over time. Recently, scholars have used new methods that specialize in finding subgroups in data and have found that there are subgroups of married couples who remain highly satisfied with their marriage over 20 years. This subgroup accounts for about 40 percent of couples in the longitudinal Study of Marital Instability Across the Life Course. A second subgroup, also accounting for about 40 percent of couples, remained around the median of marital satisfaction across time, declining slightly in the early years of marriage and then increasing later. A final subgroup was found, representing about 20 percent of the sample, which began with a lower level of marital satisfaction and experienced a more precipitous drop across the early years of marriage but which

rebounded somewhat in later years, though never to the levels of satisfaction that the more highly satisfied groups experienced. This research needs to be replicated, but it points out that all marriages, and indeed all relationships, do not change uniformly over time.

Serial Monogamy: Romantic Relationship Experiences Across the Life Course

Most relationships do not last forever; as individuals search for a long-term, in some cases lifelong commitment, they date, live with, and sometimes marry different partners. Overall, unions in the United States, defined to include both cohabitating and marital unions, are at their most unstable point in recent history. Using longitudinal data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY) 1979, a nationally representative data collection of over 10,000 adults who were between 14 and 21 in 1979, scholars have found that by the age of 40, about 12 percent of the sample had never had a union, while 40 percent were still in their first marriage, and 2 percent were in their first cohabitation. Therefore, 46 percent of the sample by the age of 40 was in second, third, or even higher-order unions. Thus, over time, individuals cycle through relationships, experiencing divorces and the dissolution of cohabiting or dating relationships along the way.

Union instability may be even greater by the age of 40 for contemporary cohorts of young adults. Scholars have compared data from the NLSY 1979 cohort and the more recent 1997 cohort, a nationally representative sample of over 8,000 individuals who were ages 11 to 14 in 1997 and have been re-interviewed annually since. By age 24, 41 percent of the NLSY 1979 cohort had never had a union, while a similar 39 percent of the NLSY 1997 cohort had never had a union. Thirty-seven percent of the NLSY 79 cohort was in their first marriage, while only 20 percent of the NLSY 97 cohort was in their first marriage. In contrast, 6 percent of the NLSY 79 cohort was in their first cohabitation, but 12 percent of the NLSY 97 cohort was in their first cohabitation. Another change was that by age 24, only 5 percent of the NLSY 79 cohort was in a higher-order union, 60 percent of which were marital unions, whereas 9 percent of the NLSY 97 cohort was in a higher-order union, 86 percent of

which were cohabiting unions. One final note of change is that the proportion of individuals who were single after a union dissolution doubled between the two cohorts, from 11 percent in the NLSY 1979 cohort to 20 percent in the NLSY 97 cohort. Thus, even by age 24, it is apparent that changes in relationships, including unions, have increased both over time for these individuals, and across historic time as well. Some scholars, including Paul Amato and Andrew Cherlin, have called this cycling of monogamous relationships “serial monogamy.” Serial monogamy has come to partly define the baby boomer and subsequent cohorts’ relationship experiences.

The process of individual relationship development occurs and recurs across the life course and in historical context. Given the changing historical context of romantic relationships and their various forms at the beginning of the 21st century, it is difficult to predict what is in store for the development of romantic relationships. Although almost 95 percent of high school seniors in the 2006 Monitoring the Future study reported that they planned to marry someday, only about 36 percent agreed that “most people will have fuller and happier lives if they choose legal marriage rather than staying single, or just living with someone.” It is likely that as time goes by, relationships will become increasingly diverse, while simultaneously, individuals will experience increasing numbers of relationships that vary in their degree of commitment across their life course.

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See also Cohabitation; Commitment, Theories and Typologies; Courtship, Models and Processes of; Divorce, Prevalence and Trends; Marital Satisfaction and Quality; Marital Stability, Prediction of; Marriage, Expectations About; Sex and Love; Sexuality

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CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

Young children's experiences with their caregivers can be the most influential of all human relationships. Children develop expectations regarding future relationships based on the quality of early interactions with their caregivers. When children experience warm and responsive caregiving, they are likely to believe that others are trustworthy and that relationships can be fulfilling. They also begin to view themselves as deserving of positive connections with others. When caregiving is harsh or unreliable, children may begin to expect that their needs will not be met by others and may begin to believe that positive relationships are unattainable. Because of the continuity between early experiences and subsequent relationship expectations, child maltreatment can exert a devastating impact on the quality of relationships across the life course. It is important to note that child maltreatment refers to all subtypes of child abuse and neglect, including physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, and neglect.

This entry examines the processes associated with child maltreatment that hinder the attainment of positive human relationships. In particular, it explores the compounding effects of child maltreatment that can affect the quality of relationships from infancy to adulthood. Special attention is directed toward factors that promote adaptive functioning despite the adversity associated with maltreatment. Finally, implications for social policy and intervention will be addressed.

Definition and Epidemiology

The first official case of child maltreatment in the United States was documented in 1873. Since then,

controversy has existed over how to define child abuse and neglect. This debate has been largely political, leading to shifts over time regarding what acts are considered abusive or neglectful. For example, when funding allocation for social services is low, only the most severe cases of maltreatment are investigated. In addition, tension has existed between liberal and conservative views regarding the degree to which the government has the right to intervene in families, with the latter tending to be more broadly committed to the protection of parental rights to raise their children as they see fit. Moreover, there has been ongoing dispute over whether child maltreatment should be defined based on the actions of the perpetrator or on the effects on the child. Additionally, researchers debate over whether to consult public records or to interview children directly to ascertain that maltreatment has occurred. The lack of a clear definition for child maltreatment, or an agreed-upon standard for identifying an incident, can cause prevalence estimates to vary considerably.

Recent estimates from public records suggest that 12 out of every 1,000 children in the United States have been victims of child maltreatment. This estimate is most likely a gross underrepresentation, as it only reflects documented occurrences. Of the documented cases, it has been estimated that approximately 63 percent involve neglect, 17 percent involve physical abuse, 9 percent involve sexual abuse, and 7 percent involve emotional abuse. However, these estimates may also be misleading as research indicates that the vast majority of maltreated children experience more than one type of maltreatment.

Research has helped to elucidate the detrimental effects that various types of maltreatment can have on children. Findings suggest that the effects of child maltreatment on relationships can be particularly harmful if the maltreatment occurs during the first 5 years of life or is chronic in nature. Research also has indicated that the severity and type of maltreatment can have differential impacts on children depending on the child's developmental stage at the time of the maltreatment. More specifically, the severity of emotional abuse in infancy and toddlerhood, as well as physical abuse during the preschool period, are especially potent predictors of later acting out behaviors both in the context of familial and peer relationships. Acting

out behaviors may include physical aggression, bullying, or verbal hostility. Conversely, the severity of neglect during the preschool years is associated with depressed and withdrawn behavior such as social isolation, tearfulness, and thoughts of suicide.

Attachment With Caregiver

Young children learn about themselves and the world around them within the context of their relationships with caregivers, most importantly their parents. These early experiences provide a foundation for relationships with other individuals not only during childhood but across the life course. Beginning in infancy, children develop a way of relating to their caregivers known as attachment. Children who experience sensitivity and responsiveness in their early interactions are likely to develop a positive view of themselves and others and therefore are likely to form secure-attachment relationships with their caregivers. Securely attached children believe that their needs will be met and therefore will have the confidence to explore their environments. They are also likely to utilize their caregivers for support and comfort during times of distress and to learn to regulate their emotions appropriately. Consequently, securely attached children are likely to be able to appropriately identify and communicate their feelings to others and to experience positive social interactions.

In that a child's primary caregiver is the indicated perpetrator in more than 80 percent of cases of maltreatment, child abuse and neglect can profoundly disrupt the development of a secure-attachment relationship. Maltreating caregivers engender fear and uncertainty in young children through their lack of sensitivity and reliability. Consequently, maltreated children are likely to form insecure- or disorganized-attachment relationships with their caregivers. Research indicates that maltreated children are more likely than those who have not been maltreated to develop an avoidant-attachment relationship with their caregivers. They exhibit their avoidance by minimizing physical proximity, eye contact, and expression of their emotions in the presence of their caregivers. Because avoidant children expect rejection when in

need of comfort, they often fail to develop productive ways of expressing negative emotions, even as adults. Other children respond to their maltreating caregivers' unpredictability by expressing considerable dependency when interacting with their caregivers. This attachment pattern is known as anxious or ambivalent. These children put forth extreme efforts to seek closeness and reassurance from their caregivers but typically fail to derive true comfort from the relationship. Anxious or ambivalent children tend to become so preoccupied with the relationship that they neglect to explore the world around them. With fewer opportunities to apply positive social and emotional skills in relationships, they often have difficulty regulating their emotions and become fearful, sad, or angry. Finally, some maltreated children fail to develop an organized strategy of relating to their caregivers. These children have a disorganized-attachment relationship and tend to exhibit fear, an inability to regulate their emotions, or complete disengagement in the presence of their caregivers. Children with disorganized attachments exhibit the most troublesome outcomes of all. They are the most likely to demonstrate low self-esteem, poor school performance, and high levels of anxiety. Children who form insecure or disorganized attachments are unable to utilize a partnership with their caregivers to help them organize future behavior and patterns of relating to others.

Relationships in the Family

Maltreating homes are exemplified by disorganization, inconsistency, and chaos, particularly in the context of familial relationships. Physically abusive parents are typically aggressive toward multiple members of the family. Likewise, neglectful parents are likely to be inconsistent and cold in many of their familial relationships. In general, maltreating parents are less satisfied with their children and find parenting less enjoyable than do non-maltreating parents. These maladaptive patterns of relating can contribute to the collapse of social structure in the family system. Consequently, maltreating families typically lack clearly defined social roles in the home, causing maltreating parents to have unrealistic or age-inappropriate expectations for their young children. These

expectations often lead to role reversal in the parent–child relationship, with the child tending to his or her parent’s needs. Without support from their caregivers, maltreated children often fail to develop appropriate skills for relating to others. These difficulties can persist throughout the life course.

Peer Relationships

As childhood progresses and the school years commence, children begin spending more of their time in the company of individuals outside of the home, and peer relationships play an increasingly important role in social and emotional development. The experience of maltreatment may lead some children to develop aggressive or withdrawn behaviors that serve to protect them from physical or psychological harm with the caregiver but that also may create a barrier to forming positive relationships with peers. Researchers have found that maltreated children are more likely to be rejected by their peers than are children who have not experienced maltreatment. There is evidence to suggest that the increased use of physical and verbal aggression by maltreated children may be one of the mechanisms that contributes to them being more likely to be rejected by their peers. Based on their early experiences with their caregivers, maltreated children also tend to withdraw from, and even avoid, interactions with their age mates. These behaviors may also lead to peer rejection, which can make it more difficult for maltreated children to establish friendships. In some maltreated children, both aggressive and withdrawn behaviors are exhibited, and when present, such children demonstrate much lower social effectiveness. When maltreated children are able to establish friendships, they are often experienced as less caring and more marked by conflict.

Research also has shown that maltreated children are significantly more likely to be perpetrators and victims of bullying than are non-maltreated children. Children who have been physically and sexually abused are particularly likely to display bullying behaviors toward their peers. Additionally, greater severity and chronicity of maltreatment tends to be associated with more difficulties with peer relationships. This pattern suggests that the

more disrupted the early relationship between caregiver and child, the greater challenges maltreated children are likely to face in relationships with their peers.

Relationships With Teachers

Research has identified continuity between the quality of children’s attachment relationships with their caregivers and subsequent attachment with their teachers. Children who have experienced secure attachments with their caregivers are more likely to perceive their teachers as warm and supportive. This positive perception of teachers contributes to children being more motivated and having more confidence in the classroom. Children who have been maltreated and have developed an insecure or disorganized attachment with their caregivers are more likely to exhibit maladaptive patterns of relating to their teachers, as characterized by the child’s increased need for dependency, approval, and help-seeking behaviors. However, children who have been maltreated often exhibit patterns of relating that prevent them from deriving the support that they need from their teachers. Some physically abused children exhibit disruptive or aggressive behaviors that lead to disciplinary actions, minimizing the time spent in the classroom. Other maltreated children are more likely to withdraw while at school, causing their needs to be overlooked by their teachers. Without supportive relationships with their teachers, children who have been maltreated often lack the motivation to do well in school and to behave appropriately. Thus, it is not surprising that maltreated children are less successful at school than their non-maltreated classmates. Poor academic achievement can have dire implications across the life course, placing individuals at risk for unemployment and potential poverty.

Romantic Relationships

In addition to experiencing difficulties forming and maintaining positive relationships within the family and with peers and teachers, individuals who were maltreated as children often go on to experience disruptions in their romantic relationships. Individuals who experienced maltreatment early in

life are more likely to have insecure patterns of attachment with their romantic partners than adults who were not maltreated as children. Furthermore, researchers have found that childhood physical abuse is associated with violence and aggression in romantic relationships. Individuals maltreated as children are more likely to be both the perpetrator and the victim of violence in these close personal relationships.

Intergenerational Transmission

Having a history of maltreatment during childhood also heightens the risk for perpetuating maltreatment on future generations of children. The insecure- or disorganized-attachment patterns that maltreated individuals often experienced with their own caregivers may disrupt their view of how a healthy caregiver–child relationship operates. Individuals who were maltreated as children also are at increased risk for experiencing difficulties with self-regulation and moral development as adults, which may contribute to them becoming maltreating parents. The absence of being able to learn positive parenting behaviors from their own caregivers also can result in the perpetuation of maladaptive parenting. Research also has found that physically and sexually abused individuals are more likely to be young parents, to experience mental illness, and to live with a violent partner. These high-risk behaviors and experiences may place maltreated children at risk for becoming maltreating parents.

Disruptions in the early parent–child attachment relationship caused by child maltreatment can trickle down to negatively impact the individual's sense of self and their interpersonal relationships with their other family members, peers, teachers, romantic partners, and even their own children. Additionally, it is likely that these difficulties in close relationships influence and build on each other to contribute to continued problems throughout the life course. However, although child maltreatment contributes to increased risk for significant interpersonal difficulties, it is important to note that there is not a one-to-one correspondence between maltreatment and maladaptive relationships. Recent estimates suggest that approximately 70 percent of maltreated children do not

become abusive parents. Thus, the experience of child maltreatment does not doom an individual to follow a negative pathway.

Resilience

Some maltreated children display resilience, meaning that they go on to adapt positively to their surroundings and to avoid difficulties with interpersonal relationships despite early experiences of adversity. It is important to identify factors that promote resilience in the face of child maltreatment, as these issues may possess important implications for developing effective prevention and intervention programs. Research suggests that the way in which children view themselves is a significant contributor to resilience in maltreated children. More specifically, researchers have found that maltreated children who have high self-esteem and who feel in control of their actions are more likely to be resilient. Further, research has shown that adaptive behaviors at one developmental stage are not necessarily indicative of resilience at other developmental stages, nor does maladaptation at one stage of development necessitate difficulties at subsequent stages. Since maltreated children tend to experience difficulties in relationships at many life stages, it is important to identify resilience factors and effective interventions across developmental periods. In fact, research has shown that having a positive experience with even one caring adult such as a teacher can serve as a protective factor that diminishes the adverse consequences of child maltreatment. Experiences with supportive adults can help children recognize that not all relationships are hurtful.

Future Directions and Implications for Intervention and Public Policy

In the decades following its initial recognition within the medical community, research on the psychological consequences of child maltreatment has burgeoned. Researchers now know that the childhood maltreatment can exert a deleterious impact on functioning and on relationships across the life span. As research knowledge has become increasingly sophisticated, however, efforts to apply this knowledge to the formulation of social

policies on behalf of victims of maltreatment have been much slower to emerge. It is clear that simply stopping maltreatment once it has occurred is not sufficient to ameliorate its negative developmental consequences. Although researchers possess information on the effectiveness of various treatment approaches, most of this knowledge pertains to interventions directed at physical and sexual abuse. Efforts must be increased to develop and evaluate interventions for children who have experienced neglect and emotional abuse. In addition, even though empirically supported treatments are available, they are not consistently provided in settings that are most likely to treat low-income, maltreated children. It is critical that efforts be facilitated to export scientifically supported interventions into practice in therapeutic and school settings, as this will ensure that children most in need of these services can attain them.

Over the past several decades, attention has been increasingly directed toward understanding the neurobiological correlates and consequences of maltreatment. However, too few studies have examined psychological and neurobiological functioning in tandem. Animal models have provided evidence that early-occurring postnatal abuse and neglect can affect behavioral and neuroendocrine responsiveness, gene expression, brain structure and function, and neurochemical markers, as well as the development of processes that have been associated with the emergence of psychiatric disorders. Investigations that have been conducted with maltreated children have begun to reveal relations between the regulation of cortisol, a stress hormone that is activated in response to acute trauma, and psychopathology. Research conducted at multiple levels of analysis is increasingly important for informing policies and interventions on behalf of victims of child maltreatment.

Because there is continuity between the quality of early caregiving relationships and future relationship functioning, early intervention and prevention programs are essential for promoting positive representations of self and others in children's earliest relationships. Preventive interventions directed toward the amelioration of difficulties in the attachment relationships of maltreated children have been developed and have been found to be effective. It is imperative that such prevention efforts be more widely available

so that the suffering associated with child maltreatment can be assuaged.

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See also Abuse and Violence in Relationships; Conflict, Family; Families, Intergenerational Relationships in; Family Relationships in Childhood; Parent-Child Relationships

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CHILDREN'S PEER GROUPS

Peer groups are a ubiquitous phenomenon of childhood. As soon as, and probably before, children begin to walk, they take special interest in peers of

a similar age. In all cultures and ethnic groups, children spend considerable time with peers, and it is taken for granted that peer experiences foster development and psychosocial adjustment. This entry distinguishes different kinds of peer groups and their measurement and outlines strategies for studying their developmental influences.

Forms of Peer Groups

Peer groups come in many forms. A broad distinction is whether groups are culturally and institutionally assigned or formed by children themselves. The term *peer group* is often used to describe assigned groups, that is, collections of children who are brought together in institutionalized settings. Examples of assigned groups are classrooms, work groups, teams, or clubs that are organized by adults.

Assigned groups are very different from natural self-selected groups that children voluntarily and spontaneously create by themselves. Such groups exist as *social crowds*, *friendship cliques*, or *social networks*. These groups are comprised of children who belong to specific social categories, share emotional bonds, or interact frequently with one another. Their labels highlight specific characteristics of the different groups in terms of cohesiveness, interpersonal closeness, and interconnectedness of interaction patterns.

Self-selected groups sometimes refer to *social categories*, defined by similarities among members in terms of personal characteristics, reputational attributes, or aspirations. Examples are social crowds of “brains” or “jocks” or groups of children who are “rejected” or “neglected” in a setting. Members of such groups do not necessarily interact with one other and sometimes do not even know each other.

In contrast, *affiliation groups* consist of peers who have chosen each other among available candidates, interact on a regular basis, and often share emotional bonds. Examples are groups of friends or social networks of peers who undertake joint activities. These groups differ from work groups, gangs, or clubs because there is usually no formal goal for the group other than to feel close and to share experiences. The groups tend to be overlapping and fluid; members are free to leave, and new

candidates can join at any time. Because membership is determined by children themselves, researchers are skeptical about the extent to which traditional findings on experimentally or institutionally assigned groups are applicable.

Measurement

Measurement strategies in research are closely tied to the nature of the different groups. When groups are culturally or institutionally assigned, there is no problem with identifying groups; the members can be listed by the adults who assigned them, and the groups are distinct and stable. Measures capture how such groups develop social structures and group norms, how they differ from other groups, and how members interact with one another.

Identification of Natural Groups

When natural groups are of interest, members need to be identified. Children usually are the source of this information. One strand of research focuses on social categories, following Jacob Moreno's Sociometric Method and Kurt Lewin's Field Theory. Sociometric groups of popular, rejected, neglected, or controversial children are identified from nominations of “most-liked” and “least-liked” peers, usually by transforming nominations into scales of social preference and social impact. Social crowds are defined as prototypical groups of, for example, “nerds,” “jocks,” or “burnouts,” and identified via peer nominations or self-referrals.

In order to identify affiliation groups, actual ties between individuals need to be captured. Following Moreno's Sociometry, the two main approaches focus on friendship cliques or on networks of children who regularly interact with one another. Friendship approaches assume that interpersonal closeness is the most important characteristic; children are asked to nominate their friends in a classroom or grade. Reciprocity of nominations is seen as the defining feature, often supplemented by ratings of relationship quality. Clusters of friends are identified as cliques, typically, using graph-theoretical strategies: Groups need to be larger than dyads, friends of a friend are also considered friends, every member of a group can be reached

by every other member at least through an indirect path, friendships not embedded in groups are excluded, and structures are accepted as groups if they do not fall apart when one tie is removed.

Social network approaches assume that social interactions are a group's defining characteristic; close relationships may or may not emerge from interactions. Because of skepticism about children's self-reports (e.g., self-enhancement biases), observational strategies are preferred. Children are either directly observed, or child participant observers nominate the peers whom they frequently see interacting in groups (sociocognitive mapping). Groups are identified via cluster analyses, correlational and factor analytic techniques, or comparisons of conditional membership probabilities (if X has a group, is Y a member?) with unconditional probabilities. Often, co-occurrence patterns are inspected to distinguish central groups (and central individuals within groups) from less central groups (and peripheral members).

Group Profiles

Once group members are identified, the second challenge is to capture the features of groups that influence development. Traditionally, attention has focused on structural aspects like size, cohesiveness, within-group similarity, or gender differences. However, structural properties say little about groups' psychologically active features. As indices of groups' psychological characteristics, studies have used profile scores of key variables in the form of member averages (e.g., of classroom behavior). These scores have interindividual variability when they are individually created for each member. Thus, children's experiences are assumed to differ even within the same group (e.g., a girl in a group of boys is in a group of the opposite gender, while each boy is in a mixed-sex group). Profile scores make it possible to examine group characteristics as antecedents of individual members' developmental change over time.

Influence Processes in Natural Peer Groups

The most challenging questions for peer research concern the functions of peer groups in shaping development. Children who are liked by peers,

who belong to well-adjusted crowds, or who have high-quality friendship cliques or interaction networks, all tend to do better socially and academically. The question is whether this is because peers influence adjustment because children who do well tend to affiliate with other highly functioning peers, or because good peer relationships and good functioning are both caused by a common third variable (e.g., quality parenting). Empirical data support all three explanations.

Robert Hinde has argued that children's peer experiences need to be distinguished according to the levels of complexity at which they are constituted; influence processes may differ by level. Individuals bring to peer interactions their personal dispositions, social orientations, and skills. These characteristics are played out in interactions with peers, who themselves bring their own characteristics. Many interactions are embedded in long-term relationships that shape interactions. Finally, relationships are embedded in social groups that are defined by relationships and interactions among members, by emergent properties such as group norms or cultural conventions, and by various forms of organization and structure, in the groups as well as in the larger setting (e.g., social hierarchies, levels of cohesiveness).

Researchers have pointed out that failure to distinguish these levels can lead to confounding of different kinds of social influences. Children who are rejected by their classmates can nevertheless have friendships and be central members of peer groups; children's friendship cliques do not necessarily include the same peers or cover the same activities as their interaction networks; members of the same social crowd may or may not have relationships or social interactions with one another. Hence, even though indicators of peer experience from different levels are generally associated with individual functioning, it is likely that the processes of social influence underlying these connections differ at the different levels.

Group Selection

Researchers studying the effects of peer groups sometimes neglect processes of selection. Natural groups exist only because children have chosen each other. Most models, including social-learning-based "shopping" models, Social Comparison

Theory, and close-relationship models, assume that groups form based on similarity. This has also been called *homophily*, *mesh*, *assortativeness*, or *synchrony*. The term synchrony is noteworthy because it highlights that selection processes continue after a group is formed; over time, children who do not remain in synchrony with their group drop out.

Studies of natural groups consistently show homogeneity on a variety of attributes (e.g., orientation to school, academic aspirations, tendencies for school drop-out, prosocial and problem behavior). Although similarity is often seen as the result of member influences, this is not necessarily so; groups are formed based on similarity and, often, peers stay with a group only as long as they remain in synchrony. This is different from experimentally assigned groups; when members are randomly assigned, member convergence necessarily implies influence through group interactions.

Social Influence in Natural Groups

Group influences are considered *socialization processes*. The traditional understanding of socialization is that influences are unidirectional, from a socialization agent to a child, and that they produce conformity. In natural peer groups, however, the socialization agents are other children, similarity already exists in many features when groups are formed, and the groups are fluid and overlapping. Such groups may not necessarily increase conformity. Theoretically, it seems hard to reconcile beliefs that intimate relationships support individual development with expectations that they act as a social mold that enforces group conformity. Instead, peer groups may foster autonomy and self-determination and may allow children to enjoy activities that they would not enjoy (as much) by themselves.

New strategies to examine peer socialization focus on changes within children. Because natural groups are self-selected, developmental influences are examined over and above initial member similarity. In friendship groups, changes in children have been found to be related to the make-up of their groups in terms of onset of deviant behaviors, in terms of academic aspirations, as well as attitudes and behavior. In interaction networks, similar patterns suggest that peer groups can lead

children to become more different from one another (i.e., the so-called Matthew Effect: Children with well-adjusted peers tend to improve over time, whereas children with less-adjusted peers tend to decline). Overall, influences of actual peer groups on changes in children, when members are independently identified and measured, appear to be smaller than concurrent correlations would suggest. Some researchers have become skeptical about whether peer group effects are larger than influences from parents or teachers. Only in specific subgroups of highly gifted, at-risk, socially secluded, or problematic children are there indications that influences may be substantially larger.

Gender Differences

Gender differences in peer groups are manifold; because children's groups tend to consist of same-sex peers, differences in group averages parallel individual gender differences. For example, on average, boys' groups seem less well-adjusted in school. However, there is much variation within each gender, and this variation often is larger than differences between genders. In addition, girls' groups are often smaller and more intimate, whereas boys' groups are more activity-based and sometimes less stable over time. On the one hand, this paints a positive picture of girls' peer relationships. However, increased intimacy comes at a cost when peer groups break up over school transitions or parental relocation. For example, girls show a marked drop in self-esteem when they enter high school, and this may be related to losses of intimate relationships and to struggles with peer group (re)integration.

At the same time, the exact nature of gender differences is not clear. Despite differences in mean levels of many variables, some authors suggest that not all gender-specific interactions magnify gender differences. It is possible that the core processes of peer group selection and socialization operate in a similar manner for boys and girls. Thus, even though girls select mainly girls (and boys select boys) as members of their groups, both do so according to their similarity with available candidates. Likewise, boys' and girls' peer groups influence their members toward gender-typical behavior, but the mechanisms and magnitude of socialization influences may nevertheless be quite similar.

For example, some studies have shown that, although girls are socialized to be more engaged in school than boys, peer groups of both genders shape their members' engagement through attention and reinforcement in daily interactions in the classroom.

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See also Friendships in Childhood; Reciprocity, Norm of; Rejection; Socialization; Socialization, Role of Peers; Social Networks; Sociometric Methods

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CLOSENESS

Interpersonal closeness covers a multitude of relationship circumstances. It may be physical closeness, as in a packed subway car where people stand cheek by jowl to each other, with their sense of personal space being violated. People may be close in the sense of kinship or close in geographical space or in psychological warmth and supportiveness. In

organizations or communities, people may be close in the sense that few steps or links are required to communicate with each other. Finally, people may be close in the sense of having an impact on each other's lives. Traditionally, these effects are considered positive, involving support in practical and emotional ways, but the impact may be negative if closeness is associated with conflict, harm, or betrayal. The focus of this entry is on interpersonal closeness in the last sense—of the ways in which people have an impact on each other's everyday lives and the personal feelings associated with such closeness. This entry examines the three major traditions of conceptualizing closeness—from an interpersonal impact framework developed by Ellen Berscheid and her associates, from a personal sense of closeness developed by Arthur Aron and his colleagues, and from a layperson's intuitive sense of closeness.

Closeness Analyzed in Terms of Personal Impact

Interpersonal closeness has three distinct and important characteristics: First, it is a feeling of positive connectedness to one or more other persons. Second, it is an attitude embodying the same feelings of closeness and extending over a significant time period. And third, closeness may refer to the behavioral patterns that engender closeness. In this case, closeness presupposes the ability to interact regularly either face-to-face or via electronic means. Berscheid and her colleagues took the idea that when people are close they tend to have an impact on each other because they are interdependent—what person A does almost of necessity has an impact on what person B experiences and is likely to do and vice versa. Berscheid and colleagues asked the question, How does one best get at this kind of behavioral impact on feelings of closeness? They came up with three answers. They asked about the *frequency* of doing things together, the *diversity* or number of different things done, and the judgment of the *strength of impact*. Although each of these may affect felt closeness, they are not the same thing, and assessing each dimension separately seemed an important step to take. Berscheid and her colleagues named the inventory the Relationship Closeness

Inventory (RCI). Their research, in several samples, established that diversity and frequency were somewhat more strongly correlated with each other than with judged strength of impact and that both diversity and strength were modestly predictive of enduring relationships among romantic couples. By combining all three aspects of measured closeness into a single index, researchers have been able to achieve a substantial predictiveness of relationship endurance among both women and men. The RCI is one of the standard instruments used in the field by researchers interested in assessing degree of closeness and its implications.

The Personal Interconnectedness View of Closeness

Not long after the work on the RCI was completed, Arthur and Elaine Aron proposed that the RCI could be supplemented by a novel but simple measure of the degree to which two (or more) persons feel themselves to be included in each other's worlds or have a sense of being interconnected with each other. A series of seven sets of two circles (or triangles) is presented to members of a couple, and each selects the pair that corresponds to their degree of felt inclusion in each other's worlds. Circles that are merely touching but not overlapping at all represent acquaintances. Those in which the circles have substantial degrees of overlap would be indicative of including each other in one's worlds and, hence, of being especially close. Total overlap of circles would indicate a complete absorption of self and other into a oneness. The Arons gave the scale the name pictorial Inclusion of Other in the Self Scale (IOS). In an ingenious set of seven studies, they established that the IOS brought a distinct and important contribution to the measurement and predictive power of closeness measures. One important conclusion of their several studies was that it is necessary to distinguish the concepts of felt or subjective closeness from the concept of behavioral closeness as measured by the RCI. Even though the RCI was initially developed by having participants select their closest relationships, it is not primarily a measure of felt closeness. The IOS relates both to the subjective sense

of closeness as well as to the behavioral sense of closeness assessed by the RCI. The IOS was a better predictor of a 3-month relationship stability than the RCI, but they both contributed strongly to the felt distress a person would have if the relationship were to break up. An interesting gender difference came to light in these studies. For men, the longer they are together with their wives, the greater their closeness—both as measured by the IOS and the strength component of the RCI—but not for women. This finding fits with data suggesting that women form friendship and romantic bonds more quickly than men, but no firm interpretation has been provided.

In a study of the personal meaning of IOS responses, participants spontaneously mentioned feelings of "connectedness" as the primary theme. In ratings of the meaning given to the IOS, "union" and "closeness" were the most strongly endorsed.

The Lay Sense of Closeness

Much of the important and informative research on this topic has proceeded from the position that people know what they mean by closeness and can be trusted to give informative and reliable reports on their felt closeness to the people in their worlds. In the Arons' studies, the lay sense of closeness was related about equally both to the IOS and to the RCI strength measures. It also had a modestly positive relationship both to friendship and romantic relationship longevity (among men).

An especially useful application on this position has been incorporated into several uses of the Rochester Interaction Record (RIR), in which people report on qualities of their personal interactions over periods of 1 to 2 weeks. Because of its ability to get at the fine-grain detail of daily interactions and to give insights into factors that are influential in the development and the processes of personal relationships, the RIR has become a widely used procedure. In the context of these studies, one takes each interaction (of any significant time period) that one has had through the day and rates the degree to which it had several characteristics such as closeness, excitement, satisfaction, conflict, attraction to the other, enjoyment, and so on.

Implications of Feeling or Being Close to Others for That Relationship

Intimacy and Closeness

To be close is, potentially, to be intimate in the sense that partners have shared personal information, know secrets about each other, and could hurt each other with the information held. There are two contexts in which closeness does not always involve intimacy. Within families, children and relatives tend to have spheres of information that are treated as not available for sharing, as it is none of the other's business. It is one of the marks of adolescence that, at some point, sons and daughters will stop sharing everything that they think and do with their parents. Likewise, parents often keep certain aspects of family and adult life hidden from their children. For some families, the hidden areas involved sexuality and physical intimacy; for others, family finances; and for others, the "black sheep" in the family tree, who, if known, would bring shame on the family. The discovery of some of these secrets in early adulthood is a common theme of coming of age novels or autobiographical works.

The Dark Side of Closeness

When one's partner or a family member tries to get too close so that their questions, comments, and even their physical presence can seem intrusive, one kind of "dark" closeness exists. Sensitivity to the possibilities of intrusive closeness is a characteristic of attachment avoidance, but real world cases exist in which the partner lacks a sense of appropriate boundaries and violates his or her partner's world. These violations are harmful to relationship satisfaction and stability.

The other context where closeness does not entail intimacy occurs when personal relationships are embedded in broader business or political organizations. In these circumstances, personal information is potentially a basis of personal power, and there is an incentive for even very close friends to be guarded in what they share. They cannot prevent the observation of personal information that arises from everyday interaction, but they may choose to remember that anything said, even in privacy, can come back to haunt the

speaker. A relevant maxim is that friends come and go—enemies accumulate.

In these broader contexts, closeness sometimes has a tactical use. When Mario Puzo's *Godfather* character says, "Keep your friends close and your enemies closer," he explicitly states the tactical use of closeness as a form of social control. As historian Doris Kerns has shown, Lincoln was a master of the tactical use of closeness when he placed his many rivals for the presidency in his cabinet, where he could watch their political moves closely.

Closeness and Marital Quality

The sense of physical and emotional closeness is typically related to the partner's mutual marital happiness and satisfaction, but a few interesting variations have been found. In examining the role of two personality traits—attachment security—insecurity and neuroticism—in marital quality, researchers found that couples agreed highly in their RIR ratings of closeness and that women's rating were more sensitive to personality variations and the effects of daily stressors. In this large study of couples, men felt close whether their attachment style was secure or not and whether neurotic or not. In contrast, women with either high degrees of attachment insecurity or neuroticism felt less close to their partners and had lower marital satisfaction.

Cultural Variations in the Forms of Closeness

The acceptable and typical forms of physical closeness to one's children vary by cultural heritage. Examples include beliefs about the benefits and limitations of certain practices regarding holding a child who cries, sleeping with one's children, and nudity among children. An interesting study of these issues has been conducted by an interdisciplinary team led by Fred Rothbaum at Tufts University. Conducting detailed interviews with 20 fathers and mothers each from European-American and Chinese-immigrant-American origin, they found that European Americans sleep in the same room with a child much less often than Chinese-immigrant parents and that to European Americans, nudity at home was acceptable but not to Chinese immigrants. Physical closeness clearly

had different psychological implications as a function of culture. The Chinese immigrant Americans placed an emphasis on harmony within the family; physical closeness fostered inhibition of emotional expression, adherence to correct values, and the acceptance of hierarchy within the family. In contrast, the European-American families emphasized independence and a romantic view of the family. They saw their practices with respect to physical closeness as fostering the distinctiveness and independence of their children, the open expression of emotions, and parental intimacy, pleasure, and exclusiveness.

Children's Relations to Their Grandparents

There is great variation in how often grandchildren get to be with their grandparents. Partly, this is a function of the significant residential mobility variations by geographical regions, such as the greater residential stability of the Midwestern heartland compared with either coast. A second factor that contributes to variations is a function of the relatively high rates of divorce, remarriage, and single-parent families. In a large study in an English village with significant residential stability, weekly or more frequent contact with grandparents was the norm. Family composition (living with natural parents, with one biological and one step parent, or in a single family) made little difference in contact, except for the grandparents related to the parent no longer living with the children. One interesting finding of this study was that the child's felt closeness to the grandparents was almost universally positively related to behavioral and mental health of the children. Children who felt close to their grandparents were less likely to get into trouble (e.g., antisocial behaviors) and less likely to be anxious, be withdrawn, or have psychophysiological symptoms. The sole exception was that closeness to a paternal grandfather in cases where the father was no longer living with the child was positively associated with antisocial behaviors. These cases seemed to be marked by ongoing conflict between the children's parents that spilled over into the child-grandparent relationship. Otherwise, grandparental support and closeness had largely positive implications for the grandchildren's development.

Brotherly Closeness

Kory Floyd conducted a series of studies of issues of brotherly love. In a sample of 59 brothers ranging in ages from the teen years through the upper 20s, he found that both Zick Rubin's liking and loving scales were correlated with behavioral closeness (RCI total score). Brotherly relationships were higher than other male-male relationships in all three dimensions—liking, loving, and closeness. Each of these three aspects of emotional and behavioral closeness had somewhat different predictors. A sense of interdependence was the only significant predictor of RCI closeness; whereas love was predicted by the depth of the relationship and degree of commitment, liking was predicted by the breadth of the relationship and degree of commitment. Brothers reported being less behaviorally close to each other with age. This probably reflects their moving into commitment romantic relationships or moving away for school and jobs. These changes have been shown to reduce daily contact and thus to reduce both the frequency and diversity of the RCI closeness dimensions.

Closeness and Conversational Qualities

How does felt closeness influence the conduct of conversations among friends, acquaintances, and strangers? Gail Hornstein did an interesting study of naturally occurring telephone conversations among women. She secured permission to audiotape all conversations by 10 women and did so over a 2-to-4-week period. She selected 20 conversations each with friends, acquaintances, and strangers and subjected these both to content analysis and to structural analysis. Friends, in comparison to both acquaintances and strangers, covered more topics, were more responsive to each other by asking more questions and engaging in more supportive minimal responses while the partner was talking, and used more complex forms of closings. Thus the emotional closer the dyads were, the more the form and the content of the conversations differed from less close dyads.

Online Communication and Closeness

Insight into how online communication among youth would be related (a) to the development of new relationships and (b) to the maintenance of

existing friendships has been provided by a Dutch team, Patti Valkenburg and Jochen Peter. In a sample of 794 Dutch youth (ages 10–16), 84 percent (665) used the Internet for instant message or chat. Most (88 percent) of these youths communicated via the Internet with their preexisting, off-line friends, but many (24 percent) also explored chat rooms or social network services for new acquaintances. For those who communicated with preexisting friends, the more online communication, the greater the felt closeness to friends and this relationship was mediated by the felt depth of their Internet communications. In these cases, the Internet seemed to facilitate the sharing of experiences and feelings and the sense of really knowing the other. For participants who were very lonely, the Internet was not effective in the development of closeness, either with friends or newcomers.

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See also Communication Processes, Verbal; Friendship Formation and Development; Interdependence Theory; Intimacy; Marital Satisfaction and Quality; Self-Disclosure; Social Support, Nature of

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CODING SYSTEMS FOR OBSERVING INTERACTIONS

People have been interested in and making observations and commentary about relationships since humankind developed the capacity for language. The development of scientifically based and empirically sound measures that allow for the systematic study of dyadic, triadic, or larger group dynamics has a much shorter history, however. Observational coding systems began to be developed in the late 1960s. Observational coding refers to efforts to describe, either live or more commonly from videotaped interactions, observable responses of individuals. What better way to understand how couples, families, friends, or siblings function and get along than to observe them directly? Direct observations have high face validity and are thought to be less vulnerable to confounding influences than self-report questionnaires. This entry provides an overview of how observational coding systems contribute to the scientific study of human relationships and describes some of the methodological considerations in conducting an observational study.

Observational research provides data that cannot be easily obtained from other sources. How people behave may be quite different from how they perceive themselves, and only direct observation can

capture this distinction. As outside observers of the marital or family system, properly trained coders add unique and independent information from that provided by the family members themselves. Observational measures are not necessarily more valid than other approaches, however, and they are not necessarily more objective than other research tools. As with all research measures, choices are made in the development and selection of coding systems, and these choices are informed by the theoretical model or possible biases of the investigator.

What Can Observational Measures Tell Researchers?

The direct observation of behavior as a means of understanding relationships is intuitively appealing. If one wants to know how well a relationship is working, just watch it and see what happens! Arguably, the greatest advantage of observational methods over self-report measures is that they are able to capture behaviors or relationship dynamics that most people cannot accurately describe or do not have adequate awareness of. Examples include rates of behavior, behaviors that are fleeting or subtle such as affective expression, or behavior patterns that are socially undesirable and therefore subject to distortion or denial. Measures of base rates allow researchers to ask questions about how much a certain behavior is exhibited in an interaction. Base rates refer to the frequency with which a behavior occurs within a specified time frame. For example, a researcher might want to know whether distressed couples express more critical comments over the course of a problem discussion than happy couples do or whether the rate of negative comments per minute is higher. Subtle changes in facial expression can result in very different emotional experiences, and the measurement of the mean duration and intensity of positive and negative facial expressions have been linked to behavioral changes in the course of an interaction.

Relationship behaviors that are socially undesirable or complex and difficult to have awareness of as a participant also lend themselves well to observational methods. For example, observational research has identified several patterns of interaction that place couples at risk for divorce or

distress. One of these is called *demand-withdraw*, meaning that one partner's request for change, support, or attention is likely to be followed by avoidance or withdrawal from the other partner. In addition, the probability of hostility or negativity from one partner being followed by similar behavior from the other partner is significantly higher in distressed than in nondistressed couples. Contempt, defensiveness, and withdrawal have been shown in observational studies to be highly predictive of marital instability. It would be very difficult for individuals to report on these types of constructs on themselves with any objectivity. Even for behaviors less subject to a social desirability bias, inadequate self-awareness may make accurate reporting by the participants difficult. For example, self-report is difficult when assessing the frequency of behaviors such as validating head nods, supportive tones, or eye contact.

Observational methodology may be particularly well suited to the study of families, as it allows for examination of relationship dynamics that go beyond the individual level of analysis and even beyond the dyadic level (e.g., parent-child, marital). An important goal of studies of family functioning is to describe mechanisms linking parenting and child development and to investigate the reciprocal and transactional ways in which these effects take place. For example, harsh and inconsistent parenting observed in the lab setting has been found to be associated with and longitudinally predictive of children's adjustment difficulties, including delinquency, drug and alcohol use, and depression. The theory of coercive family processes proposes that antisocial child behavior results from a complex behavioral pattern where parents and children engage in increasingly coercive behavior to "win" compliance struggles. Observational studies have shown that in these struggles, children tend to match their antisocial behavior to the "payoffs" offered by parents, usually in the form of the parent backing down and removing the demand for compliance. Children thus come to learn to avoid compliance by escalating their aversive behavior. Much of the foundation for this now well-accepted theoretical model comes from observational coding of parent-child interactions.

Observational methods are not necessarily superior to other means of collecting information about relationships, but rather, they complement other

approaches such as self-report questionnaires. Self-report measures tend to be most effective at capturing internal experiences such as thoughts and feelings. Observational methods, on the other hand, are often used to illuminate couple or family processes that might explain the development or maintenance of self-reported problems or issues. For example, self-report measures are likely to be most useful in assessing internal states such as level of marital distress or depression, while observations of couple interaction patterns can help researchers understand how depressed mood affects relationship dynamics. Self-report measures also can identify areas of concern such as child externalizing or internalizing problems, while observations of family interactions can help identify important dimensions of parenting (e.g., coercion) or whole family functioning (e.g., conflict, cross-generational alliances, triangulation) that appear to sustain child maladaptation over time. In addition, observational coding can identify discrepancies between self-report data and behavior that can be enlightening. For example, a depressed parent may describe his or her child as irritable and oppositional, but that child may appear cheerful and cooperative in the observational setting when interacting with the other parent, despite appearing subdued or hostile with the depressed parent. These types of discrepancies may help to disentangle some of the environmental factors that affect child behavior.

Level of Inference

The challenge of observational coding is to find a way to reliably rate, describe, and categorize ongoing streams of interaction. The goal is to figure out how to carve up a seamless flow of interaction between two or more parties into meaningful units that can be reliably and validly coded, without losing the integrity and richness of the entire interaction.

Coding systems differ in the level of analysis at which the coding takes place and tend to vary according to the relationship processes that are of interest to the investigator. Some concepts require a higher level of inference than others, while other constructs may be more concrete, focusing on specific behaviors and their sequential ordering.

Coding systems traditionally have been categorized as either macroanalytic or microanalytic, though mid-level coding systems have also begun to emerge. At a very broad level, macroanalytic systems can be defined as involving larger coding units and more inference is required, and therefore, there is more heterogeneity in the coded behavior. Microanalytic coding systems, on the other hand, involve smaller coding units, more discrete behaviors, and hence less data reduction. Microanalytic systems therefore are often considered less vulnerable to bias.

Macroanalytic ratings are often thought to be most valuable for studying behaviors and interaction sequences that are expected to be consistent across time and setting, as well as behaviors that are thought to be meaningful but less frequent. An advantage of macroanalytic codes is that they are able to take into account the larger context in which a behavior occurs, and they also are able to take into consideration the interdependent nature of relationship behaviors. In macroanalytic coding, behaviors are usually rated once for an entire interaction period. For example, a couple might be coded for the degree of negative escalation that occurs over the course of the interaction, or a family might be coded for degree of cohesiveness.

Microanalytic ratings are commonly used to study behavioral contingencies that occur during an interaction. Microanalytic codes allow for very fine-grained analysis of interaction patterns. For example, it might be interesting to know the probability of a particular behavior, such as a blaming statement, being followed by a neutral as opposed to a defensive statement made by the partner. Microanalytic coding typically involves recording the presence or absence of discrete behaviors during brief time intervals (e.g., 6–10 seconds). In a microanalytic system, the largest unit of behavior to be coded might be a sentence and the smallest unit might be a grunt or gesture. Some marital coding systems use a *floor switch* as a unit of coding, which includes a statement made by one partner and the following statement or action of the partner. Other systems code *thought units*, which refer to a verbal response, of any length, that focuses on a particular theme or content area. A disadvantage of microanalytic systems is their expense. It can take 2 hours to code a 10-minute interaction and several months to get coders trained to desired

reliability standards. The time and complexity of microanalytic coding increases notably as the number of participants increases. This may be why microanalytic systems are less common in family research than they are in couples research.

Mid-level coding systems, sometimes referred to as mesoanalytic systems, attempt to capitalize on the advantages of microanalytic and macroanalytic approaches. The time unit for coding is usually every minute or 2 (rather than every 10–15 seconds or once per 10-minute interaction). Event-based coding systems would probably be best categorized as a mid-level coding system. In this case, coding is not based on time units, but rather, certain identified events are the used to segment the interaction. For example, one might code parent-child interactions and their antecedents and consequences that fall into specific categories such as control or teaching events.

Is Observational Coding Ecologically Valid?

A vexing conceptual issue for observational research is whether the recorded data generalize to the real world. For example, the representativeness of observational coding may be affected by participant reactivity or the setting in which the interaction occurs. At a global level, videotaped interactions may be awkward, perhaps because the participants are self-conscious. More specifically, the generalizability of interactions may be reduced if the participants try to create a more favorable impression. Studies suggest, however, that it is hard for family members to “fake good” and that this is particularly true for more disturbed families. Thus, it is possible to observe negative relationship dynamics even when family members are reluctant to display them. Families or couples who do not know how to resolve problems in a productive or respectful manner, for example, are not able to produce smooth, well-regulated interactions just by trying to do so. Settings also may affect the representativeness of the interaction, and home observations tend to elicit more negative behavior than laboratory-based interactions. Less is known, however, about the differential ability of these two data collection sites to predict outcomes over time. Regardless of the setting, however, it is not unreasonable to ask

whether the observed behavior is necessarily representative of what happens in more naturally occurring contexts. Although it is important not to confuse the occurrence of a behavior with its representativeness, the general consensus appears to be that observational methodologies make an important contribution to the study of human relationships by uncovering processes that would otherwise be potentially less well examined.

Kristin M. Lindahl

See also Assessment of Couples; Assessment of Families; Communication Processes, Verbal; Conflict, Family; Conflict, Marital; Family Communication; Observational Methods

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COGNITIVE BEHAVIORAL COUPLE THERAPY

Whereas most couples enter into marriage or similar committed, romantic relationships with the full expectation that they will live their lives together in a happy and rewarding manner, the divorce rate in the United States and many

Western countries continues to be alarmingly high; in the United States it hovers around 50 percent. As a result, mental health practitioners have focused energy on ways to alleviate relationship distress. Many approaches for assisting distressed couples have been developed, yet very few have been evaluated to demonstrate that they actually help couples. This entry describes one of the scientifically based approaches referred to as Cognitive Behavioral Couple Therapy (CBCT) and includes a description of its historical roots, overall intervention strategies, and its effectiveness.

Historical Roots

As the title implies, CBCT places strong emphasis on how partners in a relationship behave, along with their cognitions or thoughts about their own and the other person's behavior. It has its historical roots in Social Learning Theory, which emphasizes that people learn to behave in a social or interpersonal environment such as from parents and family, friends, and society at large. For example, most children observe their parents demonstrate how to treat (or not treat) a partner. Likewise, individuals are rewarded or reinforced for behaving in certain ways in romantic relationships, such as receiving a smile from a partner after taking care of chores. Similarly, a romantic partner might be punished or ignored for forgetting the other person's birthday. In essence, people learn how to behave in both adaptive and maladaptive ways in committed relationships.

In addition, individuals give meaning to their own behavior and their partner's behavior within intimate relationships. For example, forgetting a partner's birthday might be devastating if it is interpreted to mean, "You don't love me." Some people's interpretations of relationship events seem reasonable and adaptive, yet others think about relationship events in distorted or maladaptive ways. Thus, an individual who concludes, "You purposely fell off the high ladder because you don't want to go to the party with me," probably is interpreting the partner's behavior in a distorted way.

CBCT was developed in the 1960s based on these scientific principles of relationship functioning, emphasizing each partner's behavior toward the other, along with thoughts or cognitions about

those behaviors. In addition, strong emphasis is placed on emotions, recognizing that a major source of satisfaction and distress is how partners feel about each other emotionally.

Treatment Strategies

Based upon the above principles, CBCT has evolved as a couple therapy approach that targets partners' behaviors, cognitions, and emotions with a primary emphasis on the current relationship, in contrast to other therapies that place an emphasis on the partners' childhood or early development. When targeting behaviors, CBCT often includes a focus on teaching couples how to communicate effectively because communication is one of the strongest predictors of relationship satisfaction long term. In addition, behavioral interventions include an emphasis on noncommunication behavior such as how to demonstrate small, caring, loving acts toward the other person, along with minimizing destructive behavior such as criticizing the other partner. CBCT also emphasizes that couples must incorporate these new ways of relating outside of the therapy session; therefore, couples frequently are asked to practice what they have learned during the session in their day-to-day lives.

From a cognitive perspective, a number of interventions are applied as necessary. For example, one partner might make distorted explanations for the other person's behavior, such as in the instance of falling off a ladder described earlier. In this circumstance, a therapist would help the individual evaluate whether this explanation is likely and whether other explanations are more plausible. Similarly, one partner might have extreme standards for what a relationship should be like, such as, "You should want to spend every waking moment with me." In this instance, the therapist might help the individual develop a more moderate and attainable standard for how to behave in relationships.

With regard to emotions, the therapist might need to address emotional responses at either end of a continuum, from (a) assisting partners who are restricted in their experience or expression of emotions, to (b) helping partners who have difficulty controlling excessive emotional responses.

Helping individuals who are more restricted learn to express emotions is important not only because it assists communication but also because appropriate expression of emotion is a major strategy for increasing intimacy. Helping individuals who have excessive emotional reactions is critical because strong outbursts of anger or other forms of distress frequently alienate the other partner who likely will either withdraw or retaliate with similar strong negative emotional reactions.

Effectiveness and Application to Other Populations

Well over 2 dozen scientific investigations in several different Western societies demonstrate the effectiveness of CBCT for distressed couples. Approximately 50 percent of initially distressed couples in these studies are satisfied with their relationship after receiving CBCT, and another 10 to 20 percent demonstrate some improvement. It is important to note that other approaches to couple therapy such as emotionally focused couple therapy, insight-oriented couple therapy, and an approach similar to CBCT called Integrative Behavioral Couple Therapy also demonstrate similar effectiveness and response rates. The intervention strategies used in CBCT also have been adapted for couples in other contexts with promising findings, including relationship education for nondistressed couples and couple-based interventions in which one partner is experiencing significant individual psychological difficulties or health complications.

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See also Assessment of Couples; Behavioral Couple Therapy; Communication Skills; Conflict, Marital; Couple Therapy

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COGNITIVE PROCESSES IN RELATIONSHIPS

How people think about themselves, their partners, and their relationships has a major influence on how they approach other people, how they feel about their relationship, and how they act toward their partners. There are a variety of methods and constructs that are included under the umbrella term *relationship cognition*. Mark Baldwin introduced the concept of *relational schemas* as a framework for understanding the cognitions people have about relationships. According to this perspective, relationship knowledge consists of a model of the self (self-schema, or how the self is experienced in a specific interpersonal situation), a model of the other person (partner schema, or how the other person is experienced in that interpersonal situation), and interpersonal scripts for expected patterns of interaction between the self and the other person. This perspective—that people develop cognitions representing regularities in patterns of interpersonal relatedness—may help to understand, organize, and integrate the various types of relationship cognitions that have been studied by relationship scientists. This entry provides background on relationship cognitions and summarizes research linking these cognitions to relationship functioning, particularly in terms of the well-being and stability of romantic relationships.

Attribution Processes

One cognitive process that has been shown to be important for relationship satisfaction and stability is the explanations or attributions that people make for events that occur in their relationship. People are particularly motivated to make attributions for unexpected or novel experiences, negative experiences, and experiences that are personally relevant. For example, consider the situation in which a partner does something negative and unexpected, such as criticize his or

her partner in front of his or her friends or family. In such a situation, the criticized partner may ask, "Why did my partner do that?" The explanation that the criticized partner comes up with is his or her causal attribution of why the event occurred. Attributions are typically studied by presenting people with relationship events and asking them to rate the cause of the event, or the partner's responsibility for the event, along several dimensions. For example, in one prominent line of research, the kinds of causal attributions people make about their partner's behavior are evaluated along the following dimensions: (a) internal reasons (e.g., something about the person) versus external reasons (e.g., something about the situation or circumstances), (b) stable reasons (e.g., something likely to continue over time) versus unstable reasons (something that is transient or time-limited), and (c) global reasons (e.g., something likely to affect many areas of a relationship) versus specific reasons (e.g., something likely to affect only one or a few areas of a relationship). People in distressed relationships make attributions that lessen the impact of positive events and accentuate the impact of negative events, whereas the opposite patterns occur in nondistressed relationships (i.e., the impact of positive events is enhanced and the impact of negative events is negated). For example, people who believe that negative partner behavior is due to internal, stable, and global causes (e.g., a partner's broad and unchangeable traits) tend to be less satisfied with their relationship and exhibit greater declines in their relationship satisfaction over time. Furthermore, people also make responsibility attributions for events in which they judge whether their partner should be blamed for their behavior. Compared with people who are happy with their relationships, people who are unhappy with their relationships tend to blame their partner for relationship problems, viewing their partner's behavior as intentional or selfishly motivated. People who make negative causal and responsibility attributions not only are less satisfied with their relationships but also tend to have less effective problem-solving discussions and behave more negatively toward each other. Finally, it has been shown that the association between attributions and relationship functioning is not due to potential confounding variables, such as personality

(i.e., neuroticism), self-esteem, physical aggression, depression, or measurement procedures.

Relationship Beliefs

Another line of research focuses on the content of relationship beliefs or cognitions. For example, *assumptions* reflect individuals' beliefs about characteristics of their partner and the way that they and their partner relate to one another. Assumptions represent a person's views about the way people and relationships actually are and include beliefs about the partner (such as "My partner is trustworthy") and scripts regarding sequences of events in social contexts (such as the steps involved in forming or ending a relationship). Second, *standards* reflect a person's views about the characteristics that a partner should have or the way that a relationship should be. For example, people often hold standards about how much time they should spend with their partner and what they should be doing during the time spent together. Standards serve as templates against which relationship events and partner behaviors are compared and evaluated. Third, *expectancies* or expectations reflect a person's beliefs about how a partner is likely to behave or about the future status of a relationship. Expectancies often take the form of "if-then" contingency statements such as, "If I am feeling down, then my partner will try to cheer me up." Expectations play a particularly important role in close relationships to the extent that they become self-fulfilling prophecies, which are predictions that become true because they lead people to behave in ways that confirm the expectation. For example, people who expect that their romantic partners will eventually reject them may act in such ways that result in rejection by others. Assumptions, standards, and expectancies can be widely shared by a culture or can be idiosyncratic to a particular individual or couple.

Assumptions, standards, and expectations are not inherently functional or dysfunctional. Rather, they become problematic or dysfunctional when they are extreme, rigidly held, or unattainable or when they are inaccurate in important ways (either as theories about relationships in general or mismatched to the reality of a specific relationship or partner). Dysfunctional relationship assumptions,

standards, and expectations include the beliefs that disagreements between partners are a threat to their relationship, that partners should sense each others' needs without overt communication, that partners cannot change themselves or their relationship, that one must be a "perfect" sexual partner, and that men's and women's relationship needs are radically different. Greater endorsement of these beliefs is associated with lower relationship quality. Furthermore, people tend to be happier in their relationship when they have relationship-oriented standards, such as believing that two people should have a great deal of closeness and sharing, should solve problems in an egalitarian manner, and should be highly invested in giving to the relationship. Finally, greater relationship satisfaction is associated with greater consistency or agreement between individuals' assessment of their current partner and relationship and their ideal partner and relationship.

A second set of general relationship cognitions that have been linked with relationship outcomes concerns people's implicit theories about ideal partners and ideal relationships. For example, research by C. Raymond Knee and colleagues has shown that people differ in whether their implicit theories emphasize destiny versus growth. People who believe in romantic destiny think that potential relationship partners are either meant for each other or they are not, and they emphasize the romantic ideal of finding the right partner. In comparison, people who hold growth beliefs emphasize relationship development over time because of hard work and perseverance. The implicit theories people hold contribute to the meaning assigned to relationship events, thereby influencing not only relationship outcomes but also the way in which people appraise and cope with relationship events, including relationship stressors. For example, early dissatisfaction in dating relationships has been shown to predict breakups for people whose implicit theories emphasize destiny but not for people whose implicit theories emphasize growth.

Memories

Memories about relationships is another important area of research on relationship cognition because individuals' evaluations of their relationships in the

present and their predictions of how their relationships might change in the future are likely to be based, at least in part, upon their memories of the past. For example, research has shown that retrospective reports of relationships differ from how relationships actually develop. Specifically, partners appear to be biased toward remembering the past in such a way that lets them perceive improvements over time. For example, spouses tend to remember declines in relationship satisfaction in the distant past but improvements in the more recent past, even when their satisfaction actually declined over time. Furthermore, as memories of the recent past recede into the distant past over time, it appears that people revise their memories so that they continue to recall improvements only in the recent past. Such memory biases may provide a sense that relationships are progressing and improving, regardless of current levels of relationship satisfaction. Viewing the recent past more favorably than the distant past may also help to see improvements as having taken place recently and declines as having taken place in the distant past. In short, memory biases such as these appear to help people see their relationships as improving, which may contribute to their optimism that their relationship will be even better in the future.

Motivated Cognition

Motivated cognition is a line of research that examines the cognitive processes that allow individuals to dispel doubt and sustain conviction in the face of less-than-perfect partners and relationships. Research by Sandra Murray and colleagues has shown that in general people tend to judge their partners with positive illusions in which the partner is portrayed in the most positive light possible. In these studies, people rate themselves, their partner, their ideal partner, and a typical partner on interpersonally oriented virtues and faults. Individuals' ratings of their current partners are associated with their ratings of their ideal partners, suggesting that images of an ideal partner color perceptions of a partner's actual traits. In addition, people tend to idealize their partners, rating them more positively than their partners rate themselves. Furthermore, individuals are happier in their relationships when they idealize their

partners and their partners idealize them. Idealization also appears to have self-fulfilling effects insofar as (a) people come to share their partners' idealized images of them over time, and (b) people who idealize each other become more satisfied with their relationships over time and are more likely to stay together. Finally, people's motivation to sustain positive images of their partner results in cognitive restructuring processes such as elevating or embellishing the importance of positive characteristics of a partner or by downplaying or minimizing the significance of negative characteristics in a partner.

Working Models and Rejection Sensitivity

In writing about Attachment Theory, John Bowlby proposed that the quality of infant-caregiver bonds influence relationships in later life through the development of internal working models. In particular, based on the quality of early interactions with caregivers, people develop (a) models of the self as worthy or unworthy of love and caring and (b) models of other people as available and responsive or unavailable and unresponsive. As applied to the study of adult relationships, early research tried to assess adults in terms of attachment types or styles that paralleled research on infant-caregiver attachment. More recently, research on internal working models in close relationships has generally focused on the underlying dimensions of anxiety (the degree to which a person holds negative views of himself or herself as a relationship partner) and avoidance (the degree to which a person holds negative views of others). Research on working models typically involves self-report instruments for assessing attachment dimensions. Although a comprehensive review of existing research is beyond the scope of this entry, a large body of research has found that internal working models are associated with relationship outcomes. In brief, this research shows that lower levels of anxiety and avoidance predict better relationship outcomes. Research is also being done to examine the degree of continuity of attachment and working models over the life span and across different relationships.

A cognitive-affective processing disposition that also draws from the theoretical models of Bowlby's

is *rejection sensitivity*. Introduced by Geraldine Downey and her colleagues, rejection sensitivity refers to a disposition to anxiously expect, readily perceive, and easily overreact to perceived rejection. Compared with people low in rejection sensitivity, people high in rejection sensitivity report less satisfaction in their close relationships and their relationships are more likely to break up. On days preceded by conflict, partners of people high in rejection sensitivity experience greater relationship dissatisfaction and are more likely to consider ending the relationship. Furthermore, in a laboratory interaction session, people high in rejection sensitivity behaved more negatively, resulting in greater levels of partner anger after the interaction. Thus, rejection sensitivity may serve as a self-fulfilling prophecy in which people who anxiously expecting rejection perceive intentional rejection in their partner's ambiguous behavior, which in turn leads them to respond with negative behavior that, if unjustified or exaggerated, may elicit greater rejection from their partner, leading to confirmation of their rejection expectancies.

Self-Concept

Relationship outcomes have also been shown to be influenced by self-concept. In general, people assume that other people view them as they view themselves. For example, people with low self-esteem underestimate how positively their dating or married partners see them. Furthermore, self-esteem may serve as a gauge or sociometer that monitors self-acceptance so that feelings of self-doubt alert people to the possibility of social rejection or exclusion, thereby motivating compensatory behavior. In addition, the self-concept serves two important functions. First, people generally seek feedback that enhances the self-concept and allows one to think positively of oneself. That is, people tend to seek out and associate with people who help them feel good about themselves. Therefore, one function of the self-concept is self-enhancement. Second, people tend to seek feedback that confirms or verifies existing self-concepts, as this verification helps to make life more predictable and provides a feeling of security. Thus, a second function of the self-concept is self-verification. For people who have positive self-concepts, self-enhancement and self-verification

work together in tandem: Positive social interaction both enhances and verifies their self-concept. In comparison, the situation is more complex for people with negative self-concepts (i.e., people with low self-esteem). Positive evaluations from others serve to make people with negative self-concepts feel good about themselves but threaten their negative self-concepts, whereas negative evaluations from others confirm their negative self-concepts but make them feel bad about themselves. Thus, these two functions of the self-concept are at odds for people with negative self-concepts. Furthermore, self-enhancement and self-verification appear to differ in importance depending upon the kind of close relationship. Whereas self-enhancement appears to be more important for dating relationships (dating persons are most intimate with partners who evaluate them favorably), self-verification appears to be more important for committed relationships such as marriage. For married people with negative self-concepts, this translates into greater levels of intimacy for people whose spouses evaluate them more negatively.

Information Processing

Much of the research on cognition in close relationships has been conducted with self-report measures in which people rate how much they agree with items representing a particular belief, based on the assumption that people can and are willing to accurately report on the content of their beliefs. A different line of research has focused on how people perceive, interpret, store, recall, and act on information about their interpersonal experiences. For example, research by Susan Andersen and her colleagues has shown that significant others have distinct mental representations that are typically chronically accessible and affect individuals' views of other people. Upon meeting a new person that resembles a particular significant other in some way, the significant other's schema will be activated and the new person will be responded to in many ways as if he or she were the significant other, much like the clinical construct of transference.

Relative to the literature on self-report measures of relationship cognitions, there has been comparatively little research on information-processing measures. However, what research has been done

suggests these methods may be useful for understanding relationship functioning. For example, people classify and organize information in terms of social relationships: Information about relationship partners is stored together, and this is done more for close relationships (e.g., marriage) than it is for distant relationships (e.g., acquaintanceship). Furthermore, when individuals in relationships are given a list of traits and asked whether the traits describe them, people have more difficulty in making me-not me judgments for the traits in which they differ from their partner than they do for traits in which they resemble their partner. This suggests that cognitive processes tend to blur the boundaries between relationship partners and the self. Continued research involving information processing methods should help increase understanding of how people notice, store, and recall relationship information.

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See also Attachment Theory; Attribution Processes in Relationships; Beliefs, Destiny Versus Growth; Beliefs About Relationships; Expectations About Relationships; Idealization; Memories and Relationships; Rejection Sensitivity

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COHABITATION

Cohabitation refers to partners in a romantic relationship who are living together without being married. Although this definition seems straightforward, there is some confusion in the research literature and among people in general as to what specific living arrangements are considered cohabitation. Are partners who have separate apartments but who spend most nights together cohabiting? If a couple first began living together as friends or roommates, are they cohabiting once their relationship becomes romantic? For the purposes of this entry, cohabitation will refer to unmarried romantic relationships in which partners share a single address without having separate residences. Thus, the answer to the first question would be no, but to the latter, it is yes.

Demographics of Cohabitation

The recent decades have seen a dramatic increase in cohabitation in the United States, as well as in Canada and in many Western European countries. The following statistics are from the United States, though many of these trends apply to other countries, too. From 1960 to 2000, there was more than a tenfold increase in the number of cohabiting couples. Further, around 70 percent of couples live together before marriage. These figures coincide with other notable changes with regard to marriage in the United States, including a rise in divorce rates over the past 5 decades (though they have leveled off more recently) and a later and later average age for first marriage.

Many cohabiting couples have children, whether their own or from previous relationships. As many as 40 percent of cohabiting couples have children residing with them, and 20 percent of children born in the 1990s will reside in a cohabiting household at some point while growing up.

Cohabiting Before Marriage: The Cohabitation Effect

Many studies in the United States, and in some other countries, find that couples who cohabit prior to marriage are more likely to have difficulties in their marriages and to divorce. This phenomenon has been somewhat of a mystery for social scientists, and something that is barely believable to the average person. After all, most people, especially young people, assume that trying out living together should improve the odds of doing well in marriage. Yet no study supports this idea. On average, those who cohabit prior to marriage are more likely to divorce, are less happy in their marriages, have higher levels of conflict, and have less confidence about their futures. This association with poorer outcomes in marriage is called the *cohabitation effect*. Like any other area of research, such findings are about what happens on average; there are many couples who would be exceptions to the general trend. Many couples who cohabit beforehand have fine marriages, and many couples who do not cohabit end up divorcing. Yet, on average, the data consistently show a higher risk associated with cohabitation. Although some social scientists expected that higher risks would no longer be found once cohabiting was more widely accepted, the newest studies continue to show the cohabitation effect.

Selection Versus Experience

The fact that the cohabitation effect occurs is not disputed among social scientists. What is debated is why it occurs. There are two fundamental explanations: selection and experience. Selection effects are characteristics of people that make them more likely to behave in certain ways. These behaviors then might be related to a particular outcome. For example, a study may find that eating more celery is linked with living longer. Would this finding suggest that all of us should be on a high-celery diet? Not really. Such a finding would have more to do with the fact that those who eat more celery also tend to have more vegetables and less fat, overall, in their diets. The result would be less about celery and more about the other characteristics of those who eat celery.

There are a number of ways in which people who cohabit before marriage differ from those who

do not. For example, those who do not cohabit tend to be more traditionally religious and are more likely to have parents who stayed married. People who are more religious are somewhat more likely to have successful marriages, and those with divorced parents are more likely to struggle in their own marriages. Thus, people who are less at risk for difficulties in marriage are less likely to cohabit prior to marriage in the first place. The selection perspective argues that such risks are present before cohabiting and that there is nothing about the experience of cohabitation itself that causes divorce.

Does selection explain the cohabitation effect? A number of researchers have begun to question if the cohabitation effect can be explained entirely by selection. If selection does not explain it fully, what else might? One answer found by some researchers is that cohabiting prior to marriage with more partners, or for longer periods of time with one partner, is associated with a change in attitudes about marriage. Essentially, people start to value marriage (and having children) less the more they cohabit. This research suggests that the experience of cohabiting erodes values about marriage and family. In turn, valuing marriage less could increase one's risk for divorce.

Inertia

Scott Stanley, Galena Rhoades, and Howard Markman have suggested an experience-based perspective for the cohabitation effect that provides an intuitive explanation. Based on prior work in the area of commitment theory, they note that no matter what else may be true, it is harder to break up when cohabiting than when dating. It is harder to exit a relationship when exiting means partners have to divide up property or friends, move possessions, break a lease, or give up a pet. It could be as emotionally difficult to break up when seriously dating as when cohabiting, but there are all these extra constraints to breaking up when two people cohabit—especially if neither partner has another place that is readily available. In essence, these researchers argue that there is stronger *inertia* in cohabiting than in dating. In physics, inertia represents the amount of energy it takes to move an object that is at rest or to change the direction of an object already moving. About 50 percent of cohabiting couples break up instead of marrying,

but breaking up is likely harder for them than it is for dating couples.

This theory of inertia suggests that cohabiting might lead some poorly matched partners to marry, even though they would not have chosen to marry if they had not already been living together. There is already considerable evidence for this notion that inertia explains some of the cohabitation effect. For example, inertia suggests that some cohabiting couples stay together because it becomes too hard to break up; those who began cohabiting only after they were already engaged cannot be as likely to marry because of inertia as couples who started cohabiting before they committed to marriage. Some research suggests that couples who cohabit only after becoming engaged are at no greater risk for marriage difficulties than those who do not cohabit at all before marriage. Based on the available evidence, it will make sense to some couples to wait until marriage to live together. For other couples who intend to cohabit, it looks like it is particularly important for the two partners to make a mutual decision about the future before they limit their options through the constraints and inertia associated with cohabitation.

Sliding Versus Deciding

The theory of inertia emphasizes the nature of relationship commitment at the beginning of cohabitation. Couples who are clearly and mutually committed to marriage when they move in together are less likely to experience the cohabitation effect. But how do most couples begin to cohabit? Researchers Wendy Manning and Pamela Smock have conducted extensive interviews with couples who are cohabiting in the United States. They find that virtually no couples talk about the transition into cohabiting. Rather, most slide into cohabitation. They rarely discuss the meaning of the change or their levels of commitment to each other first. Stanley and colleagues hypothesize that, for all kinds of major relationship transitions (e.g., having sex for the first time, becoming pregnant, cohabiting), sliding is associated with more risk than deciding. The paradoxical risks of cohabiting prior to marriage continue to be studied by numerous research teams, which should mean the cohabitation effect will be increasingly well understood in the years to come.

Cohabitation Versus Marriage

Because more couples than ever before cohabit instead of or before marriage, researchers have studied differences between married and cohabiting couples. This comparison is far harder to make than one might think. For example, married couples tend to have been together much longer than cohabiting couples. On the one hand, because most couples tend to experience a decline in happiness over time, comparisons between long-time married couples and cohabiting couples would be biased in favor of showing cohabiting couples to be, on average, happier. On the other hand, couples who make it through many years of marriage are a special group, having survived many difficult and challenging times together. Therefore, samples of long-time married couples tend to include many very happy couples. This is just one example of how difficult it is to properly compare cohabiting versus married couples. Nevertheless, after carefully accounting for the complex nature of this comparison, researchers have found several important differences between cohabiting and married couples.

Generally, cohabiting couples tend to look more like dating couples than married couples on various measures. All other things being equal, individuals who are cohabiting tend to report less satisfaction with their relationships, lower levels of dedication (a type of commitment) to their partners, and more problems with infidelity. They also tend to have more problems with alcohol and depression than people who are married.

The growing trend for couples to cohabit rather than marry, or cohabit prior to marriage, has changed the landscape for how couples and families form. Although most research has focused on first marriages, this phenomenon extends to post divorce unions as well as elderly and widowed adults who may choose to cohabit rather than marry to avoid comingling finances or upsetting family members. There will be much future research on the nature, meaning, and effects of cohabitation because it has become such a prevalent part of couple and family development.

Scott M. Stanley and Galena K. Rhoades

See also Commitment, Predictors and Outcomes; Dating Relationships in Adolescence and Young Adulthood; Marriage, Benefits of; Marriage, Transition to

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COHESIVENESS IN GROUPS

When scholars think about factors that cause people to remain in groups and work to achieve collective goals, *group cohesiveness* comes to mind. There is a general belief that cohesiveness has positive consequences for group processes and outcomes, and therefore, leaders should try to instill

and maintain it. But is this effort really worthwhile? To answer this question, it is necessary to consider how the term *cohesiveness* is defined, the techniques used to measure it, the factors that produce it, and finally, the impact it has on groups. Each of these issues is discussed in this entry.

Definitions and Measures of Cohesiveness

The earliest formal definition of cohesiveness in social psychology was offered by Leon Festinger, Stanley Schachter, and Kurt Back in their research on the operation of group standards. Writing in 1950, Festinger and colleagues defined cohesiveness as “the total field of forces which act on members to remain in the group” (p. 164). This definition views cohesiveness as a force that binds members to a group. Many later definitions of cohesiveness were offered, but most focused on some form of attraction. According to one view, cohesiveness arises from mutual attraction between interacting group members based on their similarity to one another or ability to satisfy important goals. This has been labeled *personal attraction*. According to a second view, cohesiveness depends on how much members like the group as a whole rather than how much they like individual members. Finally, a third view combines the above two ideas by suggesting that cohesiveness is based on members’ attraction to others who possess prototypical characteristics that differentiate the ingroups from outgroups. In other words, rather than being attracted to people because of their unique personal qualities, group members are attracted to those who embody qualities that make the ingroup distinctive. This has been labeled *social attraction*.

Several techniques have been used to measure cohesiveness. Some of these involve monitoring group members’ behavior. For example, researchers have observed various aspects of members’ verbal and nonverbal interactions (e.g., use of jargon and plural pronouns, physical proximity to one another, eye contact). Other techniques involve questioning members about their feelings or perceptions regarding one another or the group as a whole. For example, members are sometimes asked how much they like specific others or the entire group, how strong a sense of belonging they feel, how much they want to remain in the group, how close the

group is, and so on. Several questionnaires have been developed to measure cohesiveness, some focusing on particular kinds of groups (e.g., sports teams) and others focusing on groups in general. These questionnaires vary widely in the topics they cover and the aspects of cohesiveness they assess. Not surprisingly, controversy exists regarding the best means of measuring cohesiveness.

Antecedents of Cohesiveness

Most of the work on causes of cohesiveness has focused on determinants of personal attraction, as defined above. Research indicates, for example, that physical proximity and interaction between group members enhances cohesiveness, though this is less likely if contact is forced by an external agent and if members are initially hostile toward one another, perhaps because of different racial or ethnic backgrounds. In general, members like one another better when they work cooperatively rather than competitively, feel accepted rather than rejected, and are similar rather than dissimilar on such characteristics as religion, race, and values, particularly when these characteristics are viewed as important. Although it might seem obvious that threat to a group would enhance members’ cohesiveness because members are all in the same (leaky) boat and need to work together, this is not always the case. In fact, threat only increases cohesiveness under certain conditions—when it is imposed from outside the group, is widely shared among members, is not blamed on particular members, and is seen as something that members cannot escape on their own. Similarly, it might seem obvious that cohesiveness would be higher in successful rather than failing groups because success produces positive feelings toward everything about the group (including other members), but this too is not always the case. Although the reason that failing groups sometimes have high cohesiveness is not entirely clear, one possibility is that members of such groups need to rationalize their sacrifices. This in turn may motivate them to see their coworkers in a positive light, perhaps by exaggerating their effort on the group task.

In recent years, increased attention has been devoted to the causes of social attraction, as defined above. Evidence indicates that cues that

increase the salience of the ingroup (e.g., intergroup competition) stimulate individuals to self-categorize as ingroup members, which in turn produces attraction to other members who embody prototypical ingroup characteristics. When this type of self-categorization occurs, attraction to ingroup members does not depend on their unique personal qualities (e.g., kindness, sense of humor) but rather on their embodiment of characteristics that differentiate the ingroup from outgroups (e.g., athletic ability in the case of groups that view themselves as highly athletic).

Consequences of Cohesiveness

Several consequences of cohesiveness based on personal attraction have been identified. For example, members of cohesive groups are generally more satisfied and less anxious than are members of noncohesive groups, though cohesiveness can produce distress under some conditions (e.g., when soldiers in cohesive units lose comrades in battle). Cohesiveness can also influence group processes in various ways. Compared to members of noncohesive groups, members of cohesive groups are more likely to communicate with one another, conform to group norms, and react negatively to people who violate these norms. These latter two reactions can have negative consequences if they cause groups to reach premature consensus on an issue and then ignore or punish those who challenge this consensus, as happens in cases of groupthink. This example raises the more general question of how group cohesiveness relates to group performance. In a 1994 review article, Brian Mullen and Carolyn Copper concluded that cohesive groups often outperform noncohesive groups in both laboratory and real-world settings. Moreover, the causal arrow between cohesiveness and performance runs in both directions. Not only does higher cohesiveness produce higher performance, but higher performance also produces higher cohesiveness. Finally, the impact of cohesiveness on performance depends on the group's productivity norm. When that norm encourages productivity, cohesiveness facilitates performance. But when that norm discourages productivity (e.g., because members feel underpaid), cohesiveness undermines performance. In sum, the impact

of cohesiveness on group processes and outcomes is far from simple.

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See also Attachment Theory; Group Dynamics; Interpersonal Attraction; Social Identity Theory; Weak Ties

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COLLECTIVISM, EFFECTS ON RELATIONSHIPS

Collectivism is a cultural syndrome, a network of norms, values, and ways of engaging the world embedded in practices, artifacts, institutions, language use and structure, and ways of making sense of history. A central theme of collectivism as a cultural syndrome is that relationships with relevant others and group memberships constitute the primary unit of society, the foundation of self-concept, and the key values that should govern one's life. Social units that share a common fate are centrally important from a collectivistic worldview, which highlights interdependence among ingroup members and relevant values, such as loyalty and perseverance. These social units can be broadly defined as groups with which a real or symbolic blood tie exists (families, tribes, races/ethnicities, religions, nations, peoples) as well as, in some situations, civic (neighborhood or community) or other working groups.

Within a collectivistic perspective, each social unit feels tangible and real, and group members are obligated to and interdependent with each other. In

this way, group memberships and the relationships they entail are permanent, fixed facts of life that are indefinitely obligating. Within a collectivistic perspective, individuals can only be understood within the context of the groups they belong to and in terms of their connections with particular others. Group memberships are assumed to be stable, impermeable, and central to self-concept. Fulfilling one's obligations to group members and collective welfare are therefore central to well-being, while communicating and pursuing one's personal goals and desires is assumed to be at best a secondary issue. The alternative to a collective perspective is an *individualistic perspective* in which the individual is the most basic unit of society. Individuals are defined by their own attainments and relationships, and group memberships have meaning only insofar as they facilitate the attainment of personal goals. This entry describes theory and research about collectivism and its effects on relationships.

Theoretical Implications of Collectivism: Impact on Relationship, Values, Self-Concept, and Cognition

A collectivistic worldview should have important consequences for how relationships are conceptualized, what is perceived to be of value, and how the self is conceptualized. When perceived through a collectivistic view, a primary human goal is to maintain important group memberships and the necessary interpersonal relationships that group memberships create. This requires focusing on fitting in and appropriately engaging in social contexts. Figuring out what is appropriate requires skill in indirect communication (reading between the lines of communication and making inferences given context, tone of voice, and other cues) and the ability to restrain oneself, not stick out or offend ingroup others.

To maintain harmony in relationships with ingroup others requires a heightened sensitivity to interpersonal contextual cues including concerns for belongingness, dependency, empathy, norms for reciprocity, and occupying an appropriate place within the relationship hierarchy. These relationships require detailed interpersonal knowledge and constant awareness of others, their needs, desires, and goals. Thus, satisfying one's own need

to connect with others may best be met by satisfying others' needs. One perspective on how to fit in and anticipate the needs of ingroup others comes from an East-Asian Confucian-based perspective. From this perspective, individuals are socialized to effectively regulate and control their own emotional displays, smoothing out both displays of negative and positive emotions in settings where either may offend others. Another perspective comes from African, Mediterranean, Middle-Eastern, and Latin perspectives that emphasize ingroup others as important sources of honor. Honor-based collectivism also emphasizes that the self is defined by ingroup others but does not necessarily focus attention on regulation of emotional expression. Rather, in these contexts, displays of anger, hostility, and other strong emotions can be appropriate ways to mend and restore honor. A drawback of research to date on collective worldview and relationships is that it mostly contrasts Eastern (Asian) and Western (especially North American) societies, suggesting that results so far may be limited to a certain kind of collectivism.

Engaging in collectivism-appropriate relationships requires that one's values, goals, and thoughts about the self make sense within these relationships. From a collectivistic perspective, relationships with others are not merely connected to self-concept; they are the central, defining feature of self-concept. Without one's relationships, one would not be the same person. In this way, collectivism is centrally defined by a connection between (rather than a separation from) the self and relevant others.

Indeed, to make sense of gender differences and cross-cultural differences between Eastern (e.g., Japan) versus Western (e.g., United States) societies, researchers have contrasted interdependent and independent ways of defining the self and linked these differences in self-concept to differences in cognitive processes. This research finds consistent cross-national differences in relational styles that parallel differences in perception and cognition, how stimuli are perceived, the sense made of information and conclusions drawn from information as well as what feels convincing and worthy of attention.

Assessing Collectivism and Its Effects

An important early operationalization of collectivism was provided by Geert Hofstede in his

1980 book, *Culture's Consequences*. He conceptualized a single scale with low individualism (high collectivism) anchoring one end and high individualism (low collectivism) anchoring the other. Hofstede identified this factor by factor-analyzing work-related value questions across 65 nations. In doing so, he organized the myriad possible ways in which countries could differ into a small number of specific factors (with individualism being the first and most widely studied focus of attention). Averaged responses were used to create country scores, which he demonstrated were correlated with nation-level variables such as population size and gross national product.

Although Hofstede did not argue that his findings should be assumed to be fixed in time, since 1980, others have applied his results in making sense of their own cross-national comparisons, inferring that observed differences in samples drawn from two different nations are due to differences in individualism or collectivism. Indeed, a large number of country-country comparisons find results compatible with the notion that nations differ in collectivism and in individualism. However, there are three main criticisms of this approach and the studies that use it. First, these studies do not lay out the process connecting country-level differences in individualism or collectivism and individual differences in dependent variables of interest such as relational style. Second, they typically demonstrate that differences exist between countries but do not directly link these differences to individualism and collectivism. Third, by inferring that difference is due to individualism and collectivism, these studies cannot separately assess impact of individualism and collectivism. To address these shortcomings, some studies include a direct assessment of individualism and collectivism (study participants are asked to describe their values, attitudes, and norms). This allows for direct assessment of the link between individualism or collectivism and outcomes of interest such as relationship style.

This approach also can be criticized because collectivism is operationalized as a set of responses to value, attitude, and norm questions. A separate literature has shown that self-reports are highly influenced by the context in which they are asked; the answers one gives depend on what seems relevant in the moment and what is relevant can be due

to contextual cues one does not even consciously notice. For example, when asked to describe oneself, people are more likely to use personality traits when the study comes from an institute of personality research than from an "institute of social research," even though they are not aware of making this adjustment. In spite of this limitation, research connecting self-reported individualism and collectivism with relationship style has yielded important and theoretically meaningful results, consistent with cross-national comparisons. To examine the overall picture of this research, a quantitative synthesis (meta-analysis) across studies was needed to look for patterns that cannot be seen in a single study. Daphna Oyserman, Heather Coon, and Markus Kemmelmeier performed such a synthesis and suggest three important conclusions. Both individualism and collectivism can be assessed. Countries differ systematically on these measures. Finally, individualism and collectivism scores are not related. That is, high collectivism is not necessarily the same as low individualism.

Why might this be? One possibility is that rather than socialize only for individualism or only for collectivism, societies may actually socialize for both but differ in the situations in which one or the other framework is relevant. Saying that a society is high in collectivism would then simply be a shorthand way of saying that people living in that society usually make sense of themselves, others, and the world within a collectivistic framework but could use an individualistic framework if it seemed relevant in a particular context. A clear example involves engagement with outgroup others. Collectivism does not imply that one engages in a connected and related way with all others, just with ingroup others. When the ingroup is not relevant, one is free to compete with others, express oneself, and follow one's desires.

Empirical Evidence for the Relational Effects of Collectivism (and Individualism)

In their meta-analytic review, Daphna Oyserman and colleagues identified 71 studies examining assumed or assessed effects of individualism and collectivism on relationships of various kinds. Assumed effect studies used cross-national comparisons rather than directly assessing individualism or

collectivism, assuming for example, that if Americans differ from Chinese on a variable interest, the pattern of results can be explained by (unmeasured) differences in individualism or collectivism.

Close relationships were studied in 17 studies, which asked, for example, whether individualistic perspective was associated with romantic love, family obligation, and other close relationships. Effects for romantic love were inconclusive. Similarly, felt closeness and obligation to nuclear family are not a simple function of collectivism. Effects are complicated by the fact that felt obligation can also be perceived as part of a chosen relationship, and this seems to be how Americans tend to view their family relationships. Generally, research did not support the notion that Americans have more conflicted family and intimate relations than others but did support the idea that individualism promotes ease of interacting with strangers and more direct communication styles, while collectivism promotes ingroup preference in relationships and different forms of face-saving. Effects were substantial, often moderate to large in size, though highly variable by study and outcome. Study results suggest more freedom to choose interaction partners and lower relationship commitment and engagement with a larger group of less close others when individualism is high, but higher conformity and more time spent with ingroups rather than outgroups when collectivism is high. For example, although interacting with strangers is always more difficult than interacting with ingroup members, Japanese and Koreans report a larger difference than Americans in how they act with ingroup members versus strangers. Americans interact with more people, more frequently, whether individually or in groups, than do Hong Kong–Chinese students.

Another 38 studies examined interactions within and across groups, showing for example that a preference for forming relationships with ingroup others over outgroup others is associated with collectivism. A final 16 studies examined workplace relationships such as supervisor plans to motivate employees. These studies found that American supervisors were more likely to prefer direct communication, individual-level rewards, and tit for tat responses (e.g., immediately reward good behavior and punish bad behavior) rather than respond more indirectly or provide longer-term, group-level

rewards and responses. Here too the average effects of individualism and collectivism on relationships and relationship styles were substantial.

Of course, the question remains whether these cross-national results are actually due to individualism, collectivism, or perhaps something else. Daphna Oyserman and Wing Sing (Spike) Lee conducted a second meta-analytic review to address this question and found 13 studies examining relevant outcomes (relationship style, felt support, closeness, cooperation, and social obligation). These studies leverage prior research, demonstrating that self-reports and behavior are highly influenced by contextual cues, to prime (or to make momentarily salient) relevant active ingredients of either individualism or collectivism. For example, participants were asked to read a paragraph about a trip to the city that either included the pronouns I, me, and myself (individualism prime) or the pronouns we, us, and ourselves (collectivism prime). Researchers found that on average, the answers participants gave to the relationship questions depended on whether they had just circled singular or plural pronouns. Collectivism-primed participants felt more obligated to help, made more prosocial choices, and were more in favor of affirmative action, suggesting that when made salient in the moment, a collective worldview facilitates greater social obligation and cooperation with others.

Nicholas Sorensen and Daphna Oyserman

See also Asian-American Families; Connectedness, Tension With Autonomy; Contextual Influences on Relationships; Culture and Relationships; Emotion Regulation in Relationships; Empathy; Interdependence Theory

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COMMERCIAL CHANNELS FOR MATE SEEKING

Commercial channels for mate seeking and dating are one form of marriage market intermediary (MMI). Sociologists often speak of mate selection occurring in the “marriage market,” by which they mean the system of social and commercial institutions that facilitate courtship. Like all markets, the marriage market attempts to improve the efficiency of searching for information, making decisions, and conducting transactions (which researchers have called interacting in the context of social relationships). MMIs, like intermediaries in other markets, can be understood in terms of their ability to help with one or more of these functions (see Figure 1).

Some MMIs, like singles ads, primarily help to reduce search costs by providing and organizing information about eligible others. Others such as traditional matchmakers or Web sites such as eHarmony.com go beyond providing information and help the single choose with whom to interact. Finally, some MMIs also influence and structure the interactions themselves. For example, many traditional matchmakers provide dating advice along with the introductions. Similarly, speed dating in which clients meet a series of eligible others in rapid succession is popular in part because many clients like the way it structures the initial phases of interaction. Although overt commercial MMIs usually advertise themselves as helping singles find a long-term relationship, even when that goal is not achieved, many singles report secondary psychological benefits from meeting available others and in some cases, report positive interactions with matchmakers or other urban agents.

There is a pervasive myth that either singles use overt commercial MMIs such as dating services, or

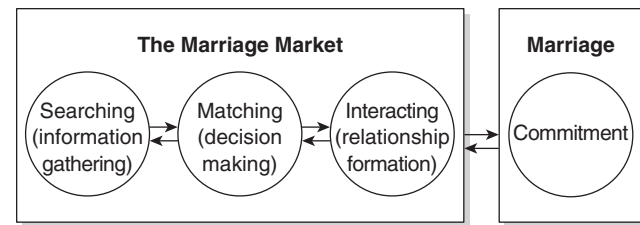


Figure 1 Functions of Marriage Markets

they try to find a mate on their own. This view overlooks the pervasive nature of MMIs (see Figure 2). MMIs can be overt, such as a dating service, or semicovert, such as a nightclub where many customers pay in part for the opportunity to meet eligible others. For example, for many years there were pervasive stereotypes about women attending college to get their “Mrs. degree,” revealing that for some families, paying college tuition for their daughters was at least in part purchasing access to a semicovert MMI. Another distinction within MMIs is that they can either be commercial or noncommercial in nature, and many MMIs are run as part of broader social institutions such as with churches. Over the past 20 years, we have seen a shift toward more commercial MMIs and in some cases, toward more overt MMIs, although semicovert MMIs such as *Facebook* and other Internet social networking sites are thriving as well.

History of MMIs

The growth of commercial MMIs constitutes a third phase in the history of courtship in Europe and in the United States. The long first phase took place prior to the Romantic period, which began in the second half of the 18th century. In this first phase, marriage was seen primarily as a practical arrangement. For most of the population, this

	Overt	Semicovert
Commercial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dating service Singles ad 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nightclub Happy hour
Noncommercial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Church singles event A friend who sets singles up on a blind date 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Friend's party Charity fundraiser

Figure 2 A Typology of MMIs, With Examples

meant a pragmatic partnership for building a home and family, hopefully where love would also be found. For the few elites, it included issues of family prestige and occasionally politics. The choice of marriage partners was strongly influenced by the family of the bride and groom, with the individuals having more or less say depending on the local culture. This social system created inevitable conflicts since, in the words of Blaise Pascal (1623–1662), “The heart has its reasons of which reason knows nothing,” and people on occasion would fall in love—Romeo- and Juliet-like—with partners of which their families did not approve. But since individuals were highly dependent on their families for economic opportunities and social legitimacy, the family usually won out in the end. During this phase, commercial MMIs in the form of matchmakers were limited to occasional use by elites and by dispersed populations such as European Jewry, where traveling scholars or full-time professional matchmakers would help families in small isolated communities find marriage partners for their children.

The second phase began in earnest in the mid-18th century as Europe grew richer and more educated. Intellectual trends such as individualism combined with growing economic independence of individuals from their families began to shift the balance of power away from families and toward singles themselves in the choice of marriage partners. A larger social and intellectual movement, called Romanticism, placed a priority on individual self-expression and saw passion in a positive light as an expression of the life force. The Romantics’ ideas about love (i.e., romantic love) slowly came to dominate European and American social discourse. By the 1920s, a new social institution, dating, was born, and courtship moved out of the parlor where it was supervised by the family and into the public space of the restaurant or movie theater and often into the private space of the car. Very gradually, in a trend that continued from the 1800s to the 1970s, marriage became redefined from a practical social arrangement reflecting both individual and family interests to the formal public recognition of a private romantic love.

Before the Romantic period, commercial MMIs were not widely popular because most people had little need for them. Romanticism increased the potential demand for commercial MMIs by

insisting that marriage be based on love, and thus, people should be highly selective in whom they marry. But at the same time, the Romantic worldview made overt MMIs ideologically unattractive. Romanticism saw love as a supernatural force existing outside of conventional social institutions and cast courtship as an individual heroic quest for life meaning, personal identity, and a kind of terrestrial salvation. Hence, the use of a commercial MMI would profane love’s sacred essence and was the admission of personal failure on a heroic quest. This explains why the use of commercial MMIs was widely seen as “for losers” who were incapable of finding love on their own, whereas this stigma did not exist for other services (e.g., no one says a restaurant is for losers who cannot cook their own dinner).

The third phase began in the 1980s with the rise of commercial MMIs as a complement to more traditional semicovert MMIs. Commercial MMIs first became popular with single professionals in their late 20s through early 40s. Many of these people had moved away from the place where they had grown up, only to find themselves ready to marry, no longer involved with high school or college sweethearts, separated from earlier social networks, and working in corporate environments where dating within the company was discouraged. These demographic changes created a tremendous practical demand for MMIs of all kinds, but their growth was slow because romantic views of love still produced strong stigmas against using overt MMIs and semicovert MMIs were of limited efficiency. Commercial MMIs used two main strategies to overcome this stigma: keeping users identities highly confidential and in some cases, promoting an elite upscale image complete with user fees ranging from \$2,500 to \$50,000. The spread of commercial MMIs was also aided by the fact that their main target market, single young urban professionals (i.e., yuppies), had disposable income and were accustomed to purchasing professional services from house cleaning to personal athletic trainers.

It is important to note that the growth of MMIs began before the rise of the Internet due to demographic changes such as later marriage and transient single populations, but technology acted as a remarkable accelerant on their spread. The first big technological change was the development of

fee-for-use 1-900 phone numbers. Prior to these 1-900 numbers, the person placing the ad paid a fee, usually \$40 to \$80, to place a small, unsigned, classified ad in the singles section of a newspaper or magazine. Interested others would respond in writing via the publication. In this system, the advertiser bore most of the time and all of the financial costs, which kept the number of advertisers fairly low. With the advent of 1-900 numbers, placing a singles ad became free, and the financial costs were borne by the responder who paid a fee to leave a voice message for the advertiser. This generated a dramatic increase in advertisers, which in turn led to an increase in responders, and commercial MMIs started to break through into the mainstream. Thus began a self-reinforcing cycle in which as more people used these MMIs, the stigma attached to them decreased, which in turn led to wider use, and so on, until the stigma based in a romantic worldview gradually started to crumble before the practical benefits that MMIs were able to provide a large population of singles.

The stage was well set for the arrival of the Internet, which has made commercial MMIs mainstream among postcollege singles today to the extent that a report from the Pew Internet & American Life Project finds that “most online Americans who are single and looking for dates have used the Internet to pursue their romantic interests” (<http://www.perfspot.com/docs/96>). Today, the mate-seeking industry, especially online, is big business. Global revenues have been quoted as the “multibillion-dollar love story” and climbing. In China alone, such dating services produced \$11.2 million in 2005 and are predicted to increase to \$81 million by 2008.

Clearly, the stigma in using an overt commercialized service is greatly diminished, despite the criticism that MMIs represent a “McDonaldizing” of romance that is systematizing, rationalizing, and rendering into a calculative mate quest what is supposed to be a magical process. Notwithstanding this criticism, some researchers contest the idea of McDonaldized romance and suggest that commercial MMIs, particularly online ones, are a historical outcome of highly fragmented postmodern societies defined by growing mobility, open-access technology, and uncertainty. As such, commercial MMIs can be considered integral to social life in posttraditional cultures and are more aptly

characterized by “eBayization” where the personal and the market merge into one than by a McDonaldized factory model. Interestingly, although commercial services such as Match.com or eHarmony.com continue to do very well, by far the largest Internet MMIs are multipurpose Internet 2.0 Web sites. Commercial Web sites such as *Facebook* connect people for all sorts of social interactions but include information on gender, sexual orientation, relationship status, and relationship goals, specifically to augment their utility as MMIs for singles who now find commercial MMIs nonremarkable. Whereas the primary social concern about commercial MMIs used to be the romantic stigma that they were for “losers,” today the primary concerns revolve around safety and the fear that these MMIs are so widely used that young singles may display more personal information online than is in their long-run interests.

Research on MMIs

Research on MMIs falls into three broad categories. A large group of studies, rather than looking at MMIs themselves, use data from MMIs such as singles ads to understand mate-seeking preferences. Content analysis of ads, for example, provides natural data for examining mate preferences for partners. Much of this work confirms common observations that when evaluating a potential mate, men place a higher priority on physical attractiveness and women place a higher priority on professional success. A second type of research explores MMIs themselves from economic, historical, or sociological perspectives. For example, Beth Bailey provides a historical overview of dating that shows the prevalence of commercial metaphors in mate seeking long before the advent of singles ads. Finally, research in therapeutic fields sometimes explores the ability of overt MMIs to help specific populations acquire social skills or find a romantic partner. One study used interviews to explore the types of social support that clients received from matchmakers, such as having a confidant, creating realistic expectations, and increasing self-esteem.

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See also Computer Matching Services; Initiation of Relationships; Internet, Attraction on; Internet Dating

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COMMITMENT, PREDICTORS AND OUTCOMES

If people were in relationships only for fun and enjoyment and ended their relationships the moment the joy subsided, there would not be much point in studying commitment; a psychology

of relationship satisfaction would suffice. However, relationships are more complicated: People stay together despite short-term and even long-term drops in satisfaction, and sometimes couples break apart although their relationship satisfaction may be the envy of others. Such phenomena require a psychology of commitment. Generally, commitment represents the motivation to maintain and sustain a relationship, even in the face of adversity. Although influenced by social factors such as making a public pledge or vow, commitment is experienced in a very personal way as an internal psychological state that motivates the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that help a relationship survive and maybe even flourish. Commitment has been described as including an attachment bond, a long-term orientation, and the intention to persist. Typically, it is assessed by asking people a series of questions including an explicit question, “How committed are you to this relationship?” Some important issues addressed by commitment research and reviewed in this entry are (1) whether personal reports of commitment predict the survival of a relationship, (2) what factors promote commitment, (3) what thoughts and behaviors does commitment influence that may help relationships survive, and (4) what is the experience of losing a committed relationship.

Predicting Whether Relationships Last

The sine qua non for relationship commitment has been its ability to predict relationship persistence. Data from thousands of participants in dating relationships (who break up at higher rates in shorter time periods than married people) reveal a strong association between relationship commitment and persistence. However, in these types of relationships, satisfaction is highly correlated with commitment, prompting the question of whether it is truly commitment or instead satisfaction that accounts for persistence. Statistical procedures that allow researchers to compare commitment and satisfaction simultaneously find that commitment predicts persistence above and beyond satisfaction, whereas the ability of satisfaction to predict persistence controlling for commitment is weak at best. Remarkably, one study showed that commitment,

rather than satisfaction, predicted whether relationships remained intact 15 years later.

Despite the ability of commitment to predict persistence controlling for relationship satisfaction, the overlap between commitment and satisfaction has often left the wider research community a little skeptical about relationship commitment. Moreover, there has been some suggestion that the use of self-report methods may inflate the degree of overlap because people often use their general evaluation of a relationship as positive or negative (satisfaction) to guide answers to other relationship questions (such as commitment): "If the relationship is good, then I must be committed to it." Prototype analyses of lay conceptions have established that, although commitment and satisfaction are indeed overlapping constructs, they are nevertheless distinct. The challenge for research has been to find ways to disentangle commitment from satisfaction in order to learn more precisely how each of them influences relationships.

One strategy to address the commitment-satisfaction overlap has been to identify or induce experimental situations that provide a stress test of the relationship. The idea is that when the relationship is not easy to maintain, a person may think more carefully about the relationship and ask, "Even though this is not a lot of fun right now, am I prepared to stick with it and work at it?" Alternatively, when faced with a relationship transition, a person faced with an uncertain relationship future may ask, "Even though the relationship is great right now (high satisfaction), am I committed enough to sacrifice a school or job opportunity to move to another city with my partner?" One naturally occurring stress test of commitment occurs when a person leaves home and dating partner to attend a university. In such a context, commitment and satisfaction are weakly correlated, and commitment predicts relationship persistence better than does satisfaction.

Mindset theory suggests that turning points in a relationship such as these might induce a deliberative mindset in which a person evaluates a goal in a relatively impartial manner, weighing the pros and cons of potentially achieving personal or relationship goals. Once a person commits to a course of action in a relationship, the individual has a more implemental mindset, shifting attention to thoughts of how to achieve those goals. In a test of

mindset theory, judgments of relationship commitment made in a deliberative mindset predicted relationship persistence, whereas judgments of relationship commitment in an implemental mindset did not predict persistence. Subsequent research showed that perceptions of a partner's commitment are more accurate in predicting relationship survival when made in a deliberative mindset. Similarly, personal predictions about how long one's relationship will last more accurately forecasts the future survival of the relationship when made in an experimentally induced deliberative mindset than an implemental mindset. Deliberation may be uncomfortable because it embraces uncertainty and because it is often tempting to skip or abbreviate deliberation. However, the accuracy of relationship forecasts is improved by engaging in deliberation.

Factors That Promote Commitment

Satisfaction may be one important factor promoting commitment, but it is not just a matter of how high one's satisfaction is; it is also necessary to consider how much satisfaction fluctuates. A person who consistently feels fairly satisfied may be more committed to a relationship than a person with the same average level of satisfaction but who experiences lots of highs and lows. Fluctuations in satisfaction are associated with decreased commitment and relationship survival, independent of average levels of satisfaction.

Most perspectives on commitment conceptualize two sets of factors that promote commitment: forces that draw people to a relationship and forces that keep people from leaving. These approach and avoidance aspects of commitment were originally described as attractions and barriers. Subsequently, the Investment Model of Commitment used Interdependence Theory to specify attractions and barriers. Attraction depends on the difference between rewards and costs relative to one's personal expectations, summarized as the level of relationship satisfaction. This means that Harry's rewards, for example, may exceed his costs more than Sue's rewards exceed her costs; but if Harry has much higher expectations, he would still be less satisfied and consequently less committed than Sue.

On the barriers side, the lack of alternatives motivates a person to stay in a relationship. Moreover, the level of investment in the relationship is a barrier to leaving because investments become losses once the relationship ends. For example, time and energy invested in a relationship are lost.

In addition to the common two-factor approach to commitment, it has been suggested that there may be an important third element distinct from attractions and barriers. A person may be committed to a relationship because it reflects personal values and has become a source of meaning and identity for the individual. These variables have been associated with what has been termed *moral commitment*, and there is evidence that moral commitment does better than satisfaction-based commitment in predicting relationship persistence. The role of meaning and values in relationship commitment may explain why relationship commitment can effectively protect individuals from an existential fear of death. Historically, religion has offered the hope of literal immortality in response to the reality of physical mortality. Theorists have posited that romantic relationships in the modern era have assumed some of the psychological functions of religion in providing a sense of meaning and purpose to one's existence.

One complexity of moral commitment is that it may be motivated either by personally embraced values that reflect one's identity or by other people's values that one feels some pressure or guilt to endorse. In recent years, research has shown that identifying with a relationship and thinking in terms of "we" rather than "you and I" may be a critical component to commitment. Although it appears that both identity and guilt-based motives predict relationship persistence, identity motives predict increasing relationship satisfaction over time, whereas guilt-driven motives predict decreasing satisfaction.

Moral commitment, values, and identity all indicate that commitment is not simply the result of a cost-benefit analysis. This may seem to depart from earlier formulations. However, it is also possible that values could be considered personal rewards. The difference is that these sorts of rewards are likely to be more stable and less volatile than hedonic rewards, and as such would predict greater commitment and relationship

persistence because of decreased variability in the reward-cost differential. Yet calling everything that helps sustain a relationship a reward may mask important differences between satisfaction and values, sacrificing precision and understanding for the sake of simplicity.

How Commitment Promotes Relationship Persistence

Although different theorists have emphasized different models of commitment, researchers have shared the goal of understanding how relationship commitment leads to persistence. What do people actually do that helps keep their relationships going, and can commitment account for this continuity? Seminal work on prorelationship behaviors stimulated both experimental and naturalistic studies on the ways in which commitment influences affect, cognition, and behavior in a given relationship. Many of these studies can be conceptualized in terms of a buffering model whereby relationship commitment protects the relationship in the face of threats from within or outside of the relationship.

One type of threat is partner transgressions, negative behaviors by the partner, such as forgetting to do something that was important to the other partner or revealing something private to others. There are two dimensions of behavioral responses to transgressions: active versus passive and constructive for versus destructive to the relationship. This two-dimensional space yields four patterns of response: voice (actively responding in a constructive way), loyalty (passively responding in a constructive way), exit (actively responding in a destructive way), and neglect (passively responding in a destructive way). Voice might be discussing the problem with one's partner in a clear, constructive manner. Loyalty would be patiently and quietly hoping that things will improve. Exit would be expressing negative emotion and then leaving the situation. Neglect would be sulking or giving one's partner the cold shoulder. A greater willingness to respond constructively (voice or loyalty) rather than destructively (exit or neglect) was termed *accommodation*, and research found that relationship commitment predicted willingness to accommodate.

Subsequent research has demonstrated that committed individuals appear more motivated to assume that the partner's bad behavior was due to extenuating circumstances rather than not caring, and these attributions make it easier to act in an accommodating, forgiving manner. In addition, committed individuals are less likely to even see their partner's behavior as negative. Research found that this perceptual bias works in tandem with accommodation so that when transgressions are moderate in objective severity, committed individuals minimize the severity and do not need to accommodate, whereas for more severe transgressions, it is more difficult to minimize, and accommodation serves as a second line of defense.

Another type of threat often studied involves responses to an attractive alternative relationship partner. This focus is in part due to the prevalence of research on university students in dating relationships, where the availability of attractive alternatives is a common, ecologically valid relationship threat. The first line of defense appears to be a failure to notice or acknowledge alternatives. In addition to reporting less attention to alternatives, committed individuals actually spend less time looking at attractive alternatives in a controlled lab setting. On the other hand, narcissists are more likely to attend to attractive alternatives and in turn are less committed to their relationships.

The second line of defense is to denigrate the appeal of alternatives. This tendency to "devalue" the attractiveness of alternatives has been studied within a broader framework of calibrating pro-relationship responses to match the level of relationship threat. Consistent with research on stress and coping, when an individual has sufficient resources (in this case sufficient commitment), he or she will ward off threats to the relationship, maybe even appraising them instead as challenges. A person committed to a dating relationship would likely find fault with an attractive person of the opposite sex. However, if a person is not sufficiently committed, then the threat would more likely win out and possibly weaken the relationship, as the low-commitment person is drawn to attractive alternatives and perhaps even infidelity. Of course, acknowledging the appeal of an alternative may not always indicate a lack of commitment, as highly committed partners can feel secure enough to recognize the attractiveness of others—as long

as such attractive others do not become too close or viable alternatives. Even among the highly committed, there are limits to the level of relationship threat that can be ignored or dismissed.

Whereas relationship commitment may motivate people to devalue the attractiveness of alternatives, it conversely appears to motivate embellished and idealized views of one's partner. Committed individuals are more likely to perceive their partners to be better than others, and this effect is most pronounced when people are asked to be accurate, or deliberate, about the true merits of the relationship. The idea here is that the demand to be accurate or deliberative threatens to unmask relationship illusions, and committed individuals compensate by exaggerating further their already positive views of their partner.

This perceived superiority or better-than-average effect is a milder version of the relationship illusions effect, a process whereby intimates see their partners more positively than even the partners see themselves. Given the positivity of self-views, this effect is particularly surprising. However, one group of individuals that consistently fails to show this bias is men in dating relationships. It has been theorized that because women identify with relationships in general, they would show a bias right from the beginning of their relationship, whereas men, who generally do not identify with their social network of relationships, do not show this bias. Research has shown one interesting exception to this tendency: Some men in dating relationships come to identify with the specific romantic relationship, which in turn promotes commitment. These men who began thinking in terms of "we" and in turn had high levels of commitment, increased their relationship illusions.

These studies suggest that commitment may motivate positive relationship processes and not just responses to threat. Consistent with this idea, commitment has been associated with building trust and the willingness to sacrifice personal goals for the good of the relationship. To date, relationship-enriching behaviors have been understudied by commitment researchers.

Despite the many ways commitment may contribute to relationship maintenance and growth, it is most critical in sustaining a relationship through challenges and adversities, be they daily hassles, major stressors, or boredom and complacency.

However, if commitment is carrying the relationship for long periods of time without satisfaction, there are likely negative consequences for both personal and relational well-being. Psychological constraints or fully immersed identities can keep a person in a destructive relationship. Processes that help maintain a relationship such as accommodation or forgiveness are agnostic about whether they are beneficial for the individual.

Loss of a Committed Relationship

Despite the numerous processes activated by commitment, relationship breakups occur sometimes despite earlier commitments. This may be because one or both partners became less committed or because the level of commitment was not sufficient to ward off a strong threat to the relationship. Generally, highly committed people experience increased psychological and even physical distress following the demise of an intimate relationship, likely because they have been abandoned by partners with weaker commitment. Given the epidemiological data on relationships and well-being, one may expect that the breakup of a relationship would result in distress. However, in the absence of high commitment, relationship termination is unlikely to have adverse consequences. On the other hand, when a relationship serves as a source of psychological meaning and reflects a personal identity, substantial psychological cost is likely after termination.

Although commitment is essential to relationship maintenance and relationship survival, how can individuals be certain that it is worthwhile to devote their energies to foster commitment? Part of the dilemma when faced with lower levels of negative behaviors or inadequately high levels of positive behavior is how to forecast a relationship future. Are these circumstances stable or unstable? Will the negativity subside or increase? Will the positive behaviors continue to wane or is this just a lull? Is one's partner committed, and does he or she genuinely care about oneself? A deliberative mind-set can help improve the accuracy of relationship forecasts, but deliberation is not without costs: Undue deliberation can paralyze an individual and prevent commitment and action. All relationships involve some degree of uncertainty and a

need for faith. Committing to a relationship is fraught with uncertainty and potential vulnerability. Pledging to devote oneself to a relationship and another person will affect one's life for better or for worse. More often than not, people are better off in relationships than alone, and people frequently recover and adjust following a failed relationship, so it may be worth the risk to commit.

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See also Beliefs, Destiny Versus Growth; Interdependence Theory; Investment Model; Long-Distance Relationships; Love, Prototype Approach; Motivation and Relationships; Trust; Values and Relationships

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COMMITMENT, THEORIES AND TYPOLOGIES

Commitment is a construct at the core of understanding human relationship maintenance. A number of commitment theories and typologies have been offered by social and behavioral scientists over the past several decades. This entry reviews some of these theories and typologies, emphasizing their points of similarity and their differences, and discusses why commitment plays a prominent role in research aimed at understanding the continuity of human relationships. The entry begins by reviewing how theorists have viewed the concept of commitment.

The Concept of Commitment

Commitment has been defined in various ways. At its root, commitment can be defined as intending to continue in a line of action. Thus, relationship commitment may be viewed as intending to continue in a relationship with a given person. The relative simplicity of this definition, however, masks significant differences in how commitment has been conceived by theorists over the years. Some view commitment in behavioral terms (i.e., continuing to do something). Others view it more psychologically, as the subjective experience of relationship continuation (e.g., how one feels about continuing a relationship with a partner). Some conceive of relationship commitment as a unidimensional concept, whereas others emphasize that it is either multidimensional in nature or that there are multiple types of commitment. For example, while some researchers describe commitment as having cognitive (e.g., thoughts), affective (e.g., feelings), and motivational (e.g., intentions) components, others describe several distinct types

of commitment itself (such as moral commitment, structural commitment, and personal commitment). Still others have emphasized the distinction between voluntary commitment (i.e., being committed because one wishes to be) and nonvoluntary commitment (i.e., being committed because one has to be). Although often possessing points of similarity, theories and typologies of commitment primarily tend to differ based on how commitment itself is conceptualized.

Theories and Typologies of Commitment

Early theories of commitment emphasized the positive factors that led people to continue in a relationship. Factors such as degree of love for a partner and satisfaction with the relationship were held to be important elements in keeping people together. Later theories, though not discounting the critical role of positive factors, included factors that prevent people from leaving a relationship, such as societal disapproval of divorce or not wanting to go through the process of starting over with a new partner. Currently, the most prominent extant theories of relationship commitment are George Levinger's Cohesiveness Theory, Caryl Rusbult's Investment Model, and Michael Johnson's tripartite typology. Although these approaches differ, they share some common elements, including the notion that relationships continue because of things that draw people to want to stay with a partner and because of things that prevent people from ending the relationship.

Levinger's Cohesiveness Theory of Commitment

Levinger was particularly interested in understanding processes involved in both keeping relationships (particularly marriages) together and breaking them apart. His Cohesiveness Model, rooted in Kurt Lewin's Field Theory, emphasized the role of two social forces in determining relationship commitment: attraction forces and barrier forces.

With respect to forces that attract, Levinger described two types of forces: present attractions and alternative attractions. Both present and alternative attractions are perceived as yielding

positive outcomes for the actor but are quite distinctive in nature. Present attractions refer to forces that draw a person toward continuing a given relationship. For example, the love one feels for a partner serves as a present attraction to the relationship and helps to sustain it. Similarly, need fulfillment, wealth, and status are all considered to be commitment-promoting attractions when they are present in a current relationship. Alternative attractions, in contrast, refer to forces that pull a person away from a current relationship. For instance, a particularly compelling unattached colleague for whom one feels attraction may serve as an alternative attraction.

Barrier forces are those things that keep partners from leaving their relationship. Levinger describes both internal and external barriers, each of which act to constrain a person from leaving a relationship. An example of an internal barrier is having feelings of obligation toward a partner, which might be rooted in a person's religious beliefs. Leaving a partner would breach the perceived obligation and generate negative feelings. In the case of a marital relationship involving offspring, feeling that children should be raised in a home with two parents may serve as an internal barrier to relationship dissolution. External barriers are forces that operate outside of the person. For example, stringent divorce laws that make it difficult to end a marriage would be considered an external barrier force that serves to maintain relationship commitment. Pressure from friends or family to "stick it out" and "make things work" also can serve as a potent external barrier to dissolution.

Together, attraction forces and barrier forces determine a person's commitment to a relational partner. As both types of forces are dynamic and subject to change over time, commitment may fluctuate.

Rusbult's Investment Model of Commitment

Rusbult's theory of commitment is rooted in Interdependence Theory, proposed by John Thibaut and Harold Kelley in the late 1950s. More specifically, Rusbult uses the interdependence concepts of dependence, comparison level, and comparison level for alternatives as a basis for

her Investment Model of Commitment. The Investment Model holds that commitment is the subjective experience of dependence and is a function of three independent variables: satisfaction level, quality of alternatives, and investment size.

The first variable held to influence commitment is satisfaction. Satisfaction level refers to the relative positivity of outcomes obtained in interactions with a partner. Outcomes are assessed with respect to a person's comparison level for similar outcomes within a given domain. For example, in determining whether one is satisfied with one's current romantic partner, one compares the outcomes received in interaction with the current partner to the outcomes that one has received in past similar kinds of relationships (e.g., outcomes from interactions with past romantic partners). If one's outcomes exceed those experienced in past relationships, one will be satisfied with the current relationship; if outcomes are below those experienced in the past, one will be dissatisfied with the current relationship. If a person has never had a past romantic relationship, he or she might compare the outcomes received in interactions with a new partner to outcomes that he or she has seen obtained by characters in a film or read about in a book. The main point is that past experiences serve to create expectations for a given domain of behavior (e.g., romantic relationships) that are used to evaluate how satisfied people are with newly obtained outcomes in that domain.

The second variable posited to influence commitment is alternatives. Broadly speaking, quality of alternatives refers to the satisfaction envisioned as attainable beyond the current relationship. For example, a person may consider a relationship with the next best available alternative romantic partner (perhaps an ex-partner or someone else to whom one is attracted). A person may also consider nonromantic alternatives to the current relationship, such as the satisfaction afforded by hanging out with friends or by simply being alone. The more compelling one's alternatives are viewed, the less committed one will be to the current partner. If alternatives are not perceived as particularly attractive, one will be more committed to the current partner.

The third factor referred to by Rusbult in her Investment Model is the model's namesake, investments. Sometimes people stay in a relationship

because they do not wish to incur the costs associated with a breakup. Investment size refers to those resources (both tangible and intangible) that one has put into a relationship that one would lose or have diminished in value if one were to leave the relationship. For example, a person may consider the time, effort, self-disclosures, joint friends, and personal reputation that might be lost or damaged upon ending a relationship. An interesting aspect of the investment concept is that it points to how a person may become committed to a relationship not because of positive feelings (i.e., satisfaction level) or a lack of other options (i.e., quality of alternative), but rather because a person may remain committed because he or she perceives that to do otherwise would yield unacceptably high costs. Thus, sometimes a person remains in a relationship even though that person really would rather not. An oft-cited illustration of this can be found in the conventional wisdom that marital partners sometimes remain together “for the sake of the children.” Indeed, children can be considered an investment that helps bind partners to their relationship.

Collectively, satisfaction level, quality of alternatives, and investment size are theorized to influence commitment level. A given relationship may be driven by one or more of these factors, and these factors have been found to work together in an additive fashion to influence commitment. Commitment level itself has been found to be associated with a number of relationship maintenance behaviors, such as willingness to sacrifice for one’s relationship and forgiveness of betrayal by one’s partner. Commitment level has also been found to mediate the effects of satisfaction level, quality of alternatives, and investment size on the enactment of such behaviors.

Johnson’s Tripartite Typology of Commitment

Johnson’s tripartite framework departs from the previous two models in conceptualizing commitment as a multidimensional rather than a unidimensional construct. Johnson specifies three distinct types of commitment: structural commitment, or feeling that one must remain in a relationship; moral commitment, or feeling that one ought to remain in a relationship; and personal

commitment, or feeling that one wants to remain in a relationship.

Structural commitment has four components: potential alternatives to the current relationship, perceived social pressure to remain with a current partner, irretrievable investments accrued over the course of a relationship, and the perceived difficulty of terminating the relationship. In Levinger’s terms, each of these components is held to make it difficult to end a relationship due largely to external constraints. Moral commitment is comprised of three components: the sense of moral obligation not to divorce one’s spouse, the sense of personal obligation to one’s partner, and the need to maintain consistency in one’s general values and specific beliefs. Personal commitment also has three components: overall attraction to a partner, attraction to the relationship itself, and one’s relational identity (i.e., the extent to which a person views the relationship as part of his or her self-concept).

There is clear overlap of many of these components with aspects of Levinger’s and Rusbult’s models. In contrast with Levinger and Rusbult, however, Johnson proposes that the three different types of commitment yield different subjective experiences. Each type is experienced as either originating from within the person or imposed from outside the person. Moreover, each type is experienced as a function of either choice or constraint. Structural commitment is based on factors that are external to the individual (e.g., social reactions) and is experienced as constraining the individual. Moral commitment is based on an individual’s own beliefs; but as morality is a function of societal beliefs, it is experienced as constraining. Personal commitment is based on an individual’s own wishes and desires and is, thus, experienced as freely chosen rather than as imposed.

Research by Johnson and colleagues has generally supported the tripartite typology. How do the three types of commitment work together to influence relationship continuation? Johnson proposes that when a person experiences strong moral and personal commitment, structural commitment is not needed to maintain a relationship. In contrast, if a person experiences low moral or personal commitment, structural commitment becomes paramount in determining relationship continuation.

Why Commitment Matters

Regardless of the theory or typology, commitment is considered an important variable by relationship researchers for several reasons. First, it is considered to be a key motivational variable, with powerful influence on relationship affect, cognition, and motivation. For example, research has found that people who self-report higher levels of commitment tend to think about their relationship in more partner-inclusive ways (e.g., they write about their relationship using more plural pronouns—we, us, our—and fewer singular pronouns—me, I, he, she), and they tend to see their relationship as better than others' relationships. Second, commitment has been shown to relate to the enactment of a variety of critical relationship maintenance behaviors. Behaviors such as accommodation, forgiveness, and willingness to sacrifice for one's partner help to sustain a relationship, keeping partners together through thick and thin. Put another way, people who are more committed to their partners act differently toward their partners than people who are less committed, and these actions contribute to relationship continuation. Third, commitment is a proximal predictor of relationship breakup. Over time, commitment ebbs for those people who eventually choose to terminate their relationship, and thus, commitment level serves as a potent bellwether for predicting the ultimate stability of a given relationship. Fourth, and finally, although romantic relationship commitment has been emphasized in this entry, the theories of commitment reviewed here can and have been used to understand commitment beyond the romantic realm. For example, commitments to a friendship, to an organization, to a sports team, or even to a policy position have all been examined using aspects of these theories. Thus, it appears that factors that lead people to continue in romantic relationships also play a prominent role in keeping them committed to a variety of pursuits.

Christopher R. Agnew

See also Cohesiveness in Groups; Commitment, Predictors and Outcomes; Courtship, Models and Processes of; Dependence; Interdependence Theory; Motivation and Relationships; Social Exchange Theory; Stage Theories of Relationship Development

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COMMUNAL RELATIONSHIPS

In this entry, the nature of communal relationships is described along with behaviors characteristic of these relationships and the interpersonal skills needed to enact these behaviors. Defining communal relationship is simple: A relationship is

communal if at least one partner (and most often both partners) assumes responsibility for the other's welfare without expecting repayments for benefits given or feeling that benefits create debts. Recipients, likewise, do not feel indebted. Communal relationships are ubiquitous and are often (but not always) exemplified by romantic relationships, friendships, and family relationships.

Mutuality and Symmetry of Communal Relationships

Communal relationships are typically mutual with both persons willing to noncontingently benefit the other as need for and as opportunities to convey care arise. Communal relationships also are often symmetrical, with partners assuming equal responsibility for one another's welfare. However, even in mutual and symmetrical communal relationships, enacted responsiveness often will be uneven because needs themselves are often uneven. In well-functioning communal relationships, this is accepted.

Communal relationships can be one-sided in the sense that assumed responsibility for a relationship member's welfare goes only in one direction. That is, one person can assume communal responsibility for a partner who feels no particular responsibility for the other person. The parent of a child so severely handicapped that he or she does not even recognize the parent, for instance, might have a nonmutual, one-sided communal relationship with that child. More commonly, communal relationships are mutual but asymmetrical. Relationships between parents and adolescent children often fall into this category. The parent and child may each assume some responsibility for the other's welfare, but the parent assumes far more responsibility for the child than vice versa.

Distinguishing Communal From Exchange Relationships

Communal relationships were initially differentiated from exchange relationships in the late 1970s by Margaret Clark and Judson Mills. The distinction was a qualitative one based on differences in the norms governing the giving and receiving of benefits. In exchange relationships, benefits were said to be given contingently, with the expectation

of specific and timely repayments consisting of benefits of comparable value. In contrast, in communal relationships, benefits were given noncontingently on the basis of needs. Early research revealed that experimental manipulations increasing expectations and desire for friendships or romantic relationships also increased keeping track of a partner's needs, helping, responsiveness to a partner's expressions of emotion, and expectations that a partner would be responsive to one's own needs. At the same time, those manipulations also resulted in negative reactions to receiving repayments or requests for repayments and led to people avoiding keeping track of individual inputs into joint tasks for which there would be rewards.

A Quantitative Aspect of Communal Relationships

Shortly after proposing the qualitative distinction between communal and exchange relationships, Clark and Mills highlighted a quantitative dimension of communal relationships, *communal strength*. Communal strength refers to the degree of responsibility people assume for the partner's welfare and therefore, the effort and costs to which they will go to benefit that partner's welfare noncontingently. Most people have very weak communal relationships even with strangers. They meet small needs of strangers noncontingently by, for instance, telling the stranger the time with no expectation of repayment. On the other hand, most people have very strong communal relationships with their own children and go to enormous lengths in terms of time, money, and effort to benefit their children. Many communal relationships such as typical friendships fall in between these extremes in terms of strength. Along with the amount of support a person is willing to provide noncontingently to a partner, greater empathic compassion to a partner's plight or greater empathic joy in response another's good fortune serves as an indicator of the strength of a communal relationship.

Communal Relationships Are Not Always Unselfish Relationships

The distinction between communal and noncommunal relationships is not equivalent to a distinction

between unselfish and selfish relationships. A person can choose to form or maintain a communal relationship with a partner for selfish or unselfish reasons. For instance, one might provide an unpleasant elderly relative whom one does not like with communally given care because one feels a sense of duty to do so, would feel guilty for not doing so, and wishes to avoid criticism from outsiders. To give another example, a person may wish to form a new friendship in which he or she is noncontingently responsive to another person in part because this person hopes that the new friend will become communally responsive to him or her (but this person cannot require that as a condition for his or her responsiveness). Such motives include self-interest. Of course one can also experience empathy for another person and respond communally as a result. Such responsiveness is typically unselfish.

It is worth noting that a person also can follow an exchange norm for selfish or unselfish reasons. For instance, although people generally exchange money or goods for other benefits because they wish to have the benefit (a selfish motive), at times people insist on increasing a person's pay or giving them additional goods because doing otherwise would result in an unfair exchange and they truly do not wish, for unselfish reasons, for the other to be unfairly treated. Whereas the motive that drives one to adopt a communal (vs. an exchange) norm may be unselfish or selfish, once the communal norm is adopted, that norm dictates that benefits are provided noncontingently to promote the partner's welfare. It is the adoption of a communal norm for a particular relationship and adherence to that norm that defines a relationship as a communal one.

Contrasting Communal Relationships With Other Types of Relationships

Communal relationships can be contrasted not only with exchange relationships but also with other relationships. For example, noncommunal exploitative relationships also exist in which people wish to obtain as much from a partner as possible without providing the partner with anything of value. Exploitative relationships are truly selfish relationships.

Communal Relationships Can Be Short or Long Term

The distinction between communal and noncommunal relationships is not equivalent to a distinction between long- versus short-term relationships. One can have a very short-term communal relationship with a stranger, as when one provides help one time without expecting or asking for compensation, or very long term, as children and parents often have with one another. The length of communal relationships with friends or romantic partners typically fall in the middle of these extremes.

Organization of People's Sets of Communal Relationships

People's networks of communal relationships are organized hierarchically, and taken as a set, they typically fall in a triangular shape with the strongest communal relationships sitting at the top. At the bottom are the many weak communal relationships they have with many strangers and passing acquaintances, in the middle are a moderate number of communal relationships with people one might call friends, and at the top are a few very strong communal relationships, often with children, a spouse, romantic partner, parents, or a best friend. Responsibility for the self fits into this hierarchy as well, with people feeling more responsibility for the self than for many of those with whom they have communal relationships, but people sometimes feel equal or even more responsible for a particular partner or partners than they do for themselves. A person's hierarchy of communal relationships suggests whose needs will take precedence in the event of partner (and self) needs arising at the same time.

The Nature of Communal Responsiveness

Although early work on communal relationships emphasized the noncontingent provision of goods or services to partners, the nature of communal responsiveness encompasses a broad range of behaviors. When one assumes communal responsibility for another's welfare, that responsiveness may be enacted by providing concrete

help, providing emotional support, encouraging one's partner as he or she strives to reach a desired goal, restraining oneself from enacting behaviors that might harm the partner, including the partner in enjoyable activities, and providing the partner with symbolic signs of caring (as when a person sends cards, provides hugs, or simply makes statements indicating care such as, "I love you" or "I care about you").

Abilities Necessary to Act Communally

Successful enactment of a communal relationship entails two distinct sets of motivations and abilities: one set that facilitates providing of communal care to a partner and a second set that facilitates receiving communal care from a partner. These are intertwined motivations and skills.

To provide optimal communal responsiveness, one must be motivated to adopt the norm (e.g., through empathy or desire for an ongoing communal relationship) and then successfully enact that norm in interactions with the partner. This requires focusing on the partner and having the appropriate skills and fortitude to understand the partner, to accept the partner, and to provide care. Much research now indicates that having a chronic need to protect the self and an attendant chronic self-focus (meaning that one typically thinks of the self and the implications of the partner's behavior for the self without focusing on the partner or what one can do to support the partner) interferes with successful provision of communal responsiveness even when one wishes to provide it.

To receive optimal communal responsiveness from a partner over time, a person also must be comfortable with dependency on a partner. This entails a willingness to accept offered care, to ask for care, to self-disclose, and to acknowledge and express one's own emotions to the partner. Current research suggests that an inability or unwillingness to set aside worries about being vulnerable (and to reveal to others areas of low competence, sensitivity, and needs, generally) interferes with receiving communal responsiveness. Discomfort with accepting dependency can also result in inappropriate feelings of indebtedness and efforts to repay when a partner has provided benefits on a communal basis.

The Importance of Trust

In mutual communal relationships, high trust in partners facilitates the success of communal relationships, as it appears to be linked with the ability to flexibly shift one's focus of attention between the self and seeking help (when necessary), one's partner and providing help (when necessary), and engaging mutually enjoyable and beneficial joint activities (when own and partner needs are not pressing). Low trust in partners, in contrast, inhibits the ability of partners to form communal relationships by leading to chronic relational self-focus and self-protective tendencies. Low trust also leads to reluctance to give noncontingent help (lest it be rejected or lest the person be taken advantage of), to seek or accept help (lest it not be offered or create a sense of dependency or incompetence with which the person is uncomfortable), and to engage in mutually enjoyable activities (lest one's attempts be rejected, embarrass the self, or anger the partner).

Benefits of Having Communal Relationships

Mutual communal relationships, when functioning optimally, allow people to share responsibility for each other's welfare. Over time, they appear to be instrumental to maintaining and promoting mental and physical health.

Margaret S. Clark

See also Belonging, Need for; Closeness; Compassionate Love; Helping Behaviors in Relationships; Intimacy; Responsiveness; Social Support, Nature of; Trust

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COMMUNICATION, GENDER DIFFERENCES IN

Popular author John Gray created quite a stir when he published *Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus*, the first in what became a series of books on the differences between men and women. In these books, Gray cashed in on the persisting belief that men and women are fundamentally different—so much so that they come from different planets. Like many authors of popular books, Gray's work has little scientific basis. His claims of radical differences between the sexes are overstated and, in some cases, inaccurate.

This entry discusses gender differences in communication. The first section defines sex, gender, and communication and discusses relations among the three concepts. The second section discusses the processes by which individuals learn what society considers gender-appropriate behaviors, including communication. The final section identifies generalizable differences between women's and men's communication.

Definitions

Many people use the words *sex* and *gender* interchangeably, but actually they are discrete concepts. The distinction between sex and gender calls attention to the twin influences of biology and society—or nature and nurture—on our identities.

Sex

Sex is a biological category—male or female—that is determined genetically. Most individuals are designated as male or female based on external

genitalia (penis and testes in males, clitoris and vagina in females) and internal sex organs (ovaries and uterus in females, prostate gland in males). Genitalia and secondary sex markers such as hair growth and muscle mass are controlled by chromosomes and hormones. Most humans have 23 pairs of chromosomes, one of which determines sex. Although there are variations in sex chromosome patterns, typically, those people society labels male have XY sex chromosomes and those that society labels female have XX chromosomes.

Gender

Gender is a more complex concept than sex. In the 1970s, researchers began to draw a clear distinction between sex (male, female) and gender (masculine, feminine). They defined gender as a social construction in sharp contrast to sex as a biological phenomenon. Put another way, gender involves the social meanings attached to sex within a particular culture and in a particular era.

Because gender is central to social order, society works very hard to convince its members that its definitions and expectations of women and men are natural, normal, and right. From birth, most individuals are socialized into society's views of what it means to be a man or woman—what each sex should and should not do. Pervasive practices reflect and aim to reproduce social definitions of gender: pink and blue blankets, toys marketed to boys (active, adventure toys) and girls (dolls and play stoves), chores parents typically assign to sons (outdoor tasks) and daughters (indoor tasks), elementary teachers' tendencies to allow boys to play rougher and be less attentive than girls are expected to be, workplace norms that make it more acceptable for female than male workers to take parental leave.

It is important to realize that gender includes both femininity and masculinity. Gender is often perceived as a synonym for women or for women's interests. Just as the study of race is commonly, but mistakenly, perceived as not having anything to do with Caucasians, the study of gender is routinely perceived as having nothing to do with men and masculinity. However, Western culture recognizes two genders, and some other cultures recognize more than two. Masculinity is just as socially constructed as femininity, and understanding how and why masculinity has been constructed as it has

helps researchers understand how many men define themselves and which attitudes and behaviors they do and do not consider appropriate for themselves. Studying gender gives insight into the processes by which each (and all) genders are constructed and—by extension—the ways in which existing constructions of each (and all) genders might be challenged and changed.

Communication

Communication is a dynamic process of creating meaning through verbal and nonverbal symbols. Communication is a primary means by which new members of a society are taught existing views of gender. As parents interact with children, they teach gender. Boys may be discouraged from playing with dolls, and girls may be scolded for getting dirty—both messages convey social views of gender in an effort to teach children how to perform identities that are consistent with existing social norms.

Learning Gender

Parents, especially fathers, encourage in children what they perceive to be gender-appropriate behaviors, fostering more independence, competitiveness, and aggression in sons and more emotional expressiveness and gentleness in daughters. When interacting with children, fathers tend to talk more with daughters and to engage in activities more with sons. Mothers tend to talk more about emotions and relationships with daughters than with sons. Because both mothers and fathers tend to talk more intimately with daughters than sons, daughters generally develop greater relational awareness and larger emotional vocabularies than sons.

In general, parental gender socialization is more rigid for boys than for girls, particularly in Caucasian families, and fathers are more insistent on gender-stereotyped toys and activities, especially for sons, than are mothers. Fathers generally regard it as more acceptable for girls to play baseball or football than for boys to play house or cuddle dolls. Similarly, it is considered more suitable for girls to be strong than for boys to cry and more acceptable for girls to act independently than

for boys to need others. The overall pattern is that parents, especially fathers, more intensively and rigidly push sons to be masculine than they push daughters to be feminine.

Communication is not only a way that new members of a culture are taught gender but also the primary means individuals use to express gender. People know which clothes will be seen by others as masculine or feminine, which postures are regarded as appropriate and inappropriate for women and men, and which words and tones of voice are regarded as more acceptable for men and for women. In other words, individuals use verbal and nonverbal communication to “do gender.”

The related processes of learning about gender and learning how to communicate gender are highlighted in a classic study by Daniel Maltz and Ruth Borker. After observing young children at play, they drew three conclusions: (1) young children tended to play in sex-segregated groups, (2) groups of girls and groups of boys generally played different kinds of games, (3) the different games played by boys and girls teach subtly different styles of communicating. These observations have been confirmed by more recent research.

The games that boys typically play included football, baseball, basketball, and war, whereas the games that girls tended to play included school, house, and tea party. The games that boys typically play—ball, war, for example—involve fairly large groups—nine individuals for each baseball team, for instance. Most boys’ games are competitive, have clear goals (touchdown, basket, capturing the robbers or evading the cops), involve physically rough play (blocking linebackers, shooting robbers), and are organized by rules (nine innings to a baseball game, two points per basket) and roles (forwards shoot baskets, guards protect forwards) that specify who does what and how to play.

Because the games boys typically play are structured by goals, rules, and roles, there is limited need to discuss how to play, although there may be talk about strategies to reach goals. In playing games, boys learn to communicate to accomplish goals, compete for and maintain status, exert control over others, get attention, and stand out.

These understandings of how to use communication are consistent with other aspects of masculine socialization. For instance, these rules accent achievement—doing something, accomplishing a

goal. Boys learn they must do things to be valued members of the team. Also, consistent with masculine socialization to maintain control and not reveal emotions or weaknesses, typical boy games do not involve emotional disclosure or other types of intimate talk.

Quite different patterns exist in games typically played by girls—house, school, and tea party, for example—and they cultivate distinct ways of communicating. Girls tend to play in pairs or in very small groups rather than large ones. Also, games such as house and school do not have preset, clear-cut goals and roles. There is no touchdown in playing house, and the roles of daddy and mommy are not fixed like the roles of guard and forward. Because traditional girls' games are not highly structured by external goals and roles, players have to talk among themselves to decide what to do and what roles to play. Playing house, for instance, typically begins with a discussion about who is going to be the daddy and who is going to be the mommy. The lack of stipulated goals for the games is also important because it tends to cultivate girls' skills in interpersonal processes.

The typically small size of girls' play groups fosters cooperative discussion and an open-ended talking to organize activity, whereas the larger groups in which boys usually play encourage competition and external rules to structure activity. Research on preschoolers of different races shows that boys are more likely to give orders and commands, compete for status, and attempt to control others, whereas girls are more likely to make requests, cooperate with others, and use inclusive and nondirective language.

Gender Differences in Communication

The lessons of children's play, as well as parental instruction in gender, are carried forward. The basic rules of communication that many adult women and men employ are refined and elaborated versions of those learned in childhood.

Feminine Communication

Extensive research has identified seven features of feminine communication, which a majority of women employ. These features of feminine communication style are consistent with patterns of

interaction in games typically played by young girls. First, feminine communication involves disclosing personal information and learning about others. For many women, personal communication is a primary means of building close relationships.

Second, feminine communication attempts to create equality between people. Instead of vying for most valuable player status, women are more likely to communicate in ways that level the playing field. To create equality, women often offer matching experiences (e.g., "I've experienced the same thing") and work to include others and keep conversation balanced so that participation is relatively equal.

Third, feminine speech tends to offer substantial support for others. In conversations, women routinely express sympathy, empathy, and agreement with others (e.g., "Of course you feel hurt" and "I think you handled that really well"). In addition, women often communicate support by showing interest in learning more about others and their experiences (e.g., "How did you feel when that happened?").

A fourth feature of feminine communication is what Pamela Fishman, in a classic article, labeled *conversational maintenance work*. This is the process of keeping a conversation going by inviting others to speak, asking questions to draw others into interaction, responding to what others say, and encouraging others to elaborate their ideas. Rather than working to get and hold the talk stage for themselves, those employing a feminine communication style emphasize getting everyone on the talk stage.

Fifth, feminine communication tends to be highly responsive, especially nonverbally. Women exceed men in eye contact during conversations, head nodding, and facial expressions that show interest as well as verbal responses that demonstrate engagement in others and what they are communicating.

Sixth, feminine communication tends to be somewhat more concrete than masculine communication. Women typically include details when describing events and experiences and provide specific examples to illustrate ideas. In addition, women tend to cite personal experiences as bases for broad judgments and values.

Finally, feminine communication tends to be more tentative than masculine communication. Women are more likely to use hedges (e.g., "I sort of think that plan is dangerous"), qualifiers (e.g., "I

don't have much experience with this issue, but . . ."), and tag questions (e.g., "The weather is really nice, isn't it?"). Although the tentativeness of feminine communication has been criticized for being unassertive and powerless, it is also inclusive, opening the door for others to enter conversation.

Masculine Communication

Researchers have identified six features of masculine communication, which is favored by a majority of men. These features are consistent with socialization provided in games that young boys typically play. The first feature of masculine communication is control, or the effort to control. Many men see interaction as an arena for pitting themselves against others and for proving their worth. The effort to control is displayed by asserting opinions, challenging others, and telling stories and jokes that capture others' attention.

A second feature of masculine communication is instrumentality, which is accomplishing objectives. In interaction, instrumentality is expressed through problem solving (e.g., "We need to figure out how this program works before we can revise it"), giving advice (e.g., "What you should do is . . ."), devising strategies (e.g., "Here's a way to outflank the other team"). In contrast to the feminine attention to feelings and process, masculine style puts greater emphasis on facts, tactical plans, and results.

Third, masculine communication tends to be dominant. Although there are many jokes about women's talkativeness, it is actually men who talk more in most contexts. Research by Mary Crawford and Michele Kaufman demonstrates that men talk more often and for longer periods of time than women in multiple contexts, including classrooms, business meetings, and informal conversations. In addition, men are more likely than women to reroute conversations to their interests and agendas (e.g., "What you're saying about the problem with your coworker reminds me of a time when I had to work with a real jerk . . .") and to interrupt others to maintain conversational dominance.

Fourth, masculine communication tends to be direct and assertive. In contrast to the tentativeness of feminine communication, the masculine style tends to be more forceful, unqualified, authoritative, and commanding (e.g., "Do it this way" and "The best approach is . . .").

Fifth, masculine communication is more abstract than feminine communication. Men rely less than women do on concrete examples, specific experiences, and concrete reasoning. Instead, men often talk at abstract levels, relying on generalizations and conceptual levels of description (e.g., "Higher order questions are more intellectually stimulating").

A final feature of masculine communication is restricted emotionality. In general, men's speech is less emotionally disclosive and responsive than women's. They are less likely than women to express sympathy, empathy, or other feelings in response to what others say. For example, masculine style would favor responding to another's disclosure with a statement such as "I understand," whereas feminine style would favor responding with a statement such as "That's so sad—you must feel really bad."

Anthony Mulac recently studied women's and men's language to see whether differences noted in earlier research still exist. He concluded that women and men have subtly different communication styles. Mulac identified six distinctive characteristics of men's language use and 10 distinctive characteristics of women's language. The differences are listed below:

More Prominent in Males' Communication

1. References to quantity ("50 percent of the time")
2. Judgmental adjectives ("boring discussion")
3. Elliptical sentences ("Good job")
4. Directives ("Work on it")
5. Locatives (location markers) ("The house faces north, northwest")
6. I-references ("I have a busy schedule")

More Prominent in Females' Communication

1. Intensive adverbs ("That's really exciting")
2. Emotion-references ("I know he loves me")
3. Dependent clauses ("I am majoring in communication, which is a very dynamic field")
4. Sentence-initial adverbs ("When I stay up late, I feel terrible the next day")

5. Uncertainty verbs (“It might happen”)
6. Oppositions (“The teacher is demanding, yet she is also fair”)
7. Negations (“Speaking up in class will not make you sound like a nerd”)
8. Hedges (“I’m sort of thinking we should stay in tonight”)
9. Questions
10. Longer sentences

Qualifying Research Findings

The forgoing research findings should be qualified in three ways. First, research provides generalizations about how women, in general, and men, in general, communicate in a specific cultural context. It cannot predict how any particular individual will communicate. Some men communicate in primarily feminine ways, and some women communicate in primarily masculine ways. Further, most people—regardless of sex and gender—engage in some masculine and some feminine communication behaviors. Very few people communicate in solely masculine or solely feminine ways. Second, the findings are better understood as fitting on continua than as being dichotomous—for instance, in general women talk more about emotions than men, yet men also talk about emotions. Third, the findings do not describe all tendencies in either feminine or masculine communication styles. For example, there has been more research on inclusive and supportive interaction than on competitive, “catty” exchanges between women, so researchers know less about the latter. Finally, what is considered masculine and feminine varies across cultures and times, so what is regarded as masculine communication in the West in 2010 might be viewed as feminine in another culture or time.

Julia T. Wood

See also Caregiver Role; Communication, Norms and Rules; Communication Skills; Emotion in Relationships; Friendships, Sex Differences and Similarities; Gender Roles in Relationships; Self-Disclosure; Sex Differences in Relationships

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COMMUNICATION, INSTANT MESSAGING AND OTHER NEW MEDIA

Communication is necessary to develop, maintain, and end relationships. Today, a portion of that relational communication for many people, particularly adolescents and young adults, occurs in text-based modalities that can be sent instantaneously but do not require physical presence with the other. The main forms of instantaneous text-based communication at a distance are e-mail, instant messaging (IM), mobile phone text-messaging, and messages sent through social network sites such as *MySpace* and *Facebook*. This entry begins by comparing text-based forms of communication with other forms of communication. Then, this entry discusses how these forms of

communication are used to initiate, maintain, and in some cases, end relationships.

Text-Based Messages Compared to Other Forms of Communication

Text-based communication, regardless of the specific modality, has been compared to other forms of communication but particularly to face-to-face communication and voice communication over the phone. Relative to these other forms of communication, text-based communication (a) allows one to take time to communicate, including editing responses; (b) gives the flexibility to communicate without being interrupted by the other; (c) can be asynchronous, which means that two people with different temporal schedules can still easily communicate; (d) presents the opportunity for the same message to be sent to several people simultaneously; and (e) allows for—and in many cases, requires—brief messages. Text-based communication also represents an economical way to communicate; for example, there is no need to pay the expense of transportation to meet for face-to-face conversation. However, relative to face-to-face and voice communications, text-based communication has lower social presence and reduced social cues. That is, the other is less “present” in the interaction, and therefore, there are fewer cues as to the other person’s characteristics and emotional reactions. Messages that require nonverbal cues for interpretation, such as sarcasm, can lead to misunderstandings. To compensate, various paralinguages (e.g., emoticons) have been developed. Another disadvantage of text-based communication is that less information can be transmitted in the same amount of time because vocal speech is faster than the process of writing text messages on a computer or mobile phone. In addition, text-based messages, particularly when there is anonymity, can lead to disinhibition in behavior including flaming. This behavior involves writing negative comments and interpersonal attacks and can occur in any text-based medium.

There are also distinctions among the modalities of text-based communications. For example, instant messaging and mobile phone texting tend to be more interactive, informal, and synchronous than e-mail. Mobile texting, a function on cell

phones similar to messages sent through the Internet, is limited to brief messages because of (a) bandwidth limitations of cell phone carriers and (b) the limitations of the inputting text on a traditional telephone keypad (many new cell phone models, however, offer miniature keyboards to aid in mobile messaging). Unlike the other modalities, social network sites generally have two forms of text messaging: traditional site-specific person-to-person messaging and a comment board. Although anyone can send a private personal message to another user, comment boards are designed to be publicly viewed, but only approved users have posting rights. Although e-mail is now used by people of almost all ages, the other forms of text-based communication technologies are used primarily by teenagers and young adults.

The Role of Text-Based Messages in Initiating Relationships

A small but growing percent of romantic relationships and friendships begin online. These relationships may begin in a chat room, in a multiuser Internet game, at a social network site (e.g., *Facebook*), or through a dating site (e.g., *PerfectMatch.com*). For example, a recent study with teenagers indicated that approximately one half reported using social networks to initiate new friendships. Research conducted with individuals in Internet newgroups has found that a majority of those sampled report that they have developed a friendship or romantic relationship with someone they met through this online venue. Although marriages and other committed relationships are still more likely to have their origin in traditional settings, a recent nationwide study conducted by Harris Interactive found that 3 percent of their respondents reported having met their current partner through an online dating service, and another 3 percent met in an online chat room.

Regardless of the specific online way in which two people first become aware of each other, text-based communication is generally the modality for first communication. For example, two people who meet through an online dating service first use text-based messages often sent anonymously through the dating site for the purpose of determining their compatibility. People who meet in

other online ways (e.g., chat rooms, social network sites) usually begin with more informal messages, perhaps focused on the shared hobby or friend.

People may also initiate a relationship with someone through text messages (e.g., e-mail) after meeting in person, such as at a party or a professional meeting. Whereas people used to exchange phone numbers upon meeting for the first time, today it is just as common to exchange e-mail addresses or user names.

Factors that lead to initial attraction through text-based communication may differ from factors that lead to attraction in face-to-face settings. Much has been written about the ease of self-disclosing through text-based messages and the important role of text-based self-disclosure in leading to attraction. Experimental studies conducted by Katelyn McKenna revealed that undergraduate students who met for the first time through text-based messages in an Internet chat room liked each other more than those who met for the first time face-to-face. The self-disclosure can be rich and allow the relationship to progress quickly. It has been speculated that physical attractiveness, which is often the characteristic people notice first about someone in a face-to-face setting, has less impact when initiating a relationship through text-based communication because its salience is likely to follow learning other information about each other. Another unique factor found to affect attraction through text-based communication technologies is writing skill. Those who write well are perceived more positively.

A dark side to relationship initiation through text-based communication is that it may be easier to engage in deception. In addition, idealization of the other can occur, which includes idealistic forecasts of attractiveness of the other, perceived similarity between self and other, and the potential for compatibility. This idealization can lead to disappointment when meeting in person.

The Role of Text-Based Messages in Maintaining Relationships

When the Internet first gained widespread use, there was concern about its effect on relationships with friends, relatives, and neighbors. The concern was that the time spent writing text messages to distant others would take time away from significant core

relationships. However, the effect of the Internet seems to be more positive than negative for maintaining relationships, according to research conducted by the Pew Internet and American Life Project, which monitors the role of the Internet in Americans' lives. E-mail is especially useful to maintain ties with friends and relatives who live at a distance. In addition, relationships with geographically close friends and relatives can be enhanced by e-mail and other forms of text-based communication. In many cases, text messages do not reduce other forms of communication for maintaining local, close relationships but may actually increase it, which has been called *media multiplexity* or *mixed-mode relationships*. Some relationships remain online and need online communication for their maintenance. Generally, however, such relationships either eventually end or progress to a face-to-face meeting.

The Role of Text-Based Messages in Ending Relationships

Telecommunication technologies have been used not only to develop and enhance relationships but also to end relationships. According to the Pew Internet and American Life project, 9 percent of single adults have broken up with someone using online communication. Teens are probably more likely than adults to terminate relationships online. Although breaking up through text-based communication may be becoming more common, people perceive it to be a noncaring way to end a relationship, according to recent research. Relationships that form over the Internet may be especially prone to early and easy termination, possibly because alternatives are perceived to be plentiful and only a click away.

Susan Sprecher and Elizabeth Wickes

See also Communication Processes, Verbal; Computer-Mediated Communication; Internet and Social Connectedness; Internet Dating

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COMMUNICATION, NONVERBAL

Nonverbal communication, also sometimes known as body language, encompasses the various ways people communicate without language. Although verbal, linguistic communication is a unique and vital part of human communication, considerable meaning is communicated nonverbally. Though estimates vary, most communication and relationships researchers agree that nonverbal communication is every bit as important as or more important than verbal communication, particularly in human relationships. The relative significance of verbal and nonverbal communication is not important. What is important is that extensive research shows that the various aspects of nonverbal communication—eye behavior, touch, body movements, interpersonal distance, facial expressions, and all the other components of nonverbal communication, separately or together—are vitally important to human relationships. This entry discusses how nonverbal communication differs from language, the biological foundation of nonverbal communication, and its multichanneled nature including physical appearance, body language, eye behavior, interpersonal distance, touch, vocal characteristics, the use of time, and the environmental context in which communication occurs. It concludes with a comment regarding the centrality of nonverbal behavior in close relationships.

Nonverbal communication encompasses all communication other than language. Nonverbal communication is analogic, iconic, and does not rely on symbols, in contrast to language that employs symbols that are arbitrarily related to their referent. Substantial research suggests that verbal and nonverbal communication employ different cognitive systems. Typically, nonverbal

communication is processed in the right brain hemisphere rather than in the language centers of the left brain hemisphere.

Nonverbal communication is primarily analogic, meaning that nonverbal messages have a more direct relationship with their referent compared with verbal or linguistic messages that are arbitrarily related to their references. Generally, nonverbal messages feel, look, or sound like what the things they refer to or represent; for example, a pat on the back is an abbreviated hug and standing closer represents more relational closeness than standing far away. Analogic messages are usually a matter of degree as opposed to a digital on-off message. A hug can range from brief and obligatory, to moderately warm and affectionate, to prolonged and passionate. Smiles can run the gamut from smirks, to grins, to broad beaming smiles. Interestingly, because iconic and analogic communication are continuous, people cannot stop sending relational messages nonverbally. There is no neutral facial expression or nondistance between two people. Thus, as long as two people are in each other's presence, relational communication is occurring via nonverbal communication. This leads to the famous communication axiom, one cannot not communicate.

Nonverbal communication employs a variety of channels, all of which are nonlinguistic. Most gestures are nonlinguistic, but sign language and emblems, which are gestures with dictionary definitions (e.g., the okay sign), constitute gestural languages that are processed in the same left hemispheric brain centers as speaking or writing. Tactile communication is usually nonlinguistic and nonverbal, though Braille print is read tactilely; it is a linguistic form of communication. Tone of voice and nonlinguistic vocalizations such as grunts or screams are nonverbal, but the spoken word is verbal. The mode is not the key to understanding nonverbal communication. The key is that nonverbal communication is nonlinguistic, is not arbitrarily related to its referent, and is not dependent on the language centers of the left brain hemisphere, unlike verbal communication.

Biological Basis of Nonverbal Communication

Nonverbal communication is a more biologically based system that evolved considerably earlier in

the history of the human species than did verbal communication. Virtually all animals relate to each other through the primary system of nonverbal communication. Verbal communication developed from the more ancient nonverbal means of communicating, which may be the reason that touch, facial expressions, and the many channels of nonverbal communication have an authenticity that words lack. By contrast to nonverbal communication, verbal communication, which is based upon and developed from the earlier nonverbal system, is a comparatively recent accomplishment in the human species.

Similarly, nonverbal communication occurs earlier in human development than verbal communication. Babies are proficient in nonverbal communication, sending and receiving messages through touch, vocalizations, eye behavior, and facial expressions. Speaking and writing must await additional chronological and cognitive development. The primary nature of nonverbal communication may be another reason why nonverbal communication seems more authentic in human relationships than words. It is more basic, fundamental, less controllable, and harder to fake than verbal utterances.

The biological basis of nonverbal communication makes it more understandable across cultures. Friendly touches, warm smiles, or closer distances tend to send positive affect among communicators even when they do not speak the same language. Verbal communication is virtually impossible among people who do not speak the same language. The biological basis is particularly evident for facial expressions that successfully communicate basic emotions like happiness, sadness, surprise, fear, anger, and disgust across culture. Slight differences in the expressions exist between cultures akin to regional accents in English in the United States. Although there are many cultural differences in nonverbal communication, these intercultural variations are much less pronounced than for verbal communication.

Channels of Nonverbal Communication

Nonverbal communication is the most basic, important, and authentic form of communication for another reason; nonverbal communication is

multichanneled, whereas verbal communication is single channeled. For instance, people express affection for one another via facial expression, distance, touch, body position, eye behavior, and warm vocal inflection. These multichannel messages are much harder to fake than a verbal utterance. It is difficult to pull off a multichanneled lie, so nonverbal communication is justifiably perceived as more genuine. The nonverbal channels discussed below are individually and collectively powerful determinants of human relationships.

Physical appearance. Long before words are uttered, relationships are determined by the physical appearance of another person. Physical attractiveness, body type, clothing style, race, biological sex, age, ethnicity, and height constitute powerful nonverbal messages that create initial impressions and determine the course of relationships. Appropriately or inappropriately people employ physical appearance cues to make attributions about other people's friendliness, warmth, attractiveness, intelligence, moral character, personality, and social status. Even once a relationship is established physically, appearance cues determine interactants' ongoing attraction and perceptions about another person's character, competence, and social appropriateness.

Kinesics. The study of the many ways that bodily actions, facial expressions, head positions, gestures, interactional synchrony, and sitting, walking, or standing positions constitutes kinesics. Facial expressions are a prominent and primary means of emotional expression and are vital to the coordination of interaction, which in turn facilitates or hinders human relationships. The basic human facial expressions are thought by most researchers to be innate, including fear, happiness, anger, surprise, sadness, and disgust, but their expression is controlled and managed by learned cultural display rules. Human gestural communication coordinates interpersonal interaction and provides emphasis, direction, illustration, and communicative redundancy. Body movements of the torso and legs reveal cues regarding gender, culture, age, agility, dominance, and personality.

Oculesics. The study of human visual interaction is called oculesics. The most important oculesic cue

in human relationships is eye contact, sometimes called mutual gaze. Eye contact is an invitation to communicate in initial interaction and a crucial communication channel in close relationships. Eye contact can also regulate communication, increase immediacy, monitor ongoing interaction, intimidate, promote flirtation, provide turn-taking cues, signal attentiveness, increase warmth, and perhaps most importantly, express involvement and intimacy. Pupil dilation is an important subliminal cue that sends messages of warmth, affection, and interest to receivers. Eye movements and blinking are signs of cognitive activity to which receivers attribute considerable relational meaning. Gaze direction also sends relational messages of attentiveness or disinterest and degrees of conversational involvement.

Proxemics. Personal space, territoriality, and crowding are proxemic variables that are vital in human interaction. Personal space, the invisible zone the surrounds people's bodies, is both an interpersonal message and an indicant of relationship closeness. Research has shown that relatively closer personal space distances, inside 1.5 feet in North America, indicate an intimate relationship. Of course, cultures vary and contact cultures that are centered in the Mediterranean region and generally found closer to the equator exhibit much closer interpersonal distances than cultures in the far north. Territoriality, possession of a fixed or home space, is evident in most species including humans. Like other animals, people protect and defend their home space against uninvited intrusion to promote safety and preserve resources. Sharing territory such as a home, an office, or a car is indicative of relational closeness. Finally, crowding is typically a negative proxemic cue that causes stress and discomfort. However, some events like discos, sporting events, and parades are expected to be crowded, adding to the excitement and positive arousal associated with the event.

Haptics. Among the most involving, intimate, nonverbal behaviors, haptic or tactile communication can be the source of intimacy, passion, or revulsion. Haptic communication is vital for infants, serving as a source of comfort, reward, and connection from the earliest days following birth.

Tactile deprivation in infancy is associated with numerous physical, psychological, and cognitive pathologies in later life. For adults, appropriate, affectionate touch conveys feeling of warmth, immediacy, intimacy, connection, informality, and closeness. Touch increases compliance with interpersonal requests and acts as a reinforcer of previous behavior. Research has shown that people who have negative attitudes toward touch and avoid interpersonal touch have less satisfying close relationships than people who approach and enjoy touch. Romantic couples touch least early in their dating relationships and most in intermediate relational stages when they are regular dating partners, engaged, or newlyweds. Long-term married couples, even very happy ones, touch less as their relationship matures. Additionally, couples converge over time, manifesting more similar levels of tactile interaction the longer the relationship has been in existence. Touch can be loathed as well as liked. If touch is harassing, excessive, or relationally inappropriate, it will lead to relational disengagement and even legal action.

Paralanguage. Paralinguistic or vocalic communication is vocalized nonverbal information. Some vocalic cues, such as sighs, groans, cries, inhalations, and yawns, stand alone, but vocalic information accompanies all spoken communication. Depending on how it is said, a word such as *okay* can communicate agreement, affirmation, hostility, eagerness, dismissiveness, reluctance, confusion, intimacy, boredom, seduction, affection, impatience, and many other messages. Vocalic cues such as pitch, cadence, speed, resonance, control, and accent lend meaning to every spoken word.

Paralinguistic cues are essential in the communication of intimacy; indeed, they may be more important than what is actually said in signaling closeness and connection.

Chronemics. The way people utilize time and the meanings that attach to time in interpersonal relationships is called chronemics. In America and most of the developed world, time is viewed as a commodity, so amount of time spent with another person indicates their importance and signifies closeness. Studies suggest that one of the most powerful predictors of relational satisfaction, closeness, and understanding is time spent together.

Sharing of talk time is associated with more relational satisfaction; likewise being on time is a courtesy that is associated with greater relational satisfaction. Studies suggest the timing or matching of interaction patterns is indicative of relational rapport and closeness.

Interpersonal environments. The environment in which relational communication takes place has a profound effect on human relationships. Many environments facilitate intimacy such as a cozy table at a restaurant, a hot tub, or a couch by a fireplace. Environments that facilitate work relationships include round tables, bright lights, cool temperatures, the absence of distractions, and good acoustics free of noise. All human interactions are facilitated by face-to-face arrangements, close distances, and eye contact. Human microenvironments are message systems in and of themselves that suggest the nature of the relationships and activities that are likely to take place.

The Centrality of Nonverbal Communication in Relationships

Nonverbal messages are at the heart of relational communication. Though verbal communication is clearly superior for detail, analysis, and precision, nonverbal communication is the primary way people communicate emotion and send interpersonal messages about the relationship. Positive affect, a primary building block of all relationships, is communicated via the multidimensional, implicit nonverbal communication system. Nonverbal communication in all its forms is at the heart of intimacy, closeness, connection, and rapport that characterize the apex of human relationships.

Peter Andersen

See also Communication Processes, Verbal; Culture and Relationships; Display Rules; Intimacy; Nonverbal Communication, Status Differences; Nonverbal Involvement; Physical Environment and Relationships; Satisfaction in Relationships; Touch

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COMMUNICATION, NORMS AND RULES

The terms *rules* and *norms* are often used interchangeably. Some scholars argue that the two are synonyms. Others consider rules and norms as distinct. In this entry, largely following principles suggested by Susan Shiminoff, definitions of and distinctions between communication rules and norms are made and some classic communicative examples are offered. In addition, constructs similar to rules and norms, often used to mean rules or norms, including maxims, principles, and expectations, are discussed, as are the associations among these constructs.

Norms and rules run the gamut from microlevel (e.g., rules of grammar) to macrolevel (normative rules for international negotiations), and only very communicative rules and norms are presented in this entry. Consideration of rules and norms are important to relational scholars, as rules, norms, and expectancies often describe or prescribe the manner in which people interact or believe others interact. However, the terminology (and the actual constructs studied using these terms) is far from uniform.

Rules

Whether implicit or explicit, rules are generally thought to have three characteristics: (1) They are followable; one can choose to follow, or not to

follow, rules. They are not like laws of gravity wherein one has no choice but to adhere. (2) Rules are prescriptive; a certain behavior is expected or preferred (in a particular context). Behavior that should not occur is also prescribed. Not following rules is subject to sanctions. (3) Rules are contextual; the prescribed behavior must be applicable in similar contexts. Rules vary in the number of situations to which they apply. A broad or high-level rule applies to many situations. More narrow rules cover fewer contexts. These three characteristics have embedded within them the idea of behavior. Behavior is often considered as a fourth characteristic of rules: Rules reference behavior (not attitudes, opinions, thoughts, and the like).

The most prominent study of conversational rules can be found in the work of Harvey Sacks, Emanuel Schegloff, and Gail Jefferson. Among numerous rules of conversing, largely concerning the sequencing of conversations, they identify rules governing turn taking in everyday conversations. A primary rule is that one party should talk at a time. This rather broad rule may cover many instances. In everyday conversation, four turn-taking rules have been identified: (1) If the speaker selects the next speaker to take a turn, that target is obliged to take that turn, and others are obliged to allow the selected target to take the turn. (2) If the above occurs, the current speaker is to enable a transition to occur (i.e., provide a turn-relevant place). (3) If the current speaker does not select the next speaker, self-selection may be invoked at the next turn-relevant place. (4) At any turn-relevant place, the current speaker may stop but does not have to stop unless that speaker has selected someone else, or someone else has self-selected to take a turn. These rules apply to everyday conversations but do not necessarily apply in institutional talk wherein changes in rules can occur quite frequently (e.g., the rules of debate). Note, however, that even in debate, the broader rule that one person should talk at a time still applies. Further, violations of these rules are generally met with displeasure. That is, what should not occur is implicit: One should not interrupt the current speaker.

Norms

Many consider rules and norms as synonymous. By some definitions they are. If one defines norms

as shared expectations, the violation of which is met with sanctions, then norms and rules are the same. It is useful, however, to consider a norm as a statistical concept: It is the average or modal behavior. Norms are not necessarily what should be done or what is perceived as being done. Rather, they describe what is. Rules of grammar versus the norms of grammar usage exemplify this difference. In standard English, the formal medium of written expression, there are numerous complex rules, one of which is that a sentence should not end with a preposition. However, in everyday talk, it is normative to end sentences with prepositions. The grammatical rule is not the grammatical norm. Or, referring to the turn-taking rules, not to interrupt is the rule, but interpretations might be the norm.

Normative Rules

Using the definitions outlined above, one can identify instances wherein rules do prescribe normative behavior. Such instances have been labeled *normative rules* or *injunctive norms*. As noted, what actually occurs (is normative) is often what is prescribed (a rule). Erving Goffman's lifetime body of work identifies many such normative rules of communication process and practices that comprise the interaction order. He identified and explicated normative social behavior in everyday life and institutional behavior. Goffman also discerned normative rules as the means individuals use to strive to maintain or become part of a particular group or society. He observed stigmatized individuals, noting that such individuals may be the most aware of social norms, as they can more readily see the discrepancy between how they are treated compared to those who are not stigmatized. Goffman discusses individuals' attempts to act and appear normatively in order to present themselves as fitting into society.

Goffman is well known for the concepts of face and face-work. Among other goals of an interaction (part of the interaction order), individuals cooperate or work together to maintain face of the individuals involved, at least for the moment, as losing face results in embarrassment or humiliation for one or both parties. Thus, any given society has developed complex ways for individuals to

cooperate to maintain (or restore) face. Someone might pretend not noticing an error on another's part. Or a person might offer an acceptable excuse for one's own or other's behavior. Though certainly people do not always work to maintain each other's face, the normative rule in everyday social interaction is to do so.

Normative influence occurs when the perceptions of norms guide behavior. Goffman studied normative rules in observing and describing how individuals strive to be seen in a normative light. When desiring to be normative, individuals can only behave in the manner that they perceive to be normative, which might or might not be the actual norm. Harold Garfinkle played a major role in understanding the strength of normative rules through his observations of violations of these rules. His work involved the purposeful violation of normative rules. To Garfinkle, the strength of a normative rule is indexed by the severity of the reaction to the violation of that rule.

Maxims and Principles

Many have considered both maxims and rules as conversational principles. However, Joan Ganz argued that principles, though prescriptive and thus rule-like, are highly abstract. The notion of communication values offers a fair description of principles, perhaps akin to a code of ethics. The most widely known conversational principle is that of cooperation. H. Paul Grice offered the cooperative principle conveying the idea that conversational participants should work together during the course of a conversation. Speakers offer utterances with the intent that listeners will attempt to infer and understand, whereas listeners assume that speakers are speaking in a manner to facilitate such understanding. As Robert Nofsinger noted, individuals who work together to make conversations make sense. Maxims similarly can be considered rules, as both prescribe preferred behavior.

Grice provided four maxims or guidelines for achieving the cooperative principle. These maxims are abbreviated as quantity, quality, manner, and relevance. The maxim of quantity directs one to offer the appropriate amount of contribution to a conversation: Do not say too much; do not say too

little. Quality reminds people to be truthful, saying neither what they know to be false nor what they lack evidence of truth. Relevance means making conversational offerings related to the interaction at hand. Manner translates roughly into avoiding obscurity, equivocation, or ambiguity, to be clear.

Violations of one or more of these maxims are sometimes required in order to follow the cooperative principle. The value of equivocal messages has been shown in the work of Janet Beavin Bavelas. Recognizing that people often have multiple goals, sometimes one maxim must be violated in order to uphold another. For example, in order to be polite, it is often necessary to be vague and less than entirely truthful. Joking and other social behaviors may demand (acceptably) violating one or more of these maxims to achieve the desired purpose of being humorous.

Joan Ganz proposes that the distinction between rules, maxims, and principles is one of the levels of abstraction. Rules, maxims, and principles might be thought of as nested. A general principle is to be cooperative. This might be accomplished through the use of the Gricean maxims. Yet these maxims must be broken down into specific prescribed behaviors or rules. When someone says thank you, the general principle of cooperation, and Gricean maxims, do not tell one what to do. The rule prescribing uttering "you're welcome" does. After a relative gives a young child a gift, a parent might say to the child, "Now what do you say?" A child might offer all of the polite words in her or his repertoire: "please," "thank you," and "I'm sorry." These constitute the words the child knows to say after an authority figure says, "Now what do you say?" The principle of cooperation is certainly in play, as are all four maxims. However, precise rules surrounding which polite word is said in what situation have yet to be learned.

Expectations

Relational scholars often concern themselves with whether or not expectations are met. It is proposed here that expectations are most usefully considered at the individual level. Expectations are not necessarily rules or norms, though they are often treated as such. Individuals' expectations are formed from influences, possibly including rules

and norms. Whatever their origin, people have beliefs, standards, or expectations of what relationships and communications should be like. This concept has sometimes been called having implicit theories of relationships (among other terms).

Expectations, which are learned and modifiable, reference beliefs about the likely or desired behavior of others. To illustrate, examples of normative behavior in relationships can be considered. Michael Argyle and Monica Henderson offered six rules as the most important rules of friendship, the violation of which were most likely to result in the demise of a friendship: (1) standing up for the other in his or her absence, (2) sharing news of success with him or her, (3) showing emotional support, (4) trusting and confiding in each other, (5) volunteering to help in time of need, and (6) striving to make him or her happy while in each other's company. Yet one could have a particular friend who repeatedly violates one of these societal norms. Friends may hold these general expectations about friendships but have different expectations based on past behavior of that particular friend.

In sum, the subtle distinctions among norms and rules are important for scholars striving to better understand everyday interaction. Most individuals in a given society do not consciously differentiate among these terms, but most are at least implicitly aware of the norms and rules of their society.

Laura Stafford

See also Communication Skills; Display Rules; Equivocation; Expectations About Relationships; Norms About Relationships; Reciprocity, Norm of

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COMMUNICATION ACCOMMODATION THEORY

Formulated by Howard Giles in the early 1970s (and refined with colleagues across different disciplines over the years), Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) attends to a fundamental dimension of human relationships, namely how people adjust their communication patterns vis-à-vis each other. More specifically, CAT lays out the conditions under which individuals will, to varying degrees, wish to reduce or emphasize the social distance between those with whom they are interacting (i.e., by accommodating or nonaccommodating, respectively). Although the theory indicates different ways of achieving these ends, converging toward or diverging away from another have been the major ones studied. CAT also attends to the social consequences, immediate as well as long term, for such convergent and divergent tactics. In what follows, the major reasons for and the outcomes of such accommodative acts are overviewed.

Accommodating or converging toward another can occur at numerous levels. Making a coffee that satisfies the known tastes of another (e.g., dark brown or very milky) would be an example, as would using cosmetics or dressing up to match someone's idiosyncratic preferences in fashion when going out together. Most research, however, has been devoted to the verbal and nonverbal parameters of communication, such as expressing opinions that are meant to approximate the political positions of others or laughing at their supposed humor. Although such acts can be consciously enacted and can require constant monitoring with

subsequent adjustments, they can also emerge without much awareness, as is often the case in subtly shifting toward another's accent, posture, speech rate, voice quality, discursive style, and so forth. Mutual accommodations can engender a growing and positive relational identity—as it can among different aged (as well as socially disparate) relatives with respect to a strong sense of family identity.

The theory proposes that people converge toward or accommodate the communicative patterns of others the more they desire their approval, respect, cooperation, and compliance. Social power, thereby, figures prominently in CAT; organizational subordinates converge more to superordinates than vice versa, traditional females to males more than the converse, and so forth. Hence, tourists adopting the language, or even key words (e.g., “hello” or “thanks”), of their hosts' language, is known—certain caveats notwithstanding—to elicit favorable reactions in and valued support from many locals. In other words, accommodation is positively perceived and can even be socially effective beyond the single act; those who view their social networks as providing them an accommodative climate espouse more life satisfaction than those who experience nonaccommodative climates. Hence, a police officer who expends time in a traffic stop apparently listening to a violator's account of his or her actions and takes his or her perspective into account, interestingly, can lead to this motorist viewing all police officers more favorably. All this suggests that being seen to underaccommodate another—for example, by staunchly maintaining and expressing one's religious ideology or blithely using English in a foreign non-Anglophone land—can be attributed negatively as self-centered, insensitive, noncaring, disrespectful, and so on. Crucially, however, CAT contends that people accommodate not necessarily where others' communication patterns actually are but where they believe them to be; stereotypes often dictate how others sound to us.

Although manifold rewards follow from carefully accommodating others, this can sometimes invoke social costs and hence, the accommodative process (as may be surmised from above) can be a quite complex one. Clearly obvious, faulty, or stereotypic mimicry can easily boomerang in terms of recipients attributing these actions to being chameleon-like or

ingratiating, or even as insincere and disingenuous, or worse as Machiavellian. In such instances, optimal levels of accommodation may be warranted so that one does not converge too much too soon, nor too quickly with an unfamiliar other, and especially toward another where unwanted romantic, or even sexual, intentions could be evident.

Miscarried convergent acts can also be transformed into signs of overaccommodation where one is seen (despite the sometimes nurturing intent) to have socially mistargeted the other. An example would be slowing down, becoming grammatically very simple, and enunciating more precisely for an elder or physically challenged person who is actually very cognitively astute; attributions of this being patronizing talk would naturally ensue. On occasion, convergence can also detract, uncomfortably, from an accommodator's feeling of a loss of their own integrity. Indeed, the need to symbolize or accentuate one's positive sense of, say, regional, national, ethnic, gender, or academic identities can be one of the principle motives for diverging from another in terms of jargon, accent, slang, physical proximity, and so forth. Obviously, diverging from a nonaccommodating or personally disdained or irritating other can also be ample reactive grounds for dissociating communicatively from them. Although diverging from others has benefits for instilling a sense of ingroup pride in the nonaccommodator (e.g., gay or adolescent), it is often (and mistakenly) construed more as a personal insult than a statement about relative intergroup inclinations and identities. In this regard, when certain American immigrants become of an age that they feel proud of their cultural heritages, they may, seemingly all-of-a-sudden, emphasize their ethnic dialects in the classroom—and in ways that White teachers could misinterpret as insolent statements about them personally.

CAT has been constituted (and been continually revised) in formal propositional terms for empirical testing, and for the most part, its elements have received support across many different languages, cultures, and social contexts. In addition, it has been invoked across various disciplines and has led to its own satellite theories in domains such as second language acquisition and intergenerational communication. The theory has been found useful in analyzing human relationships not only in face-to-face encounters but also with respect to new

media (e.g., voice-mail and e-mail). As people encounter ever-increasingly different technological means of relating to each other, CAT should, nonetheless, still have considerable explanatory power.

Howard Giles

See also Communication, Nonverbal; Nonverbal Involvement

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COMMUNICATION PROCESSES, VERBAL

Communication is integral to human relationships. Researchers who study verbal communication processes often view them as patterns of interconnections or as relational states, whether they occur between two people or between an individual and a larger audience. Similarly, scholars who study personal relationships describe verbal communication as the means by which people construct and maintain relationships. Relationships are involved in all acts of communication, and communication is the central process that gives shape to relationships.

This entry describes five basic properties of communication: *interdependence*, *reflexivity*, *complexity*, *ambiguity*, and *indeterminacy*. Of course, there are specific debates related to each of these properties, but there is wide agreement among scholars about the properties themselves and their

centrality to communication. The descriptions of each of these five properties demonstrate how the study of verbal communication and the study of human relationships intersect.

Interdependence

Interdependence refers to the idea, advocated by systems theorists, that messages simultaneously influence, and are influenced by, the messages that precede and follow them. This mutual influence creates coherence between messages and across interactions. Although similar to the view of interdependence put forth by John Thibaut and Harold Kelley, this perspective is distinct in that it focuses on the mutual influence of messages rather than on the ways that individuals affect each other's outcomes during interaction.

Interdependence accounts for the central feature of living systems—*wholeness* (or *nonsummativity*). That is, the interdependent relationships between components, rather than the components themselves, account for the unique characteristics of the whole. The application of this principle to verbal communication suggests that communication systems are defined by interdependent patterns of interaction rather than characteristics of people or messages per se. Thus, patterns are of primary interest, whereas objects (singular events or individual entities) are secondary.

Interdependence in communication is most often conceptualized in terms of two opposite response tendencies—a tendency to reciprocate or match features of the other's communication versus a tendency to compensate. For example, studies of verbal and vocal behavior indicate that, under most conditions, conversational partners automatically adapt to each other to match each other's discursive style or speech rate. In other situations, individuals may compensate for increases in physical proximity by decreasing speech volume or eye gaze.

In the research literature on personal relationships, the principle of interdependence is reflected in the study of dyadic interaction patterns. The concept of an interaction pattern presumes that there is redundancy and predictability in the way communication events or behaviors are ordered. Interaction patterns reveal a few basic things about

communication in personal relationships. First, they demonstrate ways in which communication and relationships are coherent and structured. For example, people can carry on coherent conversations because they understand the rules associated with turn taking.

Second, interaction patterns reflect multiple influences on communication, both of a proximal and distal nature. Every act of communication is enacted and interpreted within a particular historical context, including the time and place, relationship history, and history of the immediate encounter. Thus, each communication behavior is grounded in the overall context as well as in the immediate actions that precede and follow it.

Third, interaction patterns can reveal forms of relating that mediate relationship quality over time. That is, the mutual responsiveness (or reactivity) of individuals during communication predicts the quality of relationships over and above what one would assume based on overall communication base rates. Indeed, much of the research on communication in marriage is concerned with identifying patterns of interaction that predict couples' satisfaction versus distress.

Reflexivity

Reflexivity refers to the notion that communication both creates social structure and is constrained by it. The principle of reflexivity suggests that human relationships are constituted through communication. In other words, people are proactive and make communicative choices, but they also react to a variety of normative social and cultural practices that constrain their subsequent interactions.

Few researchers dispute the idea that relationships are socially constructed through communication; however, some lines of research focus on this theme more than do others. Some of the lines of research that emphasize reflexivity include the investigation of everyday discourse, relationship narratives or accounts, and relationship cultures.

Everyday Discourse

Steve Duck has made a strong argument for the symbolic force of everyday, routine conversations

in creating and sustaining relationships. Duck argues that talk, by its very occurrence, projects an image of relationships as real and enduring and thus, promotes their continuance. He also notes that talk serves as a marker of relationships. Duck says that once people agree that they are in a particular type of relationship and come to talk about it as such, their discourse changes in a number of ways. So, for example, they talk about different topics and understand those topics in different ways than they would otherwise.

Studies that explore the qualities of routine, everyday discourse often have used diary methods to examine what people talk about, when they talk, with whom they talk, and how they evaluate different forms of talk. The findings of these investigations lend support to the idea that indeed routine interactions serve as the foundation for relationships over more obviously strategic forms of communication, at least when viewed in terms of how frequently they occur.

Relationship Narratives or Accounts

The stories people tell about their associations with each other shape their relationships by delineating and reinforcing the rules and roles that define interactions. When people offer relational narratives or accounts to others, they position themselves and their partners with regard to each other and to a larger social world. They provide a portrayal of their relationship and in doing so often show how, when, and why partners behave the way they do.

Studies further suggest that the portrayals put forth in narratives are linked to relational quality—that, for example, married couples who describe themselves as having overcome obstacles together have more stable, satisfying relationships than those who do not. In fact, researchers and theorists who study narratives in close relationships argue that people often behave in ways that confirm the perceptions they hold about their associations with others. These scholars suggest that the stories individuals tell about their relationships affect the way they view their interpersonal associations and as a consequence, shape the way they perceive and respond to their partner's behavior.

Narratives also shape people's behavior when they are used to illustrate the rules and roles

associated with relationships. For instance, families who consistently tell stories about a member being sarcastic, quick-witted, and humorous may create an environment where it is difficult for that person to engage in serious conversations about emotionally charged issues. When narrators praise particular behaviors, note the usefulness of certain personality traits, or point out cases where rules or roles are violated, they create and sustain prescriptions for enacting close relationships.

Relationship Cultures

Researchers who study relationships as cultures describe relationships in terms of their ability to establish their own moral and social order, including private codes and unique interaction rules. Relationship cultures draw from conventions in the broader language community but are distinct because of jointly constructed variations in routine and common conversational practices.

There are quite a number of ways that relationship cultures manifest distinctive communicative practices. For example, over time, relational partners develop private idioms and other special vocabulary, symbols of relationship identity, routines and rituals, insider meanings, secrets, and unique rules for interaction.

Complexity

A basic notion underlying much of the literature on verbal communication is that communication conveys multiple messages simultaneously. This idea has its roots in pragmatics and Interactional Systems Theory, but it also is foundational to research on communication. For example, a number of scholars distinguish between the literal content of a message and a second, pragmatic level of meaning. The second level of meaning often is referred to as *relational communication* because it invokes a particular type of relationship. Whereas the first level of meaning tends to be explicit, the second level of meaning is relatively implicit. As such, the negotiation of relationships is an implicit subtext to all communication.

Researchers who have focused their attention on the relational aspects of communication have considered how the concepts of relationship

symmetry and *complementarity* (i.e., relative dominance) are evidenced in terms of individual utterances and recurring message sequences. Although less obvious, a similar focus on relationship negotiation is apparent in much of the research on interpersonal communication. For example, studies on communication during family conflicts are almost exclusively concerned with how families communicate about conflict and what this communication suggests about their relationships. Researchers rarely consider what families disagree about. Similarly, the research on narratives in personal relationship tends not to be concerned with the content of stories but instead focuses on how implicit features of stories and the process of storytelling are associated with relationship roles and identities.

In addition to the multiple levels of meaning that are linked to messages, several other features of interaction contribute to the complexity of verbal communication. For instance, messages are interpreted in terms of the messages that precede and follow them, including extralinguistic and contextual cues that modify meaning. Further, these various signals serve multiple functions simultaneously and may be governed by more than one set of rules. When people interact, they must integrate these multiple signals and then adapt and implement subsequent communication instantaneously in order to keep up with the normal pace of face-to-face interaction.

An issue that is frequently raised concerning the complexity of face-to-face interaction is how people are able to process rapidly changing stimuli, interpret those stimuli according to their multiple meanings and functions in the context of a matrix of other meanings, integrate all this information with multiple and sometimes conflicting goals, and then reply appropriately, without disrupting the flow of natural conversation. One explanation is that participants in communication are extremely selective about what signals they pay attention to. This perspective suggests that individuals rely on conversational devices and interpretive principles to direct their attention to the core features of messages. Another explanation is that people employ mental shortcuts both when interpreting messages and when implementing or adapting communication strategies. Consistent with the “cognitive miser” metaphor used by social psychologists, this view

suggests that cognitive processing of communication is done in such a way so as to achieve the greatest possible effect with the smallest possible effort. Yet another explanation is that communicative functions may be served by behaviors that are outside awareness. This perspective suggests that higher-order knowledge structures (i.e., broad goals) exert control over the relatively specific procedural operations that are involved in communication without requiring direct attention to those operations, except when they become problematic.

Ambiguity

A nearly universal assumption in the study of communication is that meanings are a product of negotiation. Because the coding rules associated with language and other symbolic systems are incomplete, communication is ambiguous. At the most basic level of analysis, ambiguity is reflected in linguistic *underdeterminacy*—the idea that no utterance fully encodes the thought or feeling it is used to express. Even the most explicit aspects of communication (i.e., literal meaning) rely on shared principles of inference that go beyond a surface reading of messages. Greater ambiguity is associated with the sorts of meanings that are often of interest in the study of personal relationships, such as the speech acts occurring during marital and family conflict (e.g., what counts as criticism or as validation). The meaning of a given speech act is ambiguous because the same message can perform different actions and can serve multiple functions simultaneously.

Along with the ambiguity that is inherent in language and other symbolic systems, there is also strategic ambiguity in communication. That is, speakers sometimes respond to the immediate pressure to say something coherent and appropriate with indirectness or obfuscation; they provide a response but at the same time, try to avoid saying anything too directly in an effort to preserve good relations, show politeness, maintain personal boundaries, or avoid being pinned down.

The ambiguity of communication also is illustrated by research findings that demonstrate that pragmatic and relational meanings often are seen differently by relational partners than by outside observers and that individuals who are involved in

a relationship with each other frequently perceive meanings differently as well. For instance, studies show that there is generally low-to-moderate correspondence between parent and adolescent reports of family interaction. Further, in dissatisfying relationships, spouses tend to code one another's communication in different ways, for example, by attributing negative intent to messages where none was reported by the sender or by making self-serving attributions about who is disclosing, being attentive, and collaborating versus criticizing, distorting, and changing the topic.

Another demonstration of the ambiguity of communication in personal relationships is the relatively weak empirical connection between how directly people talk about their thoughts and feelings and the extent to which others show that they understand those thoughts and feelings. Several studies of marital and dating partners have found weak or null associations between the amount of information directly disclosed during communication and mutual understanding. William Ickes explains this phenomenon partly in terms of *motivated misunderstanding*, the idea that people are sometimes motivated by desires and insecurities to maintain inaccurate conceptions about others, even in the face of explicit information that contradicts these conceptions.

Indeterminacy

Communication is indeterminate in that there are few, if any, fixed effects of messages on people or relationships. Rather, the outcomes of messages are contextual, historical, personal, and cultural. One of the main goals of communication theory and research is to articulate the critical features of contextual, historical, personal, or cultural backgrounds associated with social interaction. However, in many cases, this articulation is a difficult task because of the diverse and contradictory ways in which communication can operate.

Both General Systems Theory and Dialectical Theory support the notion that communication behaviors are associated with a number of different outcomes. General Systems Theory suggests that any final state or final condition can be achieved through different means and from different starting points. This concept, labeled *equifinality*, defies

the notion that, for example, communication goals only can be achieved using certain strategies; instead, multiple strategies may be employed to reach the same goal. Research supporting this position has demonstrated that relational partners may use different techniques to persuade each other, express opposition, and provide each other with support.

Although equifinality complicates the means by which relational partners attain particular outcomes, *multifinality*, a related component of General Systems Theory, suggests that the same starting point may result in different outcomes. A communication strategy employed in one relationship may encourage satisfaction, while in another relationship the same strategy may create distress. For instance, researchers have found that in some cases the expression of negative affect is harmful to relationships, whereas in others, it is positively associated with or unrelated to satisfaction. Studies show that negative behavior is inversely associated with relational satisfaction overall, but it would be short-sighted to conclude that negative behavior is always harmful to relationships.

Dialectical Theory takes another approach to examining the indeterminacy of communication. Rather than emphasize the various paths between starting points and outcomes, this theory suggests that the process of relating can be viewed as a dialogue about opposing or contradictory forces. Scholars who employ Dialectical Theory suggest, for example, that people desire both autonomy and connection in their personal relationships. The way partners negotiate these two opposing forces is part of what defines their relationship.

Although most communication researchers accept the basic arguments concerning dialectical contradictions and equifinality-multifinality, they may be less clear about how to integrate these arguments into their empirical work. For example, the most pervasive research strategy for assessing the impacts of communication on relationships is to evaluate the effects of communication based on their observed association with relational satisfaction or distress. This strategy often carries the implication that the interaction characteristics discriminating these groups can be categorized as good or bad communication. However, studies suggest that good, sophisticated, or skillful communication does not necessarily distinguish satisfied

from dissatisfied couples. In fact, there is evidence that some couples who are unhappy employ very skillful, effective strategies to hurt each other and that seemingly positive behaviors can result in unnecessary and damaging patterns of accommodation.

Conclusion

Although the properties discussed in this entry—interdependence, reflexivity, complexity, ambiguity, and indeterminacy—are basic qualities of communication, they pose challenges to researchers and theorists that are notably complex. Perhaps the most obvious of these challenges is for researchers to devise ways to study the multiple meanings, functions, and outcomes associated with communication behaviors. Another is for scholars to study and analyze interactions and sequences of interactions, as opposed to individual strategies, turns, or utterances. Researchers also need to attend to the contextual nature of communication so that they can begin to understand the nuanced influences of historical, relational, and cultural contexts on social interaction.

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See also Communication, Nonverbal; Communication, Norms and Rules; Communication Skills; Conflict, Family; Conflict, Marital; Emotional Communication

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COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Communication, like any other activity, can be done well or poorly. Just as people may have abilities that make them good surgeons, musicians, or athletes, individuals may possess skills that allow them to function well in interactions with others. Scholars have grappled with the problem of trying to define exactly what the term *communication skill* means, and numerous conceptions have been proposed (and various related terms such as *social skills* and *communication competence* have been introduced), but a great number of these conceptions center around the idea that communication skills involve effective and appropriate communication behaviors. That is, communication skills involve the ability to be effective in the sense that a person can accomplish his or her goals while also behaving in ways that are socially acceptable or desirable.

The study of communication skills has a very long history and is also extremely broad. It is at the center of the field of communication (where virtually every branch of the discipline is concerned in some way with communicating more effectively and appropriately), but it is also an important topic for scholars in psychology, philosophy, business management and human resources, family studies, and education. Communication skills (or lack thereof) are manifested at every turn in human endeavors: dating and marriage, parent–child interactions, friendship,

job interviews, business presentations, group meetings, bargaining and negotiation, teaching and learning, physician–patient interactions, and on and on. And what is especially noteworthy about communication skills in all of these contexts is that research shows that they play a key role in the participants' success and satisfaction, both with respect to the immediate interaction and with their long-term relationship.

The Importance of Communication Skills

A great deal of research has focused on the relationship between communication skills and various aspects of a person's occupational, relational, psychological, and physiological life. This research operationalizes communication skill in various ways and does not always produce uniform results, but on balance, there is strong evidence that communication skills are related to many sorts of positive outcomes. For example, one might expect that people with good communication skills would experience greater academic success, and there are studies that confirm this relationship. Similarly, skilled communicators are likely to do better in job interviews, and once hired, those with greater communication skills tend to perform better in their jobs and even to make more money than their less skilled counterparts. It is not by coincidence that recruiters consistently rank communication skills as one of the most important qualities they look for in a prospective job candidate.

But the importance of communication skills is not limited to the classroom, office, shop, and sales floor. Good communication skills are also related to the quality of one's interpersonal relationships. Skilled communicators tend to have more positive experiences in dating and romantic relationships. Those who are married tend to be happier in their marriages—so much so that certain communication skills are strong predictors of the likelihood of divorce. It is not surprising, then, that people with good communication skills are less likely to experience feelings of loneliness.

And the psychological factors associated with communication skills extend far beyond feelings of loneliness. For example, those with low skills are also more likely to experience anxiety and depression. It is important to note, though, that in many

of these studies the direction of causality is not clear (i.e., do low skills lead to the psychological condition, or does the psychological condition lead to low skills?). Finally, just as communication skills are related to people's mental well-being, they are also related to individuals' physical health. For example, people with low skills are also more likely to suffer from cardiovascular disease and other physiological problems. It is noteworthy, too, that people who are interpersonally isolated (something less likely to happen for skilled communicators) experience higher mortality rates.

Mapping the Domain: Types of Communication Skills

The previous section notwithstanding, it is somewhat misleading to think of a person as being skilled or unskilled because there are actually many distinct abilities that contribute to making a person a more effective and appropriate communicator. Just as a baseball pitcher might possess certain abilities (e.g., a good fastball) and not others (e.g., good control), a person might possess some communication skills but not others. Many different approaches for classifying the various types of communication skills have been developed, and no single one has come into widespread use, but it is possible, at least, to specify some of the key skills that tend to be identified by numerous authors. Furthermore, as a way of organizing these skills, it is useful to think in terms of a general hierarchy of functions that they serve.

Fundamental Functions: Encoding and Decoding Processes

At the most fundamental level of the function-based skills hierarchy are those skills involved in producing effective and appropriate verbal and nonverbal messages and in attending and interpreting the messages of others. Encoding skills, then, include such things as command of requisite vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation; the ability to produce effective nonverbal behaviors such as facial expressions and vocalic cues; and because message planning has been shown to be an important component of skillful interaction, encoding skills also include such things as the ability to

anticipate how others are likely to respond and to choose among behavioral alternatives.

Fundamental decoding skills are those involved in processing stimulus inputs. Like encoding skills, they include a wide variety of activities, including allocating attention to the most important or relevant aspects of the environment, listening, organizing and classifying inputs in appropriate ways, correctly interpreting the verbal and nonverbal behavior of others, and sizing up people and situations.

Interaction Functions: Self-Presentation, Relationship Negotiation, and Interaction Management Processes

At the mid-level of the function hierarchy are skills related to basic needs and demands that arise when people interact with others and that, as a result, characterize most, if not all, of those interactions. Among these is a concern with self-presentation. Following from the work of Erving Goffman and others, scholars have come to recognize that one of people's overarching social concerns is with the kind of impression they create in the minds of others. People want, for example, to be seen as intelligent, honest, friendly, and so on. And yet, there is skill involved in self-presentation, and people often come across in ways very different from what they intended.

A second social function manifested in virtually every human interaction is the presentation and negotiation of the relationship between the interactants. Whenever people communicate—whether with a stranger, customer, coworker, close friend, or lover—they present their view of their relationship with the other (and the other person, simultaneously, does the same). The presentation and negotiation of relationships is typically subtle, but at times it can be complex and difficult: Two people's definition of their relationship may not coincide (e.g., peer vs. subordinate), or one or both of them may be seeking to change the nature of their relationship (e.g., from friend to romantic partner). Whatever the circumstances, there are skills involved in navigating the waters of relational communication in ways that are satisfying for both parties.

A third example of a mid-level function in the hierarchy involves interaction management skills. By their very nature, conversations involve a complex interweaving of the interlocutors' behavior.

Before an interaction ever begins, there are issues of whether or how to initiate interaction. During interactions, people must engage in the exchange of speaking turns; they deal with interruptions and talk overs; they must respond to the conversational contributions of their partners; they decide whether to extend or change the topic. As an interaction comes to a close, there are skills involved in understanding and signaling that fact. Interaction management skills, then, are involved in people's ability to coordinate their behavior with that of others: Greetings, conversations, and leave-taking can proceed smoothly, with each person seemingly in sync with the other, or they can be awkward and difficult.

Social Task Functions: Context Specific Processes

At the upper level of the skills hierarchy is a whole host of skills related to specific social contexts and goals. Unlike the first two levels, which apply to virtually all interactions, these skills are related to functions and objectives that arise in particular settings. The list of skills at this level, then, is extensive indeed. For example, it includes skills related to informing and explaining, persuasion and social influence, providing support and encouragement, giving advice and counsel, managing conflict, negotiation, interviewing, group discussion and decision making, and public speaking.

General Features of Skillful Communication

The specific behaviors that constitute skilled communication will, quite naturally, vary from situation to situation (e.g., the verbal and nonverbal behaviors that are likely to be appropriate at a party are less likely to be so at a funeral). Nevertheless, it is possible to identify from the relevant research certain general features that tend to characterize behaviors that are perceived as more effective and appropriate. Among these general principles are the following five, plus two additional overarching principles:

1. Behavior tends to be perceived more positively when it reflects another orientation. People who are able to convey attentiveness, interest, and responsiveness to their interlocutors are likely to be viewed as more socially skilled than those who seem bored, disinterested, or self-absorbed.

2. Behavior tends to be perceived more positively when it reflects a higher level of energy. People who are enthusiastic, expressive, and energetic are more likely to be viewed as socially skilled than their counterparts who seem lethargic and slow.
3. Behavior tends to be perceived more positively when it is rewarding. People who, for example, convey respect for their conversational partners, or who praise and compliment others, tend to be perceived as more socially skilled than those who are sarcastic, cynical, and punishing.
4. Behavior tends to be perceived more positively when it reflects an appropriate understanding of the nature of the relationship between the interactants. Interpersonal relationships differ along a number of dimensions, and people whose behavior suggests an accurate conception of their relationship with another along these various dimensions tend to come across as being more skilled. For example, relationships differ in the level of intimacy or closeness between those involved, and people may behave in ways that seem too chummy (or too distant). Similarly, there is a power dimension to relationships, and those who seem too bossy (or too submissive) may be perceived as less appropriate and effective.
5. Behaviors that reflect a lack of composure or decorum tend to be perceived in negative ways. Many examples are possible here, but they include such things as losing one's temper and similar instances of a lack of emotional control, as well as behaviors such as nail biting and other actions related to personal hygiene.

Beyond these five general principles, then, there are two additional ones that trump the others in the sense that they suggest qualifications and conditions on the first five:

1. Behavior tends to be perceived more positively at moderate levels. Virtually any behavior is less effective and appropriate when there is either too little or too much of it. Whether it be eye contact, smiling, speech rate, self-disclosure, or whatever—anything can be overdone. And applied to the five general principles listed above, although it is true that more energetic and animated people may be perceived more positively, it is possible to be too energetic; rewarding people may come across as more socially skilled, but the principle has its limits.

2. Behavior tends to be perceived more positively when it is adapted to one's interlocutor, the relationship, and situation. The importance of this principle is to suggest that none of the previous principles will apply in every social interaction. There will always be exceptions to any set of guidelines for what constitutes effective and appropriate behavior.

Skill Acquisition and Skill Training

People are not born with skills (although people may be born with predispositions and characteristics that facilitate skill acquisition); instead, skills are acquired over time. And in the case of complex skills, the process of skill acquisition tends to be rather gradual. In fact, research on skill acquisition in a number of domains has led researchers to posit the 10-year rule: Achieving truly expert performance requires approximately 10 years of focused practice. If one charts the course of performance improvement (y axis) over time (x axis), the graph for almost any skill will be a decelerating (power) curve. In the early stages of practice, performance tends to improve a great deal, but the pace of performance improvement tends to slow, and after several years of practice, it approaches an asymptote.

There are a number of behavioral and cognitive changes that mark the course of skill acquisition, including (a) speed—experts are faster than novices; (b) accuracy—as skill improves, people make fewer mistakes or errors; (c) flexibility—more experienced individuals are better able to adapt to new and changing circumstances; (d) cognitive effort—in the early stages of skill acquisition, people have to concentrate on what they are doing, but over time, the mental work involved in carrying out the skill diminishes; (e) multiple-task performance—one of the implications of reduction in cognitive workload is that experts find it easier to do more than one thing at a time; and (f) a more abstract and sophisticated conception of behavior—rather than thinking about and monitoring the low-level, concrete details of their actions, experts tend to see what they are doing in a more abstract, big-picture way.

Numerous training programs for improving communication skills have been developed, and although they differ in their details, they do tend to reflect certain common elements:

Instruction. Skill acquisition is facilitated when people have a clear understanding of what they need to do. It is important, then, to provide explicit guidelines about what skilled behavior in a particular domain entails. Instruction may also include the presentation of models of skilled performance that reflect the desired attributes, as well as models of what not to do.

Practice. It is generally accepted that practice is essential for skill acquisition. Most typically, practice involves efforts to actually implement desired behaviors in real or simulated social contexts, but practice can take other forms, including mental rehearsal, workbook assignments, and so on. Practice tends to be most effective when people concentrate in a focused way on the details of their behavior in an effort to meet the guidelines they are trying to master.

Feedback. To more closely match behavioral ideals, people need feedback about their performances. Without such information, it may be difficult to know what sort of changes need to be made. Feedback is more effective when it is adapted to learners' own understanding of what they should be doing. So, for example, in the early stages of skill acquisition, when people tend to operate with relatively low-level, concrete conceptions of the activity, feedback ought to be couched in similar terms. As individuals acquire increasingly more abstract understandings of the activity, the most effective feedback will correspond to their construals of what they are doing.

In discussing skill-training programs, it is important to note that skill acquisition does not insure skill retention and transfer (see the discussion of skill failures below). It is typically possible to bring about improvements in various measures of skill acquisition, but this does not guarantee that people will retain that knowledge or ability over some span of time. And perhaps even more significantly, skills acquired in training and classroom settings very often fail to transfer to the real-world contexts where they are relevant.

Skill Assessment

There are a great many alternative approaches to performance assessment, and they resist easy classification, but one rudimentary scheme for organizing

assessment procedures is to classify them in terms of *level* and *method*. Level essentially concerns how fine-grained a skill assessment is. Assessments may, for example, involve (a) global evaluations of overall communication skill, (b) assessments of an individual's abilities with respect to various skill domains such as those described earlier, or (c) at a very molecular level, assessments of specific behavioral features such as eye contact, gestures, and so on. Although level concerns what is being assessed, method involves how those assessments are made. The possibilities, again, are numerous, but among the most common techniques are self- and observer ratings of performance quality in actual or simulated interactions, administration of established scales designed to tap perceptions of either one's own or another's skill level, assessment of accuracy or quality with respect to some objective standard (e.g., accuracy in detecting deception), and frequency counts and duration measures of behavioral cues taken to be indicative of either skilled or unskilled communication (e.g., self-adaptors).

Skill Failures

As important as communication skill is, the fact remains that people very often fail to act in socially appropriate and effective ways. Much research, then, has focused on understanding the sources of skill failure. One major tradition of thought identifies two broad classes of factors underlying skill failures: knowledge (including the ability to use that knowledge) and motivation. In simplest terms, in order to behave in a skilled manner, a person must possess requisite knowledge and ability and be motivated to actually put that knowledge and ability to work. When either factor is deficient or absent (for any of a variety of reasons), performance is likely to be less than optimal.

A second approach to understanding skill failures is prompted by the common observation that in many cases people possess necessary knowledge and motivation and yet still do not behave in a skillful way. Such phenomena suggest that skill failures may be the result of characteristics of the cognitive structures and processes that give rise to behavior. For example, cognitive theories of behavioral production typically posit that the memory structures used to produce behavior are strengthened through

use and that stronger memory structures are more accessible. From this perspective, then, a person may have information necessary for effective action stored in memory but fail to retrieve that information when it is needed.

John O. Greene

See also Communication, Nonverbal; Communication Processes, Verbal; Emotional Intelligence; Empathic Accuracy and Inaccuracy; Satisfaction in Relationships

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COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Community involvement encompasses the many ways individuals from the same place (e.g., from a specific town or neighborhood) or with similar interests (e.g., a professional association or individuals pursuing a given hobby) interact with one another within a common context. The interactions include, but are not limited to, volunteerism, community organizing, social action, citizenship behaviors, and neighboring. Community

involvement precipitates and reflects connections between self and others, providing opportunities for relationships to develop between individuals, between individuals and agencies or organizations, and between individuals and their communities. This entry considers dimensions of community involvement, factors believed to motivate such involvement, and consequences of involvement.

Dimensions of Community Involvement

Community involvement can take on many forms, varying across multiple dimensions; the anchors of a subset of such dimensions are described in this entry.

Involvement can be formal or informal, varying in degree of structure and commitment. As two examples from the formal end of the spectrum, an elected official holds set responsibilities within an organization for a specified period of time, and a volunteer at a nonprofit agency perhaps commits to answering a crisis hotline for 3 hours on the same night of each week. Informal involvement, on the other hand, is less structured and likely involves no explicit commitment to continue involvement. A citizen might call the authorities to report a suspicious person lurking near an elementary school; a family might regularly introduce newcomers on the block to the long-time residents.

Involvement also varies in terms of duration. It can be sustained (e.g., a long-term member of the school board), intermittent (e.g., a person who participates in neighborhood beautification projects every few years), or one-shot (e.g., a person who attends a community parade once during his or her residency).

Although community involvement is generally a social pursuit in as much as it contributes to the social fabric of broader collectives, it nevertheless varies in the extent to which the actions themselves are social. Others need not necessarily be involved in order for an action to qualify as community involvement. Examples of potentially solo actions that could nevertheless constitute community involvement include picking up a piece of litter in the park, writing a letter to the newspaper editor, maintaining a Web site for a hobbyist group, and reading a poster announcing a lost pet. If others are involved, they may be total strangers (e.g.,

marchers at a public protest), familiar others (e.g., individuals attending a Neighborhood Watch meeting or regular participants in an online community of cancer survivors), or even close friends (e.g., a small group of families who take turns preparing weekday meals for the other families).

Factors That Motivate Community Involvement

A complex constellation of factors compel individuals to become involved in their communities. These factors range from the purely situational (e.g., welcoming a stranger into one's home after a devastating natural disaster hits the community) to the purely psychological (e.g., assuaging feelings of loneliness by volunteering one's time at an agency). Factors motivating involvement fall roughly into three categories: other-focused, self-focused, and mandated.

Individuals motivated by other-focused interests generally seek to improve the lives of other people, ranging from a specific person (e.g., a child in the Big Brothers Big Sisters program) to society at large (e.g., as in the case of an environmental activist seeking to improve the world for her or his descendants). In contrast, individuals motivated by self-focused interests seek to improve or express some aspects of one's own life. A partial list of such self-focused motivations include a desire to fulfill value-based goals (e.g., religious, political, humanitarian), to fulfill a need to belong to a social group, to increase one's self-esteem, to promote one's own career, to gain skills or knowledge, to nurture generativity, and to expand one's social network.

As suggested by the category label, mandated involvement is required in some way. Examples of mandated involvement include service-learning (in which an educator pairs required community involvement with classroom experiences so that the two kinds of exposure to a particular topic can strengthen and broaden students' learning) and court-mandated involvement (e.g., a judge might require a drug offender to speak to junior high students about the risks of drug use).

Importantly, an individual might at once be motivated by any number of other-focused, self-focused, or mandated factors, and the relative dominance of these factors varies across individuals.

Consequences of Community Involvement

Community involvement holds meaningful consequences, both benefits and costs, for individual engagers, the recipients of some types of involvement, the agencies or organizations in which involvers participate (if applicable), the community in which the involvement occurs, and society in general.

The individual who involves herself or himself in the community stands to fulfill the social, psychological, and functional needs suggested by the motivations listed above. This encyclopedia's focus on human relationships calls for additional comment about the relational outcomes of involvement. Engaging in one's community presents an opportunity to meet and interact with other people. Importantly, in the case of communities of interests, the others with whom the engager interacts likely hold at least some similar views, interests, and attitudes; these similarities provide a medium for nurturing friendships and romantic attractions. In the case of geographic communities, the person who engages in her or his community may cross paths regularly with other engagers, thus increasing the opportunity for different engagers to become familiar with one another; like similarity, this familiarity sets the stage for potential friendships and romantic relationships.

Given that some types of involvement involve explicit support of others, involvement holds potential consequences for recipients or targets of involvement. For example, a parent who contributes time and energy to a parent-teachers association benefits the school's children, teachers, and administrators. Likewise, entire organizations benefit from the community involvement of individuals. Potential benefits include free (as in the case of volunteers) or low-cost (as in the case of many public officials) people power, an influx of creativity and knowledge, and goodwill within the broader community. In turn, the broader community and society in general benefit from the increase in social capital afforded by an involved citizenship.

Involvement also incurs costs. It takes individuals' time, attention, and perhaps even money. Recipients of well-intentioned support might actually experience the support as ill-timed, ineffective, or unwanted. Agencies and organizations

incur costs as they attempt to recruit, manage, and retain volunteers and activists.

In spite of the costs associated with community involvement, it is nevertheless generally valued. In total, community involvement reflects and contributes to psychological sense of community, which David W. McMillan and David M. Chavis describe as consisting of a shared emotional connection, an ability to affect one's civic entity or organization, an ability of the community to fill one's needs for support (often because of community members' ability to work together), a sense of membership or belongingness within a community, and a conscious identification with the community.

Debra Mashek

See also Social Capital; Weak Ties

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COMPARISON LEVELS

Comparison levels are an individual's expectations for the quality of a close relationship and the alternatives they have to that relationship. The *comparison level* (CL) is the standard that an individual uses to determine how satisfied he or she is with a specific relationship, which depends on the expected ratio of rewards-to-costs in that relationship. The *comparison level for alternatives* (CL_{alt}) is the minimal reward-to-cost ratio that an individual will accept to stay in a relationship, taking

into account the expected reward-to-cost ratio of the best available alternative. During the course of a relationship, if an individual's CL drops below his or her CL_{alt} for that relationship, then he or she will likely exit that relationship.

There are many determinants of CL and CL_{alt} including the quality of the existing relationship and the availability of alternatives to the relationship. CL and CL_{alt} also determine outcomes in a relationship including how committed an individual is to a relationship and how much he or she will sacrifice for that relationship. Comparison levels are a concept in social exchange theories of relationships, which view relationships as an economic system of rewards, costs, and investments. This entry reviews the determinants of comparison levels and how they affect an individual's likelihood of continuing the relationship.

CL and Relationship Satisfaction

Every relationship has rewards and costs. Rewards can be things like financial security, a supportive partner, and connections to a larger social network. Costs include time sacrificed from other interests, relationship conflict, and the partner's annoying habits. Everyone has certain expectations about what he or she deserves in his or her relationship, which determines his or her CL. These expectations are based on an individual's experience with previous relationships (parents, friends, romantic partners) and observations of other relationships. If the actual ratio of rewards-to-costs is higher than what he or she expects, then the individual will be satisfied with his or her relationship. If this ratio is lower than what he or she expects, then the individual will be dissatisfied with the relationship. Perceptions of rewards and costs can change over time. In successful relationships, people believe that their rewards grow more rapidly than the costs, making the relationships more satisfying and less likely to end.

Investments in a Relationship

Across time there are certain investments in relationships, such as financial and emotional resources, that would be sacrificed if the relationship ended. This sacrifice increases the cost

of ending the relationship and lowers the CL_{alt} . For example, couples spend more time together, combine their finances, and integrate their social networks. It is much easier to leave a dating relationship where both partners live apart than a marriage where the partners have purchased a house together. Therefore, when there are few investments that are easily forfeited, individuals are more likely to end their relationship. In contrast, a relationship with many investments increases the cost of ending that relationship.

Attractive Alternatives

Individuals always have alternatives to the relationship. They can start another similar type of relationship by finding a new romantic partner, they could become single, or they could start a different type of relationship, such as leaving a parent's home to marry. The quality of an individual's alternatives to the relationship (CL_{alt}) is based on the potential rewards and costs of the alternative. A new romantic partner may be better looking or nicer and being single may leave more time for personal pursuits, thereby raising the CL_{alt} . At the same time, individuals will lose all of the investments they have made in their current relationships and acquire the costs of the alternative. A new relationship will take time and effort, and being single may be lonely, thereby lowering the CL_{alt} . When the alternatives to a relationship are of high quality, the CL_{alt} will grow. At that point, the individual is more likely to leave his or her existing relationship.

The Relationship Between CL and CL_{alt}

In general, as a relationship becomes more satisfying (the ratio of rewards-to-costs is higher than the CL), individuals will raise their standards for alternatives to the relationships (lowering the CL_{alt}) making it less likely for people to leave the relationship. People who are highly committed to their relationship, relative to those who are less committed, pay less attention to attractive alternatives and often derogate attractive alternatives by seeing them as less attractive. Moreover, individuals who are feeling love for their romantic partners

are better able to push thoughts of attractive alternatives out of their minds.

But even committed relationships can be endangered by attractive alternatives. Even when individuals are in committed relationships, they will often pay attention to highly attractive alternatives. When individuals are in an environment with many attractive alternatives, the environment can change how these people perceive their own relationship. If people perceive their environments to be filled with attractive alternative partners (raising the CL_{alt}), they become less committed to their current relationship. Thus, across time, an individual's CL and CL_{alt} can change as the rewards and costs of the relationship change, the amount of investment in the relationship increases, and the quality and number of alternatives in the environment changes. Because these aspects of a relationship change, individuals' commitment to their relationships will vary across time.

Gian C. Gonzaga

See also Commitment, Predictors and Outcomes; Exchange Processes; Interdependence Theory; Investment Model; Satisfaction in Relationships; Social Exchange Theory

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COMPASSIONATE LOVE

Compassionate love is centered on the good of the other. The expressions *compassionate love* and the closely related *altruistic love* are used in recent research to identify a self-giving, caring love that values the other highly and has the intention of giving full life to the other, promoting flourishing. At the core of the construct are motivation, discernment, and a freely chosen decision to give. The *why* of the action, the reason for the behavior, the motivation behind the action—all are important to categorizing attitudes and actions as compassionately loving in nature. Compassionate love can be expressed in the context of other kinds of love such as romantic love and familial affection and in the context of altruistic actions but reaches beyond them. Compassionate love is not always in response to the suffering of another; it also includes attitudes and actions designed to encourage the flourishing and growth of another at a cost to self. This kind of love is a central feature in many religious traditions but is not necessarily tied to any particular religion.

Certain qualities are central to compassionate love: (a) choosing freely to give of self for the benefit of the other; (b) some degree of cognitive understanding of the situation of the other and of oneself; (c) valuing the other at a fundamental level; (d) openness and receptivity, leaving space for receptivity to the divine if relevant; and (e) response of the heart, the integrative core of one's being. Some affective quality is usually part of this kind of attitude or action, and moral decision making has been seen in empirical studies to involve affective as well as cognitive areas of the brain and body. This entry builds on this definition of compassionate love and articulates a model that is useful in fleshing out the construct, interpreting research in the area, and creating applications of research.

Operational Model

Lynn Underwood developed a model that has been useful in developing research in this area and in applying that research to practical situations. The starting point of the model, the substrate of compassionate love, consists of individual variations in

personality, biology, and developmental patterns nested within and shaped by cultural, historical, family, and social environments. Although none of these factors necessarily determine whether a person will be compassionately loving, they can increase or decrease the possibility of such behavior. Individuals, with their different initial conditions, or substrate, encounter specific situations and relationships. They engage with motivation and discernment and then make choices resulting in action or expression of attitude. There is also a feedback loop. Actions feed back on the individual, affecting the development of the person over time. The outcomes of actions and the effect of being loving itself can both exert feedback on the development of the person. Some examples follow that indicate the kinds of research that are emerging in this area and that help to flesh out this basic model.

Elaboration of the Model With Research Findings and Possibilities

Substrate

Relevant factors that affect one's capacity to express compassionate love include such things as how well one was loved as a child, one's religious and cultural environment, and one's inherited disposition. For example, it has been shown that empathic concern, but not perspective-taking empathy, may be inherited to some extent and that extraverts may find it easier to reach out to a stranger than introverts. Empathy can also be taught in a parental or social context. Physical factors are also part of the substrate. The old or disabled are less able to offer physical assistance to a person in need, even if the desire exists. Although none of these factors necessarily determine whether a person will be compassionately loving, they increase or decrease the probability of such behavior and the form it can take. These substrate factors, which can change over time, can be thought of as limitations of freedom, as they may constrain the capacity to love, but these substrate factors can also boost the capacity to express love.

Specific Situations and Relationships

The expression of compassionate love can also be affected by the specific situation and the relationship

to the person being loved. It is easier to love ingroup members than outgroup members. Most people have a distinct sense of the stranger that affects how they relate to people. The particular physical expressions of compassionate love as expressed in marriage differ from its expression in interactions with strangers. One illustration of how specific situations and relationships can affect compassionate love comes from brain-imaging studies of mothers viewing photographs of babies. There is a very different physiological response in the area of the brain correlated with positive mood when mothers view photographs of their own babies when compared to photographs of other babies. Economic structures can also affect when and how compassionate love is expressed. In the health care systems of the United States and many other countries, a fee for service or fee for time arrangement can result in actions by health care providers primarily motivated by duty, obligation, and profit. However, even in such a system, there is flexibility that provides opportunity to go the extra mile for the patient or to engage in compassionate caring for the sick person.

Motivation

Motivation and discernment are an integral part of the moment of choice and are crucial to the definition of compassionate or altruistic love. Motives are always mixed, and self-centered motives can dominate other-centered motives. Motivation is the driving force for other-centered actions and attitudes. People overcome inertia or self-centered tendencies through strength of motive. Compassionate love springs from valuing in the other person highly at a fundamental level and a desire to see the person flourish—that is, the driving force of the action or words. This competes within the person with egocentric desires for comfort and success. The kinds of motives that can get in the way of compassionate love include the need for reciprocal love and affection, the need to be accepted by others or by God, the need to belong, the feeling of guilt and/or fear, the seeing of the other as an extension or reflection of the self, the feeling of pleasure in looking well in the eyes of others, the control of the other through their indebtedness, the desire to exercise power over others, the desire to reinforce positive image of self and feelings of superiority, and/or the desire to

avoid confrontation. These kinds of internal struggles were articulated in interviews during the development of Underwood's Daily Spiritual Experience scale which included self-report items relevant to compassionate love such as "I feel a selfless caring for others" scored on a Likert scale (many times a day to never or almost never). In interviews of inner-city women, for example, this report did not correspond with self-abnegation but with attitudes that centered on the good of the other at substantive cost to oneself. Those reporting this could describe the force of this inner attitude and its weight in decisions to act or speak out. It can show itself in actions such as helping take care of the aging parent of someone else in the community or as offering a kind supportive word when exhausted at the end of a long day of work. (A more dramatic example of compassionate love would be those who rescued others in the Holocaust at substantial risk to their own well-being.) In the 2005 General Social Survey, 11.5 percent of the population reported having an experience of selfless caring for others many times a day or every day, 43.7 percent most days or some days, and 14 percent never or almost never.

The primary way to understand motive is through self-report. However, people often do not understand their own motives and also like to portray them as more positive than they are. Therefore, other techniques are needed to uncover motives. For example, experimental social psychology has techniques that attempt to isolate altruistic motives. Other innovative techniques, such as those used by behavioral economists, rely on game theory to identify controlled situations in which motive can be elucidated. Neural imaging can also compare areas of the brain that have increased blood flow during various self-reports and correlate them with responses when confronted with scenarios that elicit other-centered attitudes. Further understanding of the motives relevant to compassionate love can be facilitated by using subjects who are particularly aware of the myriad of motives involved in actions. People can be trained to reflect on motivation and to become more self-aware. An example of this was found in a set of interviews of Christian monks. These men value compassionate love highly in their living situation and are trained to reflect and recognize motives such as self-aggrandizement and other self-centered motives, as they are

encouraged to continually work toward actions centered on the good of the other. These actions can be seen in simple situations such as allowing another person to step in front of oneself in line at meals or graciously encouraging a more qualified man to be assigned to a position that one had desired for oneself. Studies of particular groups who value compassionate love and strive to incorporate it into their lives at cost to self can also give greater insight into how these motives operate.

Discernment

Discernment is also important and closely linked with motivation. Discernment involves weighing situations, both explicitly and intuitively. Compassionate love fully expressed is not just good intentions but is applying the discipline of discernment as well as one can to decide what is really good for the other in order to implement it. This discernment involves balancing competing factors. One must assert appropriate self-interests while caring for others. People continually balance short-term versus long-term considerations. The needs of others who are close and cared for must be balanced with those of strangers or more distant others. People must balance giving and receiving. Rather than taking the moral high ground and always being on the giving side, in some circumstances the compassionately loving thing is to allow the other person to give. This takes place in the l'Arche communities where those with mental handicaps are seen as people with gifts to give others in the communities, not just passive recipients of care. And finally, justice and fairness must be balanced with mercy. One may judge that it is ultimately the most loving to establish a more just society that promotes more caring behavior overall, even when it requires less than compassionate behavior toward an individual. One may even do this at cost to oneself. These choices are not easy.

Compassionate love also leaves an opening for the divine, God, or the transcendent as an effect on the substrate and as an influence on motivation and choice. For example, for some people, divine love is perceived to affect them either directly or through other people, and they find that this enables them to be loving when they are otherwise inclined. For many who believe in the existence of the transcendent, compassionate love

exists in a religious or spiritual context of love, grace, or gratitude.

Behavioral Outcomes

Actions and attitudes may be outcomes of compassionate love, but observed altruistic behaviors such as organ donation, volunteering, and supporting others in a social context can be the result of either self-centered (e.g., to be seen as a virtuous person) or other-centered motives. Behavioral outcomes are only one part of the assessment of compassionate love and are never definitive. In this model, motivation and discernment centered on the good of the other leads to loving action when the inhibiting effects of the substrate (physical, emotional, social environmental, cultural), relationship, or situation do not excessively interfere.

Conclusion

Experiencing love from another that is based on valuing a person fundamentally rather than valuing a person's functional performance or utility is one of the things that makes life worth living. When people express love with motives that seem centered on the good of the other, with cost to self, it can have a powerful impact. It is only by combining outcomes and assessing substrates, motivation, and discernment that the presence of compassionate love can be assessed. Further exploration into the causes and impediments to this behavior has potential to create a better living environment and improve social conditions.

Lynn Underwood

See also: Empathy; God, Relationships With; Love, Typologies; Social Support Interventions; Unconditional Positive Regard; Understanding; Willingness to Sacrifice

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COMPATIBILITY

According to standard dictionary definitions, *compatibility* refers to the ability of two parties to peacefully coexist, whereas *incompatibility* refers to their inability to do so. Metaphorically, this distinction can be illustrated by the difference between one set of gears that are precisely matched to each other and a second set of gears that are badly mismatched. Well-matched gears operate together in a smooth, synchronized manner; mismatched gears grind and grate against each other, producing heat, noise, mutual wear and tear, and sometimes, a complete mutual inhibition of movement.

Obviously, human relationships are far more complicated than the movements of a set of mechanical gears. However, in the human context as well, the essential distinction between a smooth coordination of respective movements (*compatibility*) versus a grating clash of respective movements (*incompatibility*) is equally valid. Given this basic distinction, the current entry reviews some important factors that directly influence compatibility in close relationships, and then concludes with a brief consideration of marital interaction and options for treating marital incompatibility.

A formal theoretical account of the difference between compatibility and incompatibility has been provided by Ellen Berscheid, who focused specifically on the intra- and interchained activities of the relationship members:

That portion of the relationship's infrastructure . . . that is especially relevant to the relationship's compatibility or incompatibility is that portion that encompasses activities that are intrachained—or, in other words, that portion that represents each

partner's organized action sequences and higher-order plans. Thus, whether—and how—the individual's sequences and plans impinge on the partner's sequences and plans (and vice versa) should determine the emotional tenor of the relationship. Where interchain connections between the partners interrupt one or both persons' intrachain activities, negative emotion should result; where interchain connections facilitate each person's performance of intrachain activities, or where there are no interchain connections to these activities, harmony should prevail. In the beginning of a relationship, both persons bring with them a lifetime of organized behavior sequences as well as current plans in progress. How these two sets of intrachain activities fit together not only helps to determine whether the relationship will be compatible or incompatible, close or distant, but also whether it shall live or die. (1985, p. 153)

Each individual has many different goals, plans, and habit patterns, and it is a constant challenge for each individual to juggle, sequence, and align them in a way that minimizes the possibility of their conflicting with each other as intrachained activities. It is an even greater challenge for two individuals—as relationship partners—to not only juggle, sequence, and align their individual goals, plans, and habit patterns but at the same time avoid disrupting each other's attempts to accomplish this task through the interchained, interconnected activities that represent all of the ways in which they are behaviorally and cognitively interdependent with each other. Because the potential for such disruption is often present and hard to avoid, the task of maintaining a compatible relationship is, at times, a difficult and complicated one.

Theory and research findings suggest that compatibility depends to a large extent on the partners' ability to understand each other and to anticipate each other's respective thoughts, feelings, goals, motives, and habitual and planned behaviors. Such understanding enables the partners to preemptively avoid disrupting each other's interchained activities (although such disruptions may, at times, be initiated intentionally—often for the purpose of avoiding an even greater anticipated disruption later on). Among the many factors that affect such understanding are the ones described below, as

identified by various contributors to William Ickes's edited book, *Compatible and Incompatible Relationships*.

Predictability

According to D. W. Rajecki, mammalian species whose members live together in groups will typically threaten, attack, and even kill unfamiliar members of their species who look and act differently. Rajecki argued that this xenophobic response is an evolved adaptation that helps to solve the problem of nonkin attempting to enter one's group and compete for the resources (e.g., food, potential mates) that are needed to ensure one's personal survival and the ability to pass on one's genes through reproduction. If his analysis is correct, humans as well as other social mammals may be biologically predisposed to have incompatible relationships with unfamiliar and dissimilar others.

Level of Cognitive and Social Development

Because parents are, in virtually every case, more cognitively and socially developed than their children, parents have a greater responsibility than their children to apply their skills in order to make the parent-child relationship a compatible one. They must be patient with the child's limitations, try to accommodate these limitations at each stage of the child's development, and encourage the child to transcend them. Parents' failures to do this can result in problems and delays in the child's development and—in extreme cases—in acts of child abuse.

Level of Behavioral and Cognitive Interdependence

According to Berscheid, a high level of behavioral interdependence is like a two-edged sword. On the one hand, it enables relationship partners to achieve a high level of involvement with each other and can therefore lead to greater cooperation, intimacy, and compatibility. On the other hand, it provides more opportunities for relationship partners to disrupt each other's interchain activities and can therefore lead to greater conflict, disaffection, and incompatibility. Fortunately,

according to Daniel Wegner, Toni Giuliano, and Paula Hertel, a high level of cognitive interdependence (i.e., shared knowledge and mutual understanding) usually helps to mitigate the potential negative effects of behavioral interdependence, although there are some cases in which partners who understand each other too well can experience greater incompatibility as a result.

Perceptions of Equity and Inequity

Research by Elaine Hatfield and her colleagues has shown that partners strive to be treated equitably within their relationships, and they will often use protests and other means to attempt to gain fairer and more equitable treatment when they feel that they are underbenefited in comparison to their interaction partner. Even when equity is objectively present, however, the erroneous perception that one is underbenefited is generally sufficient to make a previously compatible relationship more incompatible. The other form of perceived inequity—the perception that one is overbenefited in comparison to one's interaction partner—is more easily rationalized and is therefore less likely to affect the compatibility of the relationship unless one's partner perceives and objects to one's overbenefited status.

Perceptions of Relationship Type: Exchange Versus Communal

Margaret Clark and her colleagues have drawn a sharp distinction between exchange relationships and communal relationships. In exchange (i.e., nonintimate) relationships, people regard their treatment as equitable when members follow an implicit tit for tat reciprocity rule, returning benefits to each other fairly quickly and in kind. In communal (i.e., intimate) relationships, however, people are less likely to keep track of what they are "owed" over the short term and instead expect that if they strive to meet their partner's needs, their partner will strive to meet their own needs over time. Short-term violations of the reciprocity rule are therefore more likely to engender incompatibility in exchange relationships than in communal ones. Feelings of compatibility are also likely to be impaired when one person expects the

relationship to be a communal relationship, but the other person expects it to be an exchange relationship instead.

Fantasy Versus Reality

When partners' perceptions of their relationships are fantasy-based rather than reality-based, feelings of compatibility can be illusory as well. On the other hand, when fantasy-based perceptions of the relationship are discredited, the sudden awareness of incompatibility can be all too vivid and real.

Sex-Role Influences

Contrary to what many people believe, heterosexual relationships between a traditionally masculine man and a traditionally feminine woman are not the most compatible ones. Instead, the results of several studies reviewed by William Ickes reveal that both the men and the women in long-term heterosexual relationships express the highest levels of satisfaction when they are paired with a partner who scores high in psychological femininity (i.e., is caring, nurturing, and emotionally supportive).

Self-Conceptions and Mutual Identity Confirmation

The partners' kind and considerate treatment of each other may not be sufficient to ensure a compatible relationship. In addition, each partner needs to feel that his or her self-conceptions and sense of identity are consistently acknowledged and confirmed in the other partner's response to them. Incompatibility frequently results when this is not the case.

Actual and Assumed Similarity

Compatibility is generally facilitated by the partners' similarity on variables such as age, race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, level of education, religion, and political orientation. It is also facilitated by their similarity in attitudes, values, and some—but not all—personality traits.

Although the partners' actual similarity on such dimensions is clearly important, there is growing evidence that their perceptions of assumed similarity are of equal or even greater importance. For example, in many studies the degree of assumed similarity in attitudes and values plays a greater role in the partners' reported relationship satisfaction than the level of actual similarity does.

The Role of Compatibility and Incompatibility in Marriage Relationships

Because marital incompatibility is a major cause of divorce, it is also a major focus of marital research and marital therapy. George Levinger and Marilyn Rands have reviewed the topic of marital compatibility and incompatibility, examining in some detail the various causes of marital incompatibility and how couples attempt to deal with them. Levinger and Rands argue that various macrolevel variables (e.g., role complementarity, social network influences) and microlevel variables (e.g., conflict resolution styles) continuously impact the quality of marital relationships beginning at the time of mate selection.

Many researchers have used proxy measures such as marital stability and marital satisfaction to identify various demographic and personality traits that facilitate compatible relationships. The search for optimal trait predictors suggests that those traits having the most direct relevance for personal relationships (e.g., psychological femininity, anxious-avoidant attachment, social individuation, social absorption, and sociosexuality) are better than more abstract and general personality traits (e.g., the Big Five personality dimensions) in predicting marital satisfaction and other compatibility-related outcome measures.

Focusing on the darker side of compatibility, William Follette and Neil Jacobson have reviewed the topic of how marital incompatibility is assessed and treated in the context of marital therapy. Therapy with married couples often emphasizes short-term treatment goals, acute problem reduction, and skills training. Behaviorally based marital treatments, such as Behavioral Marital Therapy, have demonstrated some success in improving the quality of interaction between couples because of their focus on positive behaviors, problem solving,

and communication. Behaviorally based treatments may not be appropriate for all distressed couples, however. Because different types of incompatibility require different types of interventions, there is no single one-size-fits-all approach that can be used to restore compatibility to all troubled marriages.

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See also Conflict Prevalence and Sources; Connectedness, Tension With Autonomy; Couple Therapy; Dissolution of Relationships, Causes; Satisfaction in Relationships; Understanding

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COMPLEMENTARITY

Within the context of social relationships, the term *complementarity* has two distinct and separate

meanings. Of these two definitions, complementarity most commonly refers to the premise that people tend to seek out other individuals with characteristics that are different yet complementary from their own (a concept sometimes called negative assortative mating). A second definition of complementarity is derived from Interpersonal Theory and refers to the principle that during any dyadic interaction, the behaviors of one person tend to elicit or constrain the behaviors of the other, and vice versa (a concept sometimes called interpersonal complementarity). This entry describes both of these definitions and provides an overview of the research examining complementarity.

Negative Assortative Mating

The notion that people are generally attracted to persons who possess characteristics that are dissimilar from their own is a prominent belief in popular culture and is reflected in the common expression opposites attract. It is thought that such differences are sought because it allows couples to divide tasks and pursue goals that are consistent with each member's personality without much conflict. For example, a couple might experience little conflict if one member is motivated or driven by social rewards (e.g., remembers birthdays, focuses on raising children, etc.) and the other is focused on material rewards (e.g., earning a high income).

Although the notion of complementarity tends to be a common belief among laypersons, research examining assortative mating suggests that people tend to be attracted to others who are similar to themselves. It has been argued that such similarity might be sought because it produces feelings of attachment, fosters a sense of equality, and allows each partner to enhance or reinforce the self-concept of the (similar) other. Research has found that men and women alike have a propensity to desire romantic partners similar to themselves on traits such as extraversion, agreeableness, emotional stability, conscientiousness, and openness to experience. Studies have also found preferences for romantic partners who are similar with respect to certain demographic characteristics such as age, ethnicity, religious background, height, weight, socioeconomic status, values, political orientation, and physical qualities. As noted by David Buss,

and in contrast to the popular definition of complementarity, the notion that people desire homogamy is one of the most replicated findings in human mating research.

Not only have studies suggested that individuals tend to desire a person who is similar (i.e., not complementary) to themselves, but such similarity is also related to relationship quality. Researchers have repeatedly found that similarity between romantic partners on various characteristics (e.g., age, socioeconomic status, personality, etc.) is linked to lower levels of divorce and higher levels of marital quality. Taken together, past research suggests that this kind of complementarity is not often sought in romantic partners nor does it typically lead to satisfying relationships.

Interpersonal Complementarity

Within the context of Interpersonal Theory, the term *complementarity* refers to the principle that an individual's behavior tends to alter the behavior of his or her interaction partner. This implies that interpersonal behaviors carry information regarding how the other should respond, and thus, interpersonal behaviors can encourage or restrain subsequent behavior from others. Although this notion of complementarity seems fairly straightforward, there have been various models presented to define exactly how complementarity occurs. Arguably, the two most common models are Robert Carson's model of complementarity and Jerry Wiggins's model of complementarity. Both of these models utilize the dimensions of warmth and dominance, which are often conceptualized as the primary components of social behavior, in order to define complementarity.

Carson's model of complementarity predicts that dominant or submissive behaviors encourage the opposite behavior in interaction partners (i.e., dominance invites submission, and submission invites dominance), and warm or cold behaviors encourage similar response in interaction partners (i.e., warmth invites warmth, and coldness invites coldness). For example, if person A acts in a warm and dominant manner, the likely response of person B would be to complement this style of behavior by acting in a warm and submissive manner. Wiggins's model applies social exchange theory to

the dimensions of warmth and dominance in order to predict behaviors that are complementary. This definition suggests that every behavior carries with it information that grants or denies status (to the self and to the other) and grants or denies love (to the self and to the other), and a complementarity behavior is its logical match. For example, a dominant behavior tends to grant both status and love to the self but only grants love without status to the other. The complementary behavior would therefore be a warm response, which tends to grant love without status to the self and both love and status to the other.

Past research examining which of these two models best predicts interpersonal behavior has been somewhat mixed. Researchers have found that the videotaped behaviors of randomly paired strangers tend to occur in a manner predicted by Carson's model of complementarity. However, others have suggested that support for Carson's model only occurs along the warmth dimensions (i.e., dominance does not induce submission and vice versa). For example, researchers have found that participants who interacted with a confederate coached to act in either a dominant or warm manner tended to act in a similar manner in regard to warmth, but the dominant behavior of the confederate failed to evoke submission in the participants.

In sum, complementarity is most frequently defined as the contention that people tend to seek out other individuals with characteristics that are different from their own but is also associated with the distinctly different notion that, during any dyadic interaction, the behaviors of both persons tend to elicit or constrain the behaviors of each other.

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See also Interpersonal Attraction; Interpersonal Influence; Personality Traits, Effects on Relationships

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COMPUTER MATCHING SERVICES

Almost as soon as computers were developed, they were used to match people for romantic relationships. The first widespread computer matching service was Operation Match, which was created in the mid-1960s by Harvard students in response to what they believed to be the evils of blind dates and mixers. They recruited students from several universities, charged them each \$3, and had them complete self-ratings of looks, intelligence, and other factors. However, their computer was not powerful enough to process all of the data, and the business failed.

Computer matching was also used on university campuses in the 1960s and 1970s for the purpose of academic research on attraction. For example, in a classic study on attraction (sometimes referred to as the computer dance study), Elaine Hatfield (then Walster) and her colleagues matched incoming freshmen at the University of Minnesota for a night of dancing and, at intermission, had them complete a questionnaire about how much they liked their assigned date. A computer was used to assist with the matching of the freshmen for the dance, but the assistance was very basic: The computer generated random numbers for determining who should be assigned to whom for the date.

Over time, computers became faster, more powerful, more widespread, and small enough to be able to be placed on one's desktop. Then, the high-speed Internet was created. With these technological advances, a new generation of computer matching services was created, known as Internet matching services, online dating Web sites, and the Internet dating industry. Match.com was the first such site, launched in 1995. Currently, there are hundreds of computer matching services available on the Internet, some of them charging users a

monthly fee and some of them free, generating revenue through advertising. Some sites are broad-based and open to the general population of singles, and some sites are focused on a specific type of membership (e.g., jdate.com, GayWired.com, Silversingles.com, FarmersOnly.com) or location (e.g., LonghornSingles.com at the University of Texas). This entry discusses public attitudes about Internet (computer) matching services as a way to meet partners, how common it is for singles to meet partners through these matching services and who uses them, how the matching process occurs, and the interface between computer matching services and the science of relationships. Online dating is a more general term to refer not only to meeting partners through Internet matching services but also to forming relationships in a variety of ways through the Internet, including chat rooms and social network sites.

Public Attitudes About Computer Matching

When Internet matching services first came into existence, the general public impression was negative, at least according to anecdotal evidence such as newspaper articles. One common impression was that people who used such sites were lonely and desperate. Public attention was also focused on those who lied about their marital status or gender, as well as on sexual predators who used the Internet to obtain victims. There is no doubt that deception and sexual predators existed then, and continue to exist today, on Internet dating sites. However, now that meeting partners through Internet matching sites has become more mainstream, attitudes have shifted from being mostly negative to being mixed or positive.

In 2006, the Pew Internet and American Life Project, a nonprofit research center that monitors the social effects of the Internet, conducted a study to examine Americans' attitudes and experiences with online dating. The 70 percent of the sample who were Internet users were asked questions about their attitudes about online dating. Internet users were divided about whether online dating is a good way to meet people (44 percent agreed, but 44 percent disagreed). More agreed than disagreed with a statement, "Online dating allows people to find a better match for themselves because they get

to know a lot more people." Their findings indicated that people no longer believe that those who engage in online dating are desperate, but a majority worried that online dating can be dangerous. Single persons, and especially those who had tried online dating, had more positive attitudes about online dating as a way to meet a partner.

How Many Use Computer Matching Services to Find Partners

There are many statistics that could be considered, if they were available, to address the popularity of computer matching services: (a) the number of people (or proportion of singles) who are members of one or more dating sites, (b) the number of people (or proportion of singles) who dated someone they met through a matching site, and (c) the number of successful relationships (e.g., marriages) that result from Internet matching services. Unfortunately, there is no valid data source for determining these numbers or proportions in the United States or worldwide. However, three types of data suggest how common it is for people to meet others through computer matching services.

First, there is anecdotal evidence, including popular media and people's awareness of the personal lives of their extended network members. Such data cannot provide precise estimates but do give an idea of how common or rare a phenomenon is. Journalists write about online dating, including estimates of the amount of revenue it generates (\$900 million in 2007, according to Jupiter research) and how mainstream it is becoming. As one example, a recent news story discussed the number of weddings announced in *The New York Times* "Sunday Styles" section that included couples who met through one of the major dating sites. However, anecdotal data can lead to overestimates because of what is called the base-rate fallacy. People are likely to remember vivid and unique cases (their aunt's relationship with an eHarmony match) rather than actual base-rate statistics.

Second, one can look at data provided at the matching sites or in their press releases. Match.com claims on their site (as of spring 2008) that they serve 15 million singles in 37 countries and

“every year, hundreds of thousands of people find love at match.com.” eHarmony claims 5 million users, and a press release in 2006 claimed that over 90 singles marry each day on average from an eHarmony match (based on data from a Harris Interactive study conducted in 2005 in the United States); this would translate to 16,425 weddings a year. A caveat is in order, however. Businesses try to present themselves in the best possible light in order to attract more paying customers, and furthermore, they do not have a perfect way of tracking how many of their users go on dates or eventually marry. Therefore, any claims they make on their Web sites about number of matches can only be estimates.

The third, and best source of data, would be based on scientific studies conducted with representative samples. The Pew Internet and American Life Project on online dating, referred to above, found that only about 3 percent reported meeting their current partner through the Internet (more common was to meet through work, school, or family and friends). However, of the single Internet users seeking a partner, 37 percent reported having gone to a dating Web site or other online location to meet people. Fifteen percent of the respondents knew of someone who was in a marriage or long-term relationship with a partner they had met online, and 31 percent knew of someone who had at least tried online dating. Another study was conducted by the Harris Interactive Research center with a national sample. They reported that 3 percent of their respondents indicated having met their partner through an online dating service. Another 3 percent indicated having met their partner through an online chat room, but the most common ways of meeting a partner were at work, in school, and through friends.

Not all single adults are equally likely to use computer matching services to find a partner. The Pew study reported that the percentage of people visiting dating Web sites is higher for males than for females (although the sex ratio varies across the matching services, according to other reports), for urbanites as compared to suburbanites and those in rural areas, and among those in young to middle-adult age as compared to older adults. They also found that online daters were more liberal on social attitudes than nonusers.

The Process of Making a Match

Computer matching services facilitate matching in a number of ways, although the major way that the sites can be distinguished is by whether they offer member searching only or focus on expert matching decisions. Most sites, including the first to develop (e.g., Match.com), facilitate matching by allowing members to post profile information and search the profiles of others. Profile information can include vital demographic information (e.g., age and gender), education, likes and dislikes, and usually a photograph. To assist members in finding the most compatible matches, most sites offer both geographical searches and keyword searches. Dating sites have added many additional features over time, including preprogrammed icebreaker messages, voice and video greetings, anonymous instant messaging and e-mails, relationship advice, message boards, and personality testing.

In 2000, Neil Clark Warren launched an alternative commercial matching Web site, eHarmony.com, followed by perfectmatch.com in 2002 and Chemistry.com in 2005. These sites distinguish themselves by using a “scientific” approach to matching. Members complete a lengthy questionnaire that focuses on personality traits, interests, preferences in a partner, values, and traits that one would not be able to tolerate in a partner. Based on the information provided in these questionnaires (and a monthly fee), the site sends members compatibility matches and a procedure to begin communicating. Matching formulas are supposedly based on scientific principles and translated into computer programs that can sift through the volumes of data collected from members. Dating Web sites have not published their matching formulas or subjected them to peer review, but information on their Web sites and in the media suggests that the focus is mostly on compatibility through similarity, although complementarity (opposites that mesh together well) on some traits and values are also emphasized, particularly at perfectmatch.com. At this stage, there is no evidence as to whether these matches have a greater (or lesser) chance of survival and happiness than matches that originate in more traditional settings.

The Internet matching industry, as well as the technology that interfaces with the matchmaking

Web sites, continues to grow. New developments at matching sites include online speed dating, interfaces of compatibility matching with the social network sites (e.g., *Facebook*), matching through online introductions and votes from friends, and virtual dating. Virtual dating allows individuals to interact with each other in a virtual environment through the use of avatars that can be placed in dating scenarios, such as in a coffeehouse or lounge.

Regardless of the type of computer matching site in which two people learn about each other and engage in initial communication, if there is online attraction and rapport, the two may move their relationship offline—a progression that usually begins with phone calls and then on to a face-to-face meeting in a safe, public place. Many people may have an attraction online only to be disappointed when meeting in person. People who are serious about finding a partner through computer matching services are likely to meet several matches before becoming involved with one.

The Interface Between Computer Matching Services and Relationship Science

Many years ago, relationship researchers studied the attraction process in the commercial matching services that existed at the time—for example, personal want ads and video dating services. They studied the factors that lead to attraction and the choices made in such settings. Scientists are now studying relationship initiation and attraction at the matching sites. Academic published articles are beginning to appear based on data collected from users of matching services and have examined a number of issues including what people seek in a partner, how people present themselves, who is seeking whom, and how the initiation process occurs.

In addition, some of the matching sites invest in research, both proprietary research (for product development) and basic research (to further general science about relationships). eHarmony.com is the current leader in this regard. They have a research organization, eHarmonyLabs, which includes a research laboratory and several scientists devoted to conducting research on the initiation, growth, and maintenance of personal relationships.

Susan Sprecher

See also Commercial Channels for Mate Seeking; Computer-Mediated Communication; Initiation of Relationships; Internet and Social Connectedness; Internet Dating

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COMPUTER-MEDIATED COMMUNICATION

Computer-mediated communication is the domain of human communication in which individuals and groups interact, form impressions, establish relationships, and accomplish tasks using networked computers. Although the timing and stylistic features of communication often distinguish online from offline relationship development and

management, people can initiate relationships, establish effective groups, and develop personal partnerships using computer systems.

Generally speaking, people interacting on computers have access to fewer nonverbal cues than those who interact in person. Although early research predicted that people would not be able to form meaningful relationships using computer-mediated communication, subsequent studies have demonstrated that relational communication is indeed amenable to online interaction. Because there are fewer nonverbal cues available to people who are interacting on computers, it typically takes longer for people to achieve their interpersonal goals than when they interact on a face-to-face basis. Malcolm Parks provides a useful metaphor for understanding this aspect of computer-mediated communication: Interpersonal interaction via computers is a garden hose. Interpersonal information can flow like water through the hose and fill a container (an interpersonal impression) just as well as can a large fire hose; it just takes longer with the smaller hose. Since the language and timing of written messages exchanged via computer systems convey all the social information, with no additional matter relayed by nonverbal behavior, it takes longer for people interacting on computers to accrue sufficient social information with which to form and transmit impressions and affective influence statements.

In some cases individuals form more positive impressions of others via computer-mediated communication than they would form had they had a face-to-face conversation. This phenomenon is known as *hyperpersonal communication*. The nature of computer-mediated communication contributes to the phenomenon of hyperpersonal effects. One characteristic is that computer-mediated communication allows people to carefully select the ways that they present themselves. For example, college students may carefully edit their grammar when they interact with their professors on the computer so that their professors will infer that they are bright and conscientious. Also, because people are not located in the same place during computer-mediated communication and cannot observe their partners' normal appearance and traits, people idealize their partners' characteristics. For example, a couple who met on an online dating site and had their first interactions online may overattribute the similarity and

attractiveness of their partners. Computer-mediated communication also allows users to craft their messages quite deliberately and edit them to fit their desired self- and partner-oriented stereotypes and communication goals. Computer-mediated communication is also hypothesized to foster mutual influence of idealizing responses so that users come to act in ways consistent with the desires their communication partners envision of them. Hyperpersonal communication tends to occur quickly when people plan to have ongoing interaction with others.

One feature that is common in some computer-mediated communication settings is anonymous communication. Anonymous communication occurs when people communicate with one another without knowing the specific personal identities of those with whom they are interacting. When people are anonymous in computer-mediated groups, they tend to be influenced by group dynamics more strongly than they otherwise would. Researchers believe that this occurs when people are relating to others and thinking of themselves as members of social groups or categories as opposed to operating as if they were unique individuals. This has the effect of causing people in computer-mediated groups to exhibit behavior that is consistent with group norms. This effect is particularly strong when there is another group, an outgroup, which members implicitly reject. The effect of group norms has been used to explain the occasional occurrence of flaming in online groups, that is, the contagious reciprocation of insults and profanities. Early research claimed that this kind of misbehavior was a result of the lack of nonverbal cues in computer-mediated communication, and individuals' inability to assess situational norms when they were online. Group identification research provides a better account of flaming, however: When it appears in some groups, it is reciprocated and becomes normative for that group. This is why flaming is not endemic to all computer-mediated communication: It is a function of local group norms exacerbated by anonymity, and not a function of online communication per se. Researchers continue to try to uncover what makes people using computer-mediated communication sometimes remain anonymous and rely on group norms to guide their behavior, while other times people seek and reveal unique information about themselves and interact on a personal level.

As new technologies develop, innovations allow people to interact with others across multiple communication channels. Research is beginning to focus on mixed-mode relationships in which people interact via computers, other media, and in person. Often this occurs when people meet by way of the Internet and continue their relationship through other telecommunications, leading to face-to-face interaction. This progression is typical when people utilize online dating Web sites to meet and establish relationships with potential romantic partners, but it is also common for spontaneous friendships that develop in Internet discussions that are not romantically oriented. An important issue for these mixed-mode relationships is whether people judge the information their partners present about themselves as truthful. Indeed, some research shows that people becoming involved in romantic relationships seek more information about their potential romantic partners than people who are simply friends with one another. Current research is exploring the characteristics of personal information about online acquaintances which make it either more or less believable. It appears that information is more believable when the person it describes is unlikely to be able to create or manipulate it.

New technologies also support mixed-mode relationships that began offline. Social networking technologies such as *Facebook* and *MySpace* allow friends to carry on relationships that move between online and offline venues. Social networking technologies also help people to stay in touch easily with larger networks of acquaintances. These technologies have allowed people who were once out of touch to reconnect easily with one another and continue their relationships online. They are a vital tool for relational maintenance.

Brandon Van Der Heide and Joseph B. Walther

See also Communication, Instant Messaging and Other New Media; First Impressions; Internet, Attraction on; Internet Dating; Technology and Relationships

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CONFLICT, FAMILY

Family conflict is best understood as a particular type of interpersonal conflict that greatly affects the psychological and physical well-being of family members. This entry first defines family conflict and then discusses the frequency and intensity of conflict and ways in which family conflict can be categorized in terms of behaviors and outcomes. Then, the sources and functions of family conflict are reviewed before the entry concludes with a look at the outcomes of family conflict.

Defining Family Conflict

In the most basic way, family conflict can be defined as interpersonal conflict experienced in familial relationships. This means that it is a special case of interpersonal conflict. It is interpersonal because it takes place between individuals who are fully aware of one another and who are interdependent. Like other types of interpersonal conflict, it has both psychological and behavioral attributes. At the psychological level, family conflict exists whenever a family member pursues a goal and perceives another member to be interfering with achieving that goal. At the behavioral level, family conflict occurs whenever a family member engages in outward behavior directed at reducing or removing the perceived interference.

Such behavior may range from an indirect request, such as simply stating one's desires (e.g., "I'd love to go to that party"), to acts of physical coercion (e.g., battering a spouse), and they can be directed at the interfering family member or a third party (e.g., a child anticipating a "no" from the mother might go to the father first).

Family conflict is different from other types of interpersonal conflict for several reasons. First, family relationships are usually involuntary—that is, relationships exist and are maintained regardless of how rewarding or satisfying they are, meaning that they are also enduring and full of personal history. Second, family relationships are embedded within family systems, meaning that they affect and are affected by other interpersonal relationships within the family. For example, a conflict between siblings affects not only their relationship, but also one sibling's relationship with another sibling or the relationship between the parents. Finally, family relationships exist within a cultural context that defines a specific set of expectations, rules, and values for family relationships that are different from other interpersonal relationships. For example, in North America, compared with other interpersonal relationships, family relationships are affectionate, less private, and more physically violent (e.g., spanking).

Frequency and Intensity of Conflict

Of all interpersonal relationships, family relationships are the most conflicted because of both the greater intimacy of family relationships and the greater interdependence of family members. Greater intimacy leads to more conflict because it is associated with more directness in communication, an increased sense that one has the right to make requests of the other, and increased expectations that the other will comply with one's request. Greater interdependence leads to more conflict because being dependent on others means that they are more likely to be able to interfere with goal achievement and to be perceived as interfering.

Research has not been able to establish the frequency of family conflict, mainly because different researchers use somewhat different definitions and operationalizations of conflict, but there can be no doubt that it constitutes a substantial proportion

of family communication. Particularly, when using the definition proposed in this entry, arguably most interactions involving parenting could be defined as conflict.

As far as conflict intensity is concerned, there can be little doubt that conflict is most intense in family relationships. Whereas few would engage in or tolerate physical violence in conflicts at work or with friends, family relationships are rife with violent conflict. In representative samples of the U.S. population, for example, Murray Straus found severe violence (including kicking, punching, and attacks with objects) occurring in at least 8 percent of all marital relationships, 11 percent of parent-child relationships, and 36 percent of sibling relationships. Less severe violence (e.g., shoving, pushing, and slapping) occurs in around 16 percent of marriages, in almost 100 percent of parent-child relationships with young children (age <3 years), in 34 percent of parent-child relationships with adolescents, and in 64 percent of sibling relationships.

Types of Conflict

Because family conflict is so pervasive and includes such a wide range of behaviors, it is very difficult for researchers to make any statement about it that applies to all family conflict. One way to address this problem is to categorize conflict into different types that are defined specifically and about which theoretical statements can be made. Because most scholars interested in human relationships care about what happens between people rather than in the heads of individuals, most of these typologies either are oriented toward relational outcomes of conflict or toward observable behaviors, sometimes in combination with the likely outcomes of these behaviors.

One way to distinguish between different types of family conflict is to focus on the relational outcomes of conflict behaviors and to label them accordingly as either functional (i.e., constructive) or as dysfunctional (i.e., destructive). Such a distinction is meaningful as long as it can be assumed that there are conflict behaviors that fairly consistently lead to positive outcomes and those that lead to negative outcomes. Distinguishing between constructive and destructive conflict behaviors is often motivated by the desire of the researchers to

identify and teach “good” conflict communication skills. As the voluminous number of “how to” manuals attests, this research has proven very fruitful and has certainly captured the public imagination.

Such typologies, however, are not without problems. Not only is the meaning of conflict behavior inherently ambiguous, but also the standards by which conflict behavior is judged as either constructive or destructive are often impossible to define objectively. Whereas it is relatively easy to make theoretical distinctions that employ fairly abstract concepts such as “interest versus needs centered” and “bolstering versus compromising interdependence,” judging concrete behaviors using the same abstract concepts is much more difficult.

In addition, it is not entirely possible to separate the relational outcomes of conflict from its practical outcomes for individuals. Although process does matter, persons’ relationship commitment and satisfaction is at least partially dependent on the extent to which they are able to obtain desired outcomes from their interpersonal relationships. Thus, whether conflict is ultimately constructive depends on whether conflict is judged using a long- or short-term perspective; whether these outcomes are psychological, behavioral, or relational; and finally, from whose perspective the outcomes are judged. Because at the root of many family conflicts are incompatible goals or interests of family members, it is almost inevitable that any outcome has to be evaluated differently depending on whose perspective is used when making the evaluation. Thus, conflict behavior that achieves a desired outcome for one family member (and from that person’s perspective is functional) might be dysfunctional for another. Even relational outcomes are not necessarily perceived the same by all parties in a family.

An alternative way of classifying conflict behaviors is to focus on the behaviors themselves, rather than their outcomes. Exclusively behavioral typologies group certain types of conflict behaviors together, usually distinguishing between different types of behavior along some underlying dimension, such as intensity. For example, one popular typology distinguishes between latent conflict, problem to solve, dispute, and fight. Similarly, Straus identified three types of conflict behaviors: reasoning, which refers to rational discussion and

problem-solving behaviors; verbal aggression, which refers to behavior symbolically hurting the other; and violence, which refers to behavior inflicting physical pain and/or injury.

A number of other conflict typologies proposed by researchers categorize conflict behaviors into four types based on two underlying dimensions. Despite various labels for the types and dimensions, they are conceptually very similar, and the dimensions can be generically described as direct versus indirect communication and cooperation versus competition. The four resulting types can generically be called negotiation-collaboration (direct and cooperative), which includes behaviors such as agreement, analytic remarks, metacommunication, description, expressing, problem solving, summarizing, and validating; fighting-argument (direct and competitive), which includes behaviors such as blaming, coercive acts, confrontation, disagreement, invalidation, and rejecting acts; nonconfrontation-accommodation (indirect and cooperative), which includes behaviors such as facilitation, irrelevant remarks, resolving acts, and topic management; and passive aggressive-obstruction (indirect and competitive), which includes behaviors such as denial, equivocation, and withdrawal.

Sources of Family Conflict

The number of actual and perceived goal incompatibilities between family members that are at the root of family conflict depend on goals that vary by individuals and families and therefore are both infinite and unpredictable, as are their sources. There are, however, a number of fairly normative and therefore predictable goal incompatibilities between family members that make certain kinds of family conflict both common and predictable. Ignoring conflict between spouses (dealt with in a different entry in this encyclopedia), conflict between parents and children, and between siblings is typical for families and contributes significantly to children’s cognitive and social development.

Conflict between parents and preadolescent children most typically involves parents’ attempts to regulate their children’s behavior and children initially resisting and ultimately complying with the demands of their parents. That is, conflict is a

natural part of the socialization process as children move from other-regulation to self-regulation, and such instances constitute much of family communication. Thus, one would expect the frequency of family conflict to decrease as children mature and become more self-regulated. This expectation is supported by data showing parents' use of physical punishment decreasing as children get older.

Whereas conflict frequency decreases as children mature, families often perceive an increase in the intensity of family conflict as children reach adolescence. This apparent contradiction occurs because the very nature of the parent-child relationship is changing during adolescence, which makes parent-child conflict more salient to family members during adolescence. In relationships involving younger children, both parents and children understand their relationship as one in which parents provide guidance and discipline. Thus, both parents and children expect to have conflicts with one another and see conflict as an integral and therefore not necessarily salient aspect of their relationship. As a consequence, both parents and children may perceive their relationship to be relatively free of intense conflict, even though much of their communication consists of parents regulating their children's behavior, which could objectively be defined as conflict.

Adolescents, in contrast, tend to see themselves as much more autonomous and independent in their relationships with their parents and increasingly come to resist the regulating behavior of their parents. For them, resistance to the parents often becomes an end in itself, while parents try to maintain some influence over their children. Thus, even though parents objectively regulate their children's behavior less frequently, the influence that parents exert over their adolescent children becomes the underlying relational issue that manifests itself in overt conflict, making these conflicts more intense and both parents and adolescents more aware that they do experience conflict in their relationships.

Functions of Family Conflict

Not only is family conflict an inevitable part of family relationships, but also it serves important functions for the family as a whole and for individual family members. As systems of interdependent

individuals whose goals, interests, and needs are not always in alignment and often in direct opposition, families must find ways to respond to such incompatibilities in ways that maintains the system overall. Because it is impossible for family members to anticipate each other's interests, desires, and emotional states without communicating about them, only expressed conflict allows family members to address and resolve their divergent goals. Thus, the most important function of family conflict is to allow families to recognize the needs of individual family members and to coordinate their behaviors so that they can facilitate goal achievement for their members while simultaneously maintaining the family system.

Probably the second most important function of family conflict is to facilitate the socialization and development of children. Specifically, family communication serves five developmental functions for adolescents, all of which are mainly achieved through conflict. The functions are renegotiation of roles, rules, and relationships; identity exploration; enhancing adolescents' self-esteem; modeling and teaching problem-solving behaviors; and enabling adolescents' decision making.

Almost by definition, these functions involve family conflict. For example, it is hard to imagine that renegotiations of parent-adolescent relationships, and the rules that accompany them, can be accomplished without expressed conflict. In fact, the renegotiation of roles explicitly involves a change in the power relationship from relative dependence to relative independence of the adolescents. Adolescents usually aim for greater independence, and the parents usually aim to maintain the status quo. Because both parents and children are heavily invested in their respective goals, these conflicts are not easily resolved and are often quite emotional. Similarly, for parents to teach and to model conflict behaviors and to teach decision-making skills requires them to engage in family conflict and decision making. It is an old adage that children learn more from what parents do than from what parents say, and conflict communication is no exception. Although less obviously related to conflict, the functions of helping adolescents explore their identities and enhancing their self-esteem also are related to family conflict. Exploring identities almost invariably involves adolescents' taking positions and espousing opinions and values that

differentiate them from other family members and, particularly, from their parents. Doing so successfully enhances self-esteem.

Outcomes of Family Conflict

Family relationships and family communication interest researchers, counselors, and laypeople because for most adults and children, family relationships are their most important and most intimate interpersonal relationships. In addition, families are children's main socialization agents, and the communication and relationship skills that children acquire in their families of origin affect the quality of their interpersonal relationships throughout their lifetime. All these reasons that justify an interest in family communication in general also justify an interest in family conflict communication in particular. How persons communicate during family conflict is of paramount relevance in determining the quality and stability of their family relationships.

Married couples who manage interpersonal conflict well in their relationships report greater relationship satisfaction, more love and respect for their partners, and greater commitment to their partners and are less likely to get divorced. Similar findings are reported for other family relationships. Families that manage their conflicts well have more satisfied parents and children, and children perform better in school and in peer relationships. Thus, family conflict is an important determinant of relationship quality and quality of life of family members. In addition, because of the family's central role in socializing children, the conflict behaviors children learn in their families of origin affect their subsequent interpersonal relationships as adults. Finally, physical violence and child abuse greatly affect the mental and physical health of children and are more likely to occur during family conflict than during any other time of family communication.

Ignoring the research on marital conflict, which is discussed in a different entry of this encyclopedia, most research on the consequences of family conflict has investigated the outcomes for children. Generally speaking, to the extent that families engage in conflict that is destructive, hostile, or even violent, family conflict is associated with

negative outcomes for children. In contrast, to the extent that families engage in constructive conflict, such as rational conflict and conflict focused on problem solving, family conflict is associated with positive outcomes for children in general and for adolescents in particular. Young children who are exposed to intense, destructive parental conflict experience fear, sadness, and anger and feel unsafe and insecure in the home and outside the family. In addition to negative psychological outcomes, children of families that frequently engage in destructive conflict also experience problems in their peer relationships. Intense parental conflict is associated with children's greater aggression and anger in relationships with teachers, peers, and siblings.

There are several processes by which parental conflict causes these negative outcomes for children. One explanation for the psychological and social effects is that important security needs that children have in their relationships with their parents are unmet when parents have frequent conflict among themselves or with their children, particularly if these conflicts involve verbal aggression or physical violence. The negative psychological consequences that children exhibit are the result of these unmet needs. The social effects, by contrast, are the result of poor parental modeling of communication skills that leads children to behave poorly in their interpersonal relationships with others.

Similar processes are responsible for the positive outcomes children experience when exposed to constructive parental conflict behavior. These children benefit both psychologically and socially from their parents' problem-solving skills. Because children experience safety and security in their relationships with parents, they are psychologically better adapted, have higher self-esteem, and perceive the world to be a friendlier and less threatening place than children of families where parents model poor conflict communication. In regard to social outcomes, the conflict styles they learned from their parents help these children manage their relationships with their siblings and peers more successfully than children of families with poor parental modeling.

Compared to the interest in outcomes for children, there is very little research interest in parents as victims of family conflict, and therefore, the knowledge of how parents are affected by family conflict is limited indeed. One would think that high

frequency and negativity of family conflict would lead to similar reductions in relationship satisfaction and related psychological outcomes as conflict in the marital relationship. There is, however, almost no empirical evidence available supporting this assumption. Clearly, this is an area where future research will have to provide the answers.

Ascan F. Koerner

See also Abuse and Violence in Relationships; Conflict, Marital; Conflict Resolution; Divorce, Children and; Family Communication; Sibling Relationships

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CONFLICT, MARITAL

Marital conflict refers to overt opposition between spouses that is identified by the spouses as disagreement or a source of difficulty in the relationship. Couples complain about sources of conflict ranging from verbal and physical abusiveness to personal characteristics and behaviors. Perceived inequity in a couple's division of labor also is associated with marital conflict and with a tendency for the male to withdraw in response to conflict on this topic. Conflict over power is strongly related to marital dissatisfaction. Finally, conflicts relating to extramarital sex, problem drinking, and drug use have been shown to predict divorce.

Implications of Conflict

Conflict between spouses is among the most frequently investigated topics in marital research, and this research focus is understandable given its implications for mental, physical, and family health. Marital conflict has been linked to the onset of depressive symptoms, anxiety disorders, eating disorders, episodic drinking, binge drinking, out-of-home drinking, and male alcoholism. Although married individuals are healthier on average than the unmarried, marital conflict is associated with poorer health and with specific illnesses such as cancer, cardiac disease, and chronic pain perhaps because hostile behaviors during conflict are related to alterations in immunological, endocrine, and cardiovascular functioning. Physical aggression occurs in about 30 percent of married couples in the United States, leading to significant physical injury in about 10 percent of

couples. Marriage is also the most common interpersonal context for homicide, with more women being murdered by their partners than by anyone else. Finally, marital conflict is associated with important family outcomes, including poor parenting, poor adjustment of children, increased likelihood of parent-child conflict, and conflict between siblings. Marital conflicts that are frequent, intense, physical, unresolved, and child-related have a particularly negative influence on children.

Behavior During Conflict

Much of the research on marital conflict has been motivated by the goal of helping couples to deal effectively with conflict. This research has focused on the observation of discussions in the laboratory where couples are asked to try and resolve a problem in the relationship. Typically, couples also complete an inventory assessing marital quality (e.g., Dyadic Adjustment Scale, DAS) and those scoring below the cutoff for marital distress (DAS score <97) are compared to nondistressed couples. Using these methods, researchers have provided detailed information about how marital distressed and nondistressed couples behave during conflict.

During conflict, distressed couples make more negative statements and fewer positive statements than nondistressed couples. They also are more likely to respond with negative behavior (e.g., put downs, whining) when their partner behaves negatively. Indeed, this negative reciprocity, as it is called, is more consistent across different types of situations than is the amount of negative behavior, making it the most reliable overt signature of marital distress. Negative behavior is both more frequent and more frequently reciprocated in couples who engage in physical aggression than in other couples. Nonverbal behavior (e.g., posture, gaze aversion, voice tone), often used as an index of emotion, reflects marital satisfaction better than verbal behavior and, unlike verbal behavior, does not change when spouses are asked to try to fake good and bad-distressed marriages in the laboratory.

In some research studies, couples have been asked to keep daily records of positive and negative behaviors. Daily negative behaviors predict

variability in day-to-day marital satisfaction. That is, on days when there are more negative behaviors reported, marital satisfaction is lower. The association between behaviors recorded and marital satisfaction is stronger for distressed than for nondistressed spouses. Overall, the data from diary studies yield findings that are very similar to those obtained in the laboratory and described above. In both laboratory and diary studies, negative spouse behavior accounts for approximately 25 percent of the variability in the spouse's marital satisfaction. Among newlyweds, wives' reports of husbands' negative behaviors predict wives' satisfaction with the marriage 2 years later.

Although direct observation of conflict that takes the form of physical aggression (ranging from slapping the partner to use of a weapon) in marriage is not possible, studies have been conducted on interactional styles in violent and nonviolent marriages. Even when compared to distressed couples who are not violent, for example, the interactions of distressed violent couples are marked by higher levels of negative reciprocity, anger, and contempt. Alcohol use is associated with increased levels of physical aggression. Surprisingly, a few studies find that some form of physical aggression is present in a majority of newlywed marriages, and both physical and psychological aggression predicts divorce among newlyweds.

Patterns of Conflict Behavior

The sequences of behavior that occur during conflict are more predictable in distressed than in nondistressed marriages and are often dominated by chains of negative behavior that usually escalate and are difficult for the couple to stop. One of the greatest challenges for couples locked into negative exchanges is to find an adaptive way of exiting from such cycles. Couples usually try to get out of the negative exchanges with responses designed to repair the interaction (e.g., "You're not listening to me"), but these exchanges are delivered with negative affect (e.g., irritation, sadness). The partners tend to respond to the negative affect, thereby continuing the cycle. This cycle makes their interactions structured and predictable. In contrast, nondistressed couples appear to be more responsive

to attempts at repair and are thereby able to exit from negative exchanges early on. For example, a spouse may respond to "Wait, you're not letting me finish" with "Sorry, please finish what you were saying." Their interaction, therefore, appears more random and less predictable.

A second important conflict behavior pattern exhibited by marital distressed couples is the demand-withdraw pattern in which one spouse pressures the other with demands, complaints, and criticisms, while the partner withdraws with defensiveness and passive inaction. Specifically, behavior sequences in which the husband withdraws and the wife responds with hostility are more common in distressed than in satisfied couples. This finding is consistent with several studies showing that wives display more negative affect and behavior than husbands, who tend to not respond or to make statements suggestive of withdrawal, such as irrelevant comments. Disengagement or withdrawal is, in turn, related to later decreases in marital satisfaction. However, inferring reliable gender differences in demand-withdraw patterns would be premature, as recent research shows that the partner who withdraws varies according to which partner desires change. So, for example, when a man desires change, the woman is the one who tends to withdraw.

It is noteworthy that neither distressed nor non-distressed spouses reciprocate positive behavior. This finding challenges the widespread view that satisfied couples are characterized by a *quid pro quo* that involves the exchange of positive behaviors. Instead, they are better described as behaving according to a bank account principle to the extent that they expect positive behaviors to be reciprocated; the reciprocation occurs over the long term.

Does marital conflict studied in the artificial setting of the laboratory capture what happens in the real world outside the laboratory? Couples who participate in laboratory studies report that their interactions in the laboratory are reminiscent of their typical interactions. Research also shows that conflict behavior in the laboratory is similar to conflict behavior observed in the home; however, laboratory conflicts tend to be less severe, suggesting that research findings underestimate differences between distressed and nondistressed couples.

Is There a Simple Way to Summarize Research on Marital Conflict?

One way to summarize the extensive literature on marital conflict behavior is in terms of a simple ratio. For happy couples, the ratio of agreements or positive behaviors to disagreements or negative behaviors is greater than one, and for unhappy couples, it is less than one. John Gottman identifies this ratio more precisely for what he calls regulated and nonregulated couples. These couples were identified by calculating for each spouse the cumulative difference between positive and negative behaviors across the course of an interaction. Using the patterns in these difference scores, he distinguished regulated couples (increase in positive speaker behaviors relative to negative behaviors for both spouses over the course of conversation) from nonregulated couples (all other patterns). Regulated couples displayed positive problem-solving behaviors and positive affect approximately 5 times as often as negative problem-solving behaviors and negative affect, whereas the corresponding ratio was approximately 1:1 for nonregulated couples. This distinction is important because regulated couples, compared to nonregulated couples, were more satisfied in their marriage and were less likely to divorce.

In sum, marital satisfaction and marital stability does not reflect the absence of marital conflict but rather a relatively higher level of positive behavior compared to negative conflict behaviors. Concretely illustrating this point is the finding that the ratio of sexual intercourse to arguments, rather than their base rates, predicts marital satisfaction.

Intrapersonal Processes Related to Conflict

Beginning in the 1980s, recognition emerged that a purely behavioral account of conflict was limited and gave rise to the study of intrapersonal variables such as thoughts and feelings that might give rise to and maintain conflict behavior.

Thinking

In regard to interpretations or thoughts about conflict, researchers have focused on two questions presumed to arise regarding relationship

conflict: “Why is the conflict occurring?” and “What can I do to resolve the conflict?” The first question has to do with the attributions for the conflict, and the second deals with efficacy expectations or the extent to which a spouse believes that he or she can perform the behaviors necessary to resolve the conflict.

In regard to attributions, it is argued that explanations inferred for partner conflict behavior determine responses to the behavior. Certain kinds of explanations tend to promote conflict. For example, a spouse inferring that his or her partner’s critical comment was meant to be destructive (e.g., “She is trying to embarrass me”) rather than constructive (e.g., “She is trying to help me create a good impression”) is more likely to respond negatively to the comment. Consistent with this view, it is well established that conflict-promoting attributions are related to negative affects that occur during conflict interactions, especially anger and whining, rates of negative behavior, the effectiveness of problem-solving attempts, and the reciprocation of negative partner behavior. These relationships are stronger in distressed spouses than in nondistressed spouses. Finally, conflict-promoting attributions for marital problems have been associated with more negative conflict behavior over a 12-month period.

In a similar vein, a spouse’s belief that he or she can perform the behaviors necessary to resolve the conflict predicts his or her conflict behavior. When these efficacy expectations are stronger, higher rates of positive behavior during conflict are observed. Stronger efficacy expectations also predict use of higher-quality problem-solving approaches and observers’ rating of spouses’ satisfaction with conflict resolution attempts.

Feeling

A variety of indices of emotion have been examined in marital research including, as noted earlier, nonverbal behavior that is more powerful than verbal behavior in discriminating satisfied from dissatisfied couples. Other indices of emotion investigated include verbal reports and measures of autonomic nervous system activity such as heart rate. Online measurements of autonomic nervous system activity during the course of low and high conflict discussions show that physiological

interrelatedness (or physiological linkage) between partners occurs at the times when negative affect was reported as occurring and being reciprocated and is higher during high-conflict tasks compared to the low-conflict tasks. Higher physiological interrelatedness also is related to lower marital satisfaction.

From the foregoing, it is clear that intrapersonal processes such as thoughts and feelings are critical in providing a more complete account of marital conflict. Most recently, however, it has become clear that marital conflict can only be understood fully when considered in context, a realization that has emerged from the focus on longitudinal research in the past decade.

Contextualizing Conflict

Conflict behavior and conflict patterns seem to be relatively stable over time and to predict changes in marital satisfaction and marital stability. However, longitudinal findings show that conflict, taken by itself, accounts for a small portion of the variability in later marital outcomes, suggesting that other factors need to be considered in predicting these outcomes. This has led to an increasing interest in how conflict may vary according to contextual factors.

Stressors and Life Events

Diary studies illustrate that couples have more conflictual marital interactions at home on days of high general-life stress than on other days and at times and places where they are experiencing multiple competing demands; arguments at work are related to marital arguments, and the occurrence of stressful life events is associated with more conflictual problem-solving discussions. Ongoing stress, such as financial need or chronic illness, also is associated with marital conflict. Such considerations suggest that conflict may have little impact on a marriage in the absence of external stressors. There is a growing need to identify the stressors and life events that are and are not influential for different couples and for different stages of marriage, to investigate how these events influence conflict, and to clarify how individuals and marriages may inadvertently generate stressful events.

Spousal Support and Affectional Expression

The significance of conflict for marital outcomes also needs to be considered in relation to the occurrence of spouse support and emotional expression. Supportive spouse behaviors are only weakly related to the conflict behaviors observed during the problem-solving discussions used to study marital conflict, but they appear to play an important role in moderating the impact of conflict. The amount of supportive behavior partners exhibit predicts later marital stress (i.e., more supportive behavior correlates with less future marital stress), independently of conflict behavior. When support is low, there is an increased risk that poor skills in dealing with conflict will lead to later marital deterioration. Finally, in the context of high levels of affectional expression between spouses (e.g., saying, "I love you," and expressing physical affection outside of intercourse), the inverse relationship between conflict behavior and marital satisfaction decreases. In regard to conflict patterns, the demand-withdraw pattern is unrelated to marital satisfaction in the context of high affectional expression, but they are highly related in the context of average or low affectional expression. It is therefore apparent that attention to positive spouse behavior is essential for a correct characterization of the role of conflict in marital outcomes.

Spousal Background and Characteristics

Although initially ignored in research on marital conflict, there is increasing evidence that the background and characteristics of individual spouses play an important role in regard to marital conflict. The importance of spouses' backgrounds is illustrated by the finding that divorce is transmitted across generations. Divorce rates are higher for offspring whose parents report low marital conflict prior to the divorce and for offspring who behave in hostile, domineering, and critical ways compared to offspring who do not behave in this manner. Thus, while parental divorce places offspring at risk for marital conflict and divorce, such outcomes are not inevitable.

An individual characteristic that is proving to be particularly informative for understanding marital conflict comes from recent research on attachment,

which aims to address questions about how the experience of relationships early in life affects interpersonal functioning in adulthood. For example, spouses who tend to feel secure in relationships tend to compromise and to take into account both their own and their partner's interests during problem-solving interactions, thus showing low conflict; those who tend to feel anxious or ambivalent in relationships show a greater tendency to oblige their partner and focus on relationship maintenance thereby showing less conflict than do those who tend to avoid intimacy in relationships. And spouses who are preoccupied with being completely emotionally intimate in relationships show an elevated level of marital conflict after an involuntary, brief separation from the partner.

Of particular interest for understanding negative reciprocity are the findings that greater commitment is associated with more constructive, accommodative responses to a partner's negative behavior and that the dispositional tendency to forgive is a predictor of spouses' responses to their partners' transgressions. In other words, spouses who have a greater tendency to forgive are less likely to avoid the partner or to retaliate in kind following a transgression by the partner. Forgiving may be a means of exiting from negative reciprocity as it is associated with later conflict resolution. Indeed, spouses themselves acknowledge that the capacity to seek and grant forgiveness is one of the most important factors contributing to marital longevity and satisfaction. Also relevant to understanding conflict is sanctification, a process whereby the marriage is perceived as having divine character and significance (e.g., "God is present in my marriage" and "My marriage is sacred"). The degree to which a spouse engages in this process is related to greater collaboration in resolving disagreements and less conflict. Importantly, this association is independent of degree of religiosity.

Conclusion

Guided by the view that marital distress results from ineffective handling of conflict, a substantial body of research has emerged on conflict behavior in marriage. Over time, this work was expanded to include intrapersonal processes related to conflict. With the recent attempt to place conflict in context,

there is an emerging consensus that its role in marriage needs to be reconsidered. Also, there is increasing recognition that marital conflict may be more complex than initially thought and that it needs to be accompanied by an understanding of marital strengths if researchers are to gain a more complete understanding of the marital relationship.

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See also Attribution Processes in Relationships; Conflict Resolution; Couple Therapy; Marital Satisfaction, Assessment of; Marital Satisfaction and Quality

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CONFLICT MEASUREMENT AND ASSESSMENT

It is common for friends, lovers, and family members to experience conflict from time to time. In an interpersonal relationship, conflict is defined as a situation in which at least one partner dislikes how the other appears to be behaving, thinking,

or feeling. When there is conflict between two people, they may argue, calmly discuss the issue, or avoid the topic altogether. Conflict is a key force that produces change in relationships, for better or worse, and therefore, researchers assess conflict to learn how relationships work. When two people are able to resolve conflict, they often make changes to accommodate each other, gain a better understanding of each other, and experience an increased level of closeness or friendship. When two people fail to resolve conflict, their relationship is likely to deteriorate. This entry describes how researchers assess conflict, the different components of conflict that are typically assessed, and important issues to consider regarding the validity of conflict assessment.

Ways of Assessing Conflict

There are several factors that make assessing conflict a challenge. Although conflict is a normal component of almost any interpersonal relationship, most people do not experience conflict on a daily basis, and when conflict does occur, people often try to keep it hidden from public observation. Therefore, it is especially difficult for researchers to directly observe conflict in a natural environment. Instead, researchers most typically assess conflict by making observations in a structured laboratory setting or by administering questionnaires that ask people to provide a self-report description of their conflict experiences.

Research with married couples has made extensive use of structured laboratory settings to assess conflict, and this method can be easily adapted to assess conflict in a wide variety of relationships. In the typical protocol, a couple visits a research laboratory where they are asked to identify an area of conflict. Partners may be separated and individually asked to describe a recent conflict episode, or they may be given a list and asked to identify issues that cause conflict in their relationship, or a researcher may interview the couple together and identify a common area of conflict. Using one of these techniques, a single area of conflict is selected as a topic for discussion, and the couple is then left alone in a room with instructions to attempt to resolve the issue. Typically, the couple is given 10 to 15 minutes for their conversation, and sometimes,

couples are asked to complete two different conversations, discussing separate topics selected by each partner. With the couple's knowledge and consent, their conversations are video-recorded.

The video-recorded conflicts are scored using one of several possible approaches. Typically, researchers use a coding manual that provides precise definitions for different types of communication behavior. Trained coders then use detailed instructions in the coding manual to assign scores to the conversation. In this approach, it is essential to ensure that ratings are reliable. That is, the scores assigned to any given conversation should not be dependent on who coded it. Reliability can be improved by having each conversation coded by several different coders and also by ensuring that coders receive sufficient training. It is not always necessary, however, to train coders. Recent research has found that untrained coders can actually make reliable ratings regarding the extent to which people express certain basic emotions, such as anger or sadness. Another way to obtain scores is to have a couple rate their own conversation. For example, participants may watch a playback of their conversation and turn a dial in real time to indicate their level of emotion, or they may be asked to identify points in the conversation when a particular type of thought, feeling, or behavior occurred.

Another method of assessing conflict involves self-report questionnaires. In contrast to laboratory assessments, questionnaires are easier to administer to large groups of people and to people across multiple geographic regions. Using questionnaires, it is possible to assess levels of violent behavior during conflict, to assess multiple perspectives of conflict from each member of a family or team, and to assess the private thoughts and feelings people have during times of conflict. Although questionnaires are traditionally printed on paper, it can be both convenient and inexpensive to administer questionnaires using the Internet. In this way, data can be automatically scored and entered, and respondents can receive automatic feedback that might help them improve their conflict resolution skills. Researchers can also assess conflict by using a diary method in which participants report their everyday experiences over several days or weeks. For example, participants may carry a small electronic device to provide reports of current experience at specified or random points throughout each day. In this way,

it is possible to assess both the frequency of conflict and a person's experience during conflict episodes that happen to occur.

Which Components of Conflict Are Important to Assess?

Assessing conflict is complex because conflict contains many different components, and these components can be assessed at varying levels of specificity. Many questionnaires for measuring conflict provide a single score reflecting the overall level of conflict in a relationship. In contrast to this type of global assessment, it is often useful to conduct a more detailed assessment regarding specific components of conflict. For example, there are instruments available for assessing the underlying issues that cause conflict, the extent to which a conflict is resolved, the extent to which children observe different types of conflict between family members, and the extent to which partners use physical violence during conflict. As discussed below, some of the most commonly assessed components of conflict include specific types of communication, emotion, and cognition (or thoughts).

Communication

Most research using structured laboratory settings has focused on assessing ways people communicate during conflict. In this line of study, researchers have developed a number of different coding manuals, which taken together, describe a vast array of communication behaviors. Many behaviors defined in these manuals can be broadly classified as either positive or negative based on whether the communication facilitates or hinders conflict resolution.

There are several types of negative communication. One of the most common is criticism, which includes voicing negative explanations for a partner's behavior, blaming a partner for something, and making accusations about what a partner is thinking, feeling, or wanting. Criticisms frequently begin with the word *you*, and they sometimes involve global or sweeping statements using words such as *always* or *never*. Because criticisms are likely to be perceived as an attack, they frequently

elicit either defensiveness or withdrawal from a partner. In a defensive response, a person attempts to invalidate, trivialize, deny, or refute the perceived attack. When a person withdraws, he or she seeks to escape from conflict by avoiding the partner or by becoming silent and unresponsive. More extreme forms of negative communication include expressions of contempt, where one partner says something hurtful to the other, and domineering behavior, where one partner seeks to threaten or control the other.

Whereas negative communication often involves critical statements about one's partner, positive communication typically involves personal or vulnerable statements about oneself. To resolve a conflict, it is essential for each partner to understand the other's viewpoint, and this is most likely to occur when both partners calmly state their own desires, emotions, opinions, and perspectives and when they demonstrate empathic concern, affection, and understanding for each other. Thus, positive communication generally includes sharing personal information about oneself, carefully listening to one's partner, and making responsive statements that show understanding for one's partner.

Emotion

Research has identified two types of emotion that are especially important to assess during times of conflict, sometimes referred to as hard emotion and soft emotion. Hard emotion includes feeling angry and aggravated, and this type of emotion is associated with asserting power, defending oneself against perceived attacks, and pursuing self-focused objectives. Soft emotion includes feeling sad and hurt, and this type of emotion is associated with expressing vulnerability, seeking social support, and pursuing objectives that strengthen interpersonal relationships. Both emotions are important because they motivate partners to address areas of conflict. However, hard emotion often leads to high levels of negative communication, whereas soft emotion is associated with significantly less negative communication and is often beneficial for helping couples resolve conflict. In addition to hard and soft emotion, people occasionally experience pleasant emotions during times of conflict, such as affection or shared, nonsarcastic humor, and these emotions often facilitate conflict resolution.

Notably, there may be important differences between assessing a single instance of conflict and assessing the ways conflict is typically handled in a relationship, and this is especially true for emotion. Some components of conflict are associated with temporary declines in relationship satisfaction but actually predict long-term improvements in overall relationship quality. For example, a single episode of anger can lead to increased conflict, but in the long term, occasional expressions of mild anger may benefit a relationship, whereas the chronic suppression of anger is likely to be harmful. In contrast to anger, crying during a single episode of conflict may elicit empathy from a partner, whereas crying may elicit only frustration if it is a chronic response to conflict interactions.

Cognition

Cognition involves the thoughts that people think during conflict, and three types of cognition are especially important: attributions, expectancies, and beliefs. Attributions are the explanations people make for a partner's actions. In the case of conflict, attributions include a person's judgments regarding whether his or her partner caused the conflict or should be blamed for the conflict. Expectancies include the predictions a person makes regarding how the other is likely to behave during a conflict. People are more likely to use negative communication when they expect their partners to be negative. Beliefs include the assumptions people make regarding what types of conflict are normal and how people should act during times of conflict.

Conflict in Families

In addition to the components of conflict discussed above, there are unique components of conflict that can be assessed when more than two people are involved, as is the case in family conflict. Using questionnaires, family conflict can be assessed from the perspectives of both adults and children. In structured laboratory settings, families are sometimes observed as they discuss an area of family conflict or as parents instruct their children to clean a messy playroom. Two distinctive components of family conflict include boundaries and

leadership. Boundaries have to do with alliances among family members. For example, a coalition occurs when two people join together against a third person, and triangulation occurs when one person tries to entice or entrap another into forming a coalition against a third. Disengagement occurs when family members have strong boundaries that separate each other, whereas enmeshment occurs when family members lack boundaries altogether. In assessing family conflict, it is also useful to consider parental leadership style. For example, a parent may use a democratic style in which all family members are given opportunities to express their viewpoints and feelings. A parent could also use an autocratic style in which he or she seeks to control and coerce other family members into compliance, or a chaotic style in which the parent fails to provide effective leadership or guidance.

Validity of Conflict Assessment

As with any type of assessment, it is important to demonstrate that the methods used to assess conflict are valid. That is, the methods should accurately measure what they are intended to measure. For example, when an assessment involves the use of self-report questionnaires, there is a risk that people may provide invalid answers because they fail to remember an event accurately, they do not want to acknowledge personal faults, or they view a situation from a one-sided perspective. With married couples, it is common for a wife and husband to give completely different accounts of what actually occurred during a conflict, a tendency which calls into question the validity of their reports. However, the validity of a self-report questionnaire can be supported if research demonstrates that partners' responses to the questionnaire correspond with ratings made by trained coders observing partners' behavior in a laboratory setting.

The validity of a questionnaire can also be threatened by sentiment override, which occurs when a person responds to questionnaire items on the basis of his or her global feelings about the relationship rather than responding to the specific content of the items. For example, a person who is happy and satisfied in a relationship

may simply give positive responses to all items without making distinctions between different types of questions. Thus, before a measure of conflict is used, it is important to demonstrate that it is distinct from measures of general relationship satisfaction, and if the measure is intended to assess specific components of conflict, each component should be distinct from the others.

In research using a structured laboratory setting, two questions regarding validity are commonly raised. First, do people behave differently because they are being video-recorded? On the one hand, it is likely that people act nicer toward each other in a laboratory setting than they do privately at home. On the other hand, partners often find that it is extremely difficult to alter their conflict communication, even when they are being video-recorded, and researchers are typically able to observe a wide range of communication behavior in a laboratory setting. The second validity question is whether observed communication behavior might be influenced by the topic of conflict chosen for discussion. Research with married couples has found that spouses communicate differently depending on whether the topic involves a change requested by the husband or the wife. However, research has generally shown that spouses do not alter their style of communication when they shift from discussing an extremely difficult topic to a relatively minor area of disagreement.

Another issue is whether methods of assessing conflict are equally valid for people from different populations or cultural groups. Because most people like to keep their conflicts private, the types of people willing to participate in research on conflict (and especially observational research) may not be representative of the general population. There also may be important cultural differences in how people negotiate conflict. For example, research finds that husbands in the United States show more withdrawal than husbands in Pakistan. The assessment methods discussed above will likely prove valuable in future research seeking to compare and contrast how people from different cultures and populations go about resolving their conflicts.

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See also Arguing; Attribution Processes in Relationships; Coding Systems for Observing Interactions; Conflict, Family; Conflict, Marital; Conflict Patterns; Conflict Resolution; Daily Diary Methods; Marital Satisfaction, Assessment of; Marital Satisfaction and Quality

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CONFLICT PATTERNS

Conflict patterns are the behaviors displayed in relationships around areas of dissatisfaction or disagreement. These behaviors include verbal and nonverbal actions that occur before, during, and after an argument. Conflict patterns are a natural and inevitable component of human relationships. Some psychologists also believe that conflict is important and necessary. This entry describes the most common conflict patterns, how they are conceptualized and measured, how they relate to other aspects of relationships, and cultural similarities and differences in conflict behaviors.

Types of Conflict Patterns

Generally, conflict patterns fall into three types. The first is mutual engagement in which both people are actively involved in the discussion. In this pattern, if the problem is discussed constructively by both people, the outcome may be successful resolution of the conflict. However, if there is mutual escalation or negative reciprocity (i.e., back-and-forth negativity), the outcome is typically exacerbation of the problem.

The second pattern is mutual avoidance or mutual withdrawal in which both people actively avoid (walking away from one another, changing the topic) and/or passively withdraw (tune out, halfheartedly discuss, or remain quiet) from discussion of problems, thereby preventing heated conflict but also leaving problems unresolved.

The third pattern is demand-withdraw, when one person in the relationship actively pursues changes in the other, while the other person avoids or withdraws from conflict. The person in the demanding role may complain, criticize, blame, nag, or make demands. The person in the withdrawing role may actively or passively prevent confrontation or defend. This pattern has also been called other names by authors, including pursuer-distancer, rejection-intrusion, and nag-withdraw.

Conceptualization and Measurement

Although all three conflict patterns may be present in a variety of relationships (friends, lovers, siblings, parent-child, coworkers, etc.), they are most often studied in marital or romantic relationships. Of the three, demand-withdraw has become the most salient and widely studied. Although typically referred to as demand-withdraw, this name does not imply a causal sequence of demanding causing withdrawal. Instead, the pattern of demanding and withdrawing behavior is cyclical or bidirectional, which means that each person's behavior stems from and in turn exacerbates the behavior of the other. In other words, demanding does not cause withdrawing or vice versa, but both are present simultaneously, and each one typically causes the other to increase in frequency and/or intensity. For example, a wife whose husband avoids her attempts to discuss household chores responds with more

intense forms of demand, which in turn exacerbates his withdrawal and her demands in an ongoing and mutually exacerbating cycle.

Conflict patterns are typically measured in two ways. The self-report method asks people to rate the likelihood of several different conflict patterns occurring in their relationship before, during, and after a typical conflict. Behavior observation of conflict is achieved by asking people to discuss a problem in their relationship while being audiotaped or videotaped, and then coders are trained to rate how much they hear or see conflict patterns occurring during the discussions.

Correlates and Consequences

Relationship researchers study conflict patterns to understand how they are related to the levels of satisfaction and stability experienced in relationships. For example, researchers want to understand what kinds of conflict patterns predict divorce. As expected, relationships are happier and longer lasting when more positive behaviors are displayed during conflict, whereas they are more dissatisfied and unstable when more negative behaviors are displayed around conflict. Specifically, distressed couples report and demonstrate more mutual escalation, mutual withdrawal, and demand-withdraw than nondistressed couples.

John Gottman and colleagues have identified four conflict behaviors (named the Four Horsemen) that predict unhappiness or divorce: criticism, contempt, defensiveness, and stonewalling. These researchers contend that when all four of these behaviors are present, divorce can be predicted with 94 percent accuracy. They also suggest that of the four, contempt (characterized by belittling and scornful behaviors such as eye rolling, sarcasm, mockery, insults, and hostile humor) is the most destructive to marriage relationships.

On the other hand, these researchers have also found three conflict patterns that work well for happy couples. Validators argue with mutual respect, validate the spouse's thoughts and feelings, and use compromise to resolve conflicts. Volatiles argue energetically and vigorously but also experience and express passion and warmth

during nonconflict times. Avoiders, on the other hand, downplay problems, ignore complaints, or agree to disagree, preferring to focus on the positive validators and volatiles use the mutual engagement pattern since both partners are actively involved in the argument, even though validators act more constructively, while volatiles act more negatively toward one another. Avoiders use the mutual avoidance or withdrawal pattern but remain happy because they are similar in their preference for minimizing the problem and are able to maintain enough positivity in the relationship to offset the negativity around the unresolved problem. In fact, these researchers have found that the common element to all three of these conflict styles is that they display at least 5 times as many positive behaviors as negative behaviors in the relationship. These findings suggest that even if conflict behaviors are negative, the relationship can succeed if this negativity is overshadowed by enough positivity.

Causes

Many factors influence the way a person behaves during conflict. Some of the most widely studied include individual characteristics such as (a) skill level—the amount of skill a person has in how to communicate constructively and resolve conflict; (b) gender—although many similarities exist in communication styles, differences between men and women have also been found; (c) personality traits like agreeableness (being likable and good-natured), neuroticism (being prone to anxiety and bad moods), and locus of control (beliefs about the amount of control one has in determining the outcome of conflict); (d) amount of stressors in one's life; and (e) one's goals in the discussion, such as bringing about changes, maintaining harmony, defending one's character, and so forth.

Growing attention is being paid to sociocultural and contextual influences such as ethnicity, sexual orientation, social setting (presence or absence of others), cultural ideologies about appropriate behaviors, work stresses of the particular day, relationship qualities such as amount of affection routinely expressed, and even the atmospheric temperature and humidity.

Gender Differences

One of the reasons the demand-withdraw pattern has garnered so much attention is because many early studies of the pattern found a gender difference in these behaviors. Specifically, researchers found that women were more often in the demanding role during conflict, while men were more often the withdrawers.

There are three perspectives on what causes these gender differences in demand-withdraw behaviors around conflict. The first two represent nature and nurture perspectives. The nature perspective posits that men and women are hardwired differently, and therefore, their innate biology causes them to act the way they do (with men more withdrawn and women more engaged during conflict). For example, the Escape Conditioning Model suggests that men are more likely to withdraw because they are more physiologically aroused by relationship conflict than women. Therefore, men withdraw to cope with the adverse emotional reactivity they experience, while women are able to sustain higher levels of engagement. Existing research is divided on whether men or women are more physiologically aroused by conflict, and some findings suggest no gender differences at all. Further, recent findings suggest that the demander is actually more physiologically aroused than the withdrawer.

From the nurture perspective, men and women are socialized to act in different ways in relationships. For example, women are socialized to express emotion, seek emotional intimacy, and value relational connectedness, whereas men are socialized to be autonomous and inexpressive. These differences inevitably lead women to prefer talking about feelings and problems to restore relational harmony, whereas men prefer avoiding these discussions.

Again, according to the nurture perspective, the type of marital structures and power differences espoused in a society, such as traditional or patriarchal marriage (husband-dominant) versus egalitarian (equal power shared by husband and wife), would influence the type of conflict patterns used. This situation could actually mean that wives would be socialized to be more withdrawing and husbands socialized to be more demanding, instead of the reverse. For example, some countries such as Pakistan espouse patriarchy, and others such as the United States encourage more egalitarian marriages.

Interestingly, although wives are more likely to be in the demanding role and husbands in the withdrawing role among American couples, this pattern is reversed among Pakistani couples. Among Pakistani couples, wives are more likely to withdraw than husbands, and husbands are more likely to use demands than wives. These findings suggest that demanding and withdrawing tendencies during conflict are strongly influenced by sociocultural context.

The third perspective, advanced and supported by research conducted by Andrew Christensen and others, is called the conflict structure view. According to this perspective, behavior during conflict depends not on gender, but on the position taken on the particular topic. Specifically, the person more invested in seeing change occur takes on the demanding role, while the person more invested in the status quo takes on the withdrawing role. For example, if a husband and wife are discussing household chores (because the wife wants the husband to help out more around the house), the wife is more likely to demand while the husband is more likely to avoid or withdraw. On the other hand, if the same couple is discussing finances (because the husband would like the wife to spend less), the husband is more likely to demand while the wife is more likely to withdraw or avoid. In sum, from this perspective, the kinds of behaviors displayed depend on the structure (or topic) of the conflict. Research shows that this kind of flexibility in conflict behavior depending on the topic of the conflict appears to be most likely among happier couples and among couples who have been together fewer years.

Cultural Similarities and Differences

Limited research has examined conflict patterns across cultures. There are mixed findings regarding which groups display more negative or positive behaviors during conflict. However, a consistent finding is that the level of satisfaction or distress in a relationship is associated with the amount and type of conflict patterns used. This finding means that regardless of culture, race, or other aspects of diversity, couples' happiness in their relationships depends in part on how they behave during conflict. Some research suggests

that this is even more so for Caucasian Americans than other groups, and other results suggest no differences among various groups in the strength of this association.

Cross-cultural research has demonstrated that demand-withdraw is present in countries outside North America, such as Brazil, Italy, Taiwan, and Pakistan. Similar to those of North American couples, the relationships in each of these countries that are characterized by more demand-withdraw are also more unhappy.

Research on same-sex couples shows that they share many similarities with opposite-sex couples. For example, they report similar amounts and types of conflict behaviors, these behaviors are similarly related to their level of happiness or distress, and they similarly predict relationship outcomes. Same-sex couples are also similarly characterized by one partner tending to be demanding and the other withdrawing during conflict. In same-sex couples, partners higher in femininity, desiring more closeness in the relationship, and more committed are more likely to demand during conflict, while partners lower in femininity, desiring more distance in the relationship, and less committed are more likely to withdraw from conflict.

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See also Arguing; Communication, Gender Differences in; Conflict, Family; Conflict, Marital; Conflict Measurement and Assessment

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CONFLICT PREVALENCE AND SOURCES

People often gravitate toward relationship partners who hold attitudes and values similar to their own. Yet, though partners are similar, they are not identical. By their very nature, relationships consist of two people who each bring a unique set of goals, needs, and preferences to the table. As a result, situations are likely to arise in which both partners cannot simultaneously have what they want, leading to disagreements even within happy and established relationships. For this reason, choosing a mate has been likened to choosing the particular set of problems that one is willing to contend with in the years to come. Recognizing the inevitable presence of conflict in relationships, relationship scientists have sought to determine just how prevalent conflict is within intimate relationships and to determine the factors that may exacerbate conflict between partners. The purpose of this entry is to highlight common precursors of relationship conflict.

Frequency and Topics of Relationship Conflict

To examine the frequency of conflict within relationships, researchers have generally asked couples about the kinds of interactions they have with their partners each day. This research indicates that many of the important interactions that couples report are, in fact, arguments. Interestingly, this research also suggests that particular times of day and locations may foster disputes between partners. Arguments are more likely to occur in the kitchen than any other location and are most

likely to occur on weekdays. In fact, the early evening weekday hours, when partners are transitioning from work to their roles at home, seem to be a particularly turbulent period for couples. Moreover, the frequency of arguments tends to be linked to partners' overall relationship satisfaction. Unhappy couples report twice as many unpleasant interactions as do happy couples (approximately four versus two over a 2-week period), even though unhappy couples actually spend less time together on a daily basis. Not surprisingly, then, difficulty communicating and resolving conflict is the primary reason couples seek relationship counseling.

So what do couples argue about? Although one might expect the topics of disagreement to be as varied as the people in the relationships, researchers have found remarkable commonalities across couples in the types of incidents that trigger arguments. One study examining heterosexual, gay, and lesbian couples revealed that all three types of couples report their most common topics of disagreement as falling into the areas of power (e.g., decisions regarding money and division of labor) and intimacy (e.g., affection and sex). Further research shows similar findings. In several studies, couples were presented with a list of possible sources of relationship problems (e.g., religion, children) and asked to select which topics represented sources of difficulty in their relationship. The topics most frequently identified by couples as sources of relationship conflict were money, communication, and sex. Moreover, these issues have been cited as problematic by couples in different relationship stages (i.e., premarriage, newly married, and later marriage), suggesting that the sources of relationship conflict remain fairly consistent over the course of a relationship.

Why Do Couples Argue? Incompatible Goals and Misperceived Intentions

Why are some topics particularly difficult for couples to navigate? Some theories suggest that conflict is the result of incompatible goals between partners. According to this view, conflict arises when one person pursues his or her goals in a way that interferes with the other person's goals. For instance, conflicts regarding money may begin if

one partner believes it important to save money for the future, while the other partner prefers to splurge on desired items in the present. Unless partners are able to strike a compromise between their differing goals, conflict is likely to escalate and lead to feelings of relationship dissatisfaction.

The process of negotiating differing goals, however, is complicated by the fact that partners sometimes find it difficult to express their needs and perspectives effectively. Research examining the communications of both happy and unhappy couples suggests that while most individuals have positive intentions when expressing themselves to their partner, they are frequently unsuccessful in translating those thoughts and feelings into a positive behavioral expression. In fact, positive messages seem to be more difficult than negative messages to convey effectively. Moreover, even a well-sent positive message might not be perceived as such by the receiving partner. Further studies have compared spouses' ratings of their partners' communications with the ratings made by trained independent observers. Among happy couples, spouses tended to rate their partners' statements as more positive than did independent observers. Conversely, among unhappy couples, spouses rated their partners' statements as more negative than did the outside raters. In particular, unhappy spouses often perceived neutral statements (as rated by independent observers) as negative. Thus, disagreements arise not simply because of differing goals but because the process of discussing those goals with a partner can create a situation of ineffective communications and misperceived intentions.

Is Conflict a Product of the Person or the Relationship?

Although conflict is a component of all relationships, some people clearly are less capable than others of resolving relationship disagreements. Is this because these individuals are generally deficient in their interpersonal skills (e.g., poor conflict resolution represents a trait of the individual)? Or are disagreements simply more likely in some relationships than others (e.g., poor conflict resolution represents the state of the relationship)? Evidence supports both perspectives. For instance, some research suggests that individuals' conflict

resolution skills are heavily influenced by how conflict situations were handled in their families when they were growing up, a phenomenon referred to as the intergenerational transmission of behavior. One study found that adolescents who had warm, nurturing relationships with their parents exhibit more warmth and less hostility in their intimate relationships 5 years later. Similarly, a study of dating couples revealed that women raised in families characterized by poor communication and little emotional involvement were more likely to respond to a partner's negative behavior with further negativity (e.g., angry communications) during conflict discussions. Thus, rather than diffusing a partner's negativity with positive comments, these women responded in ways that escalated conflict. Finally, studies of married couples reveal that spouses from broken or aggressive homes are more likely to display negative and aggressive behavior toward their partner. In fact, one study found that 26 percent of people who had seen their parents engage in aggression behaved aggressively in their own relationship. However, among people who had not witnessed their parents engaging in aggression, only 10 percent behaved aggressively in their own relationship. Thus, at least to some degree, conflict resolution behaviors may be the product of the individual, as people learn their relationship behaviors from their parents.

Poor conflict resolution, however, cannot be blamed entirely on individuals not knowing better forms of communication. Some studies have observed spouses engaging in problem-solving discussions with their partner and separately with a stranger. Comparing these discussions reveals that spouses tend to display more negative behavior and less positive behavior when talking with their partner than when talking with the stranger. These findings suggest that spouses were capable of engaging in effective problem solving but were not using those skills when interacting with their partner, suggesting that poor conflict behavior can be specific to particular relationships.

When are couples more likely to behave poorly toward each other? Clearly, couples vary in how many issues they have to disagree about (e.g., how to spend leisure time together, jealousy issues, intrusive in-laws, etc.), and couples facing more problems tend to behave more negatively with each other. However, research has also examined

the role that stressors originating outside of the relationship, such as work stress and financial difficulties, may play in shaping interactions between partners. This research suggests that disagreements are more likely on days when partners report experiencing more stress. Further evidence examining married couples over the early years of marriage indicates that when couples are experiencing especially high levels of stress, they are more likely to engage in psychological aggression (e.g., yelling or storming out of the room) during conflict interactions. Conversely, at times when stress is lower, these same couples are able to resolve their conflicts in a more positive and constructive manner. These findings indicate that identifying precursors of conflict requires understanding not only which couples are prone toward negative problem-solving behaviors but also when all couples, regardless of their general conflict skill level, may be more likely to engage in negative behaviors.

When Conflict Turns to Aggression

Particularly heated or frustrating conflict exchanges can sometimes escalate to the point where couples engage in mild forms of assault, a situation known as common couple violence. Generally, this term refers to acts of pushing, grabbing, or slapping the partner, as well as to throwing objects at the partner. Common couple violence is quite prevalent within intimate relationships. More than half of engaged couples report either husband-to-wife or wife-to-husband aggression (or both) in the year before marriage. Moreover, one study of newlywed couples found that almost all of them engaged in psychological aggression and approximately one fourth of them engaged in some act of physical aggression (e.g., throwing something at their partner or hitting their partner) in the first 4 years of marriage. Prevalence rates among dating couples are slightly lower, perhaps because dating couples tend to have less contact and exert less control over each other than engaged and married couples.

Is Resolving Disagreements the Key to Relationship Happiness?

Given the prevalence of relationship conflict, is the key to a successful relationship finding ways

to effectively solve relationship disagreements? Recent approaches to couples' therapy suggest that couples' goals should not be to solve their problems per se, but to improve how they discuss their differences. From this perspective, effective communication may not always lead to solutions, but it does prevent the development of negative feelings and divisiveness between partners.

Supporting this idea, numerous studies have found that the way couples talk about marital difficulties predicts not only current levels of marital satisfaction but also changes in satisfaction over time. One study observed newlywed couples discussing issues they wanted to improve in the relationship. Spouses who expressed more positive affect, such as humor or affection, when talking about these issues maintained the highest levels of satisfaction over the early years of their marriage. Moreover, displaying negative communication behaviors, such as criticizing or devaluing one's spouse, was not necessarily predictive of greater declines in satisfaction over time as long as spouses also expressed positive affect during the discussion. Thus, it is not just what couples say during arguments but also how they say it that matters for their long-term relationship satisfaction.

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See also Abuse and Violence in Relationships; Communication Skills; Conflict, Marital; Conflict Patterns; Conflict Resolution; Contextual Influences on Relationships

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CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Conflict is a daily part of human existence. Although there are different types of conflict ranging from subconscious or internal struggles to clashes between nations (e.g., war), conflict can be defined as a state of disharmony between incompatible or antithetical persons, ideas, values, or interests. Conflict may involve a zero-sum mentality in which one person's goals are accomplished only at the expense of someone else. For example, someone gets a job while another person does not. This entry examines different types of conflict resolution and how it is commonly defined and measured. It discusses contemporary theories of conflict that focus on positive and negative aspects of conflict, persuasive arguing, diffuse physiological arousal, and imagined interaction Conflict Management Theory. Concurrently, this entry will review existing research about conflict resolution in interpersonal relationships.

Types of Conflict Resolution

Resolving conflict refers to a variety of strategies, which include compromise, negotiation, mediation, and arbitration. These techniques are applied to settling interpersonal, organizational, business, community, and international disputes. Robert Blake and Jane Mouton identified five strategies of managing conflict in business organizations that are frequently cited in the conflict resolution literature. These strategies are smoothing, forcing, withdrawal, compromising, and problem solving. These strategies also apply to a variety of relationships, which include friends, rivals, and close intimates.

Smoothing involves the loser of the win-lose configuration and represented the loser cooperating with the winner and being low in assertiveness. The winner of the win-lose model undertook forcing, which included the winner being low in cooperation and highly assertive with the loser. Traditional conflict avoidance (withdrawal) was seen as low in both assertiveness and cooperation. Compromise is moderate in both assertiveness and cooperation. Compromise represents high cooperation with the needs of others along with low assertiveness of one's own needs. Neither party is completely satisfied or dissatisfied. Sometimes, this compromising has been referred to as lose-lose because both parties may feel frustration at not achieving their optimal goals. The final strategy, problem solving, reflects a win-win option in which there is mutual accomplishment of goals that integrates both high assertiveness of one's own needs coupled with high cooperation in solving the needs of others.

Measurement

Conflict resolution is measured through a variety of procedures including self-report questionnaires, behavioral observation and coding of arguments and conversations, and clinical interviews. A popular scale that has been validated cross-culturally and measures conflict and violence is Murray Straus's Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS). The scale measures the frequency and intensity of the following strategies: withdrawal, reasoning, verbal threats, moderate physical coercion (e.g., slapping, scratching), and severe coercion (punching, choking). The CTS is a popular instrument that measures physically coercive strategies (e.g., hitting) as well as withdrawal, threats, and calm discussions. It has been cross-culturally tested in over 31 countries and discriminates between the sexes with men using more intense strategies such as punching and women using less severe strategies such as slapping.

The behavioral observation of conflict tactics in which verbal and nonverbal behaviors are coded is used by a variety of scholars. For example, research has examined the conflict resolution tactics among happy and unhappily married couples who end up divorcing. Sample codes for husband-wife include

complaints versus criticisms. Complaining is constructive, while criticisms are destructive. Complaints are concerned with a specific issue (e.g., failure to be on time for a specific appointment). Conversely, criticisms are more global and reflect negative judgments about the partner's personality. "You always" or "you never" statements are common as well as ridicule and sarcasm. Happy couples use more complaints, while unhappy couples more often criticize.

Nonverbal tactics that are commonly coded reflect the emotional sentiment of the partners while arguing. These are coded as positive affect, negative affect, and neutral. Research typically indicates that nonverbal codes are more powerful discriminators among happy compared to unhappy couples. Yet while arguing, happy couples are more likely to state a complaint with neutral affect that is responded to with a statement such as an agreement that validates the complaint (e.g., "I understand what you are saying. It must be rough"). Unhappy couples use a pattern of countercomplaining in which a complaint is responded to with a countercomplaint that is stated with negative affect.

Studies reveal that the frequency of arguing does not predict relational instability, breakups, or divorce. Rather, it is how the arguing is done. Arguing with contempt, expressed through nonverbal expressions such as eye rolls and smirking facial expressions (e.g., scorn), is a very powerful cue of ineffective communication. Additional ineffective conflict resolution strategies include stonewalling or withdrawal and defensiveness. In terms of stonewalling, research has indicated that so-called strategies of time-out are ineffective in controlling conflict because the individual often keeps the conflict alive in the mind by having imagined interactions in which he or she imagines arguing with the partner. It is common to relive the conflicts in the mind and ruminate about them, which may result in physiological arousal and anxiety. Additionally, individuals mentally plan or rehearse for anticipated encounters with the party. Hence, while out of sight, the person maintains the conflict in his or her mind unless he or she is engaged in other tasks.

Conflict resolution is observed in interaction laboratories in which behaviors are coded using content analysis of themes. In addition,

physiological behaviors are monitored including heart rate variability, blood pressure, and somatic activity in the form of wrist movements. Couples are videotaped discussing events of the day and grievances. A variety of variables are examined, including effects of background music (music therapy), and non-verbal behaviors used while interacting, including eye gaze, gesturing, touching, smiling, smirking, body lean, and body posture.

Negotiation is often studied in laboratory experiments in which individuals are randomly assigned to conditions. These studies have mostly looked at antecedents of the strategies adopted by negotiators and the outcomes attained, including whether agreement is reached, joint benefit to both parties, and the individual benefit to each party. For example, the person who makes the first offer tends to achieve greater benefit than the other party.

Conflict is easy to monitor in couples in laboratories. A list of topics is provided to relational partners, and they are asked to rate how pleasing or displeasing the topics are (e.g., social life, openness of communication, spiritual values, job, fidelity). Subsequently, they are asked to discuss the most displeasing topic. Another procedure uses a modification of the Inventory of Marital Conflicts. The inventory has been used in numerous studies in marital interaction. However, it can be modified to apply to other relationships. Fictional opposing scenarios are presented to partners, who are instructed to try to persuade each other to their point of view.

Aside from surveys and behavioral coding of conflict strategies, interviews are often used. Individuals are asked about recent conflicts and how they were handled. This question represents what is called a retroactive imagined interaction, as individuals replay in their minds repetitive arguments. They are queried about how they handle conflicts and if alternative strategies could have been used to facilitate more productive outcomes. Interviews are commonly used by social workers, communication skills interventionists, or therapists. For example, court-referred anger-management course instructors often used direct interviews to learn about the history of conflict while devising conflict-resolution strategies that the individual can understand.

Theories of Conflict

The study of conflict resolution requires an understanding of explanations for why conflict and violence occurs in interpersonal relationships. Following are brief explanations of popular theories of conflict resolution.

Conflict Theory

Conflict theorists take a counterintuitive approach to why conflict is an integral characteristic of the human condition. Conflict includes positive and negative qualities. Conflict is seen as natural. The key is to use conflict productively rather than intensely. Some positive qualities include increased understanding of alternative positions on issues, self-growth by discovering repressed skills in oneself (e.g., discovering that in stressful conflicts, people have latent skills that had not been used before), and mobilization of energy to the extent that conflict can energize and focus thoughts, as opposed to being in a state of complacency or mindlessness (using scripted or automatic behavioral routines).

Persuasive Arguing-Argumentative Skills Deficiency

A popular explanation for conflict is that individuals are frustrated by an inability to communicate their feelings. These people are conflict-avoiders who do not enjoy arguing and who may become defensive if they feel trapped. Conversely, conflict-engagers enjoy arguing for its intellectual merits. Numerous studies by John Gottman and Dominic Infante have demonstrated that volatile or high argumentative couples are seen as more credible, eloquent, creative, and self-confident. They are willing to initiate arguments, discuss controversial issues, and express disagreement. Conversely, avoiding or low argumentative couples dislike arguing, shy away from conflict, withdraw from arguments, and are reluctant to voice disagreement. Ideally, there is a balance between precipitating arguments needlessly and avoiding arguments altogether.

People who lack argumentative skills can become frustrated because of their inability to articulate what they are feeling. As a result, verbal aggression in the form of name-calling, insults,

put-downs, sarcasm, offensive language, racial or sexist epithets, threats, and ultimatums are likely to be used. Nonverbal contempt may be signaled through the rolling of the eyes, gritting of teeth, and constriction of eye pupils as the frustrated person exhibits facial expressions reflecting mockery or disdain.

Individuals can be both high in argumentativeness and high in verbal aggressiveness even though research has indicated that the correlations between the two are typically low to moderate. Moreover, Western cultures based on an individualistic as opposed to collectivistic orientation have demonstrated a cultural bias for argumentativeness in which competition is rewarded over cooperation. In addition, research has revealed sex differences in arguing and verbal aggression. Although there is ongoing debate in the literature, following are some stereotypes that have various degrees of empirical support. Males are more argumentative in public than females, interrupt more, and are more prone to verbal escalation such as losing their tempers. Females initiate discussions of problematic relational issues and complain of male withdrawal during discussion of serious topics. There is considerable debate as to which sex is more verbally aggressive, with some researchers arguing men and others, women.

The argumentative skills explanation of conflict espouses the view that lack of argumentation skills is a catalyst for physical and emotional violence. Indeed, the lack of effective conflict management skills is a major issue in partner abuse, including familial violence. Hence, arguing can be constructive to the extent that individuals are focused on the topic as opposed to going off on tangents. This strategy reflects "gunnysacking," in which individuals unleash a repressed set of grievances on another even if they are unrelated to the specific discussion at hand.

Research has revealed positive tactics for dealing with conflict, including using positive understanding while arguing. Examples of this strategy are being able to say that one is sorry for a misunderstanding and resolving the problem so that both partners are happy. Another strategy is rationality, which reflects restrictive rules for arguing because they restrict another person's behavior in terms of telling them what they should not do. Examples are not raising one's voice, not arguing, and not getting

angry. Conversely, positive understanding reflects prescriptive rules because they prescribe behaviors that should be performed in order to resolve conflict such as listening without prejudgments.

Conciseness and consideration are two additional conflict-resolution rules. Conciseness is a prescriptive rule and reflects behaviors such as sticking to the main point, being specific, and getting to the point quickly. Finally, consideration is a restrictive rule category and represents strategies such as not talking too much, not making someone else feel guilty, avoiding mimicry or sarcasm, and not pushing one's view as the only solution or the correct choice.

Although all of these strategies for resolving conflict are seen as characterizing happy and satisfied relationships, signaling positive understanding while arguing is most important in constructive attempts to resolve conflict. Indeed, positive understanding also signals a sense of empathy and perspective taking, as the other person's point of view are considered. Indeed, signaling positive understanding can be viewed as an art because of the variety of strategies that reflect it. On the one hand, being honest and communicating what is on one's mind reflects the strategy, but so does seeing the other's viewpoint, being able to apologize, and resolving the issue so that both parties are satisfied.

Gender and Diffuse Physiological Arousal in Couples

Gottman and his associates have studied the physiology of marital conflict, including data analyses on couples over a 14-year period. For example, physiological arousal among newlyweds while arguing is predictive of declines in marital satisfaction over time. In addition, there is data on the effects of conflict on hypertension and coronary heart disease. Yet researchers may differ in their conclusions. For example, Gottman claims that physiological arousal is more punishing for men, while Janice Kiecolt-Glaser and her colleagues argue that women suffer physiologically from the ill effects of marital or relational duress. Therefore, some researchers believe that men are more likely to withdraw from discussing sensitive topics in unhappy marriages because they are trying to prevent arousal and the release of adrenalin. Once the man is aroused, it takes him longer for

the heart rate to return to a basal level. Furthermore, in discussing serious issues in their relationships, some researchers claim that there are gender differences with unhappy men withdrawing from conflictual discussions. Conversely, in happy marriages, men are less likely to withdraw from conflict.

Other research reveals higher systolic blood pressure for unhappily married males while arguing compared to happily married males. Over 80 years ago, research about marital grievances found that husbands were concerned about their wives' criticisms and escalating emotion, while wives were concerned about their husbands' withdrawal and aggressiveness (e.g., "He is quick-tempered and argumentative"). Other research reveals males being worse at soothing themselves after a big argument, perhaps to maintain adrenalin for purposes of later counterattack. For example, after exposure to anger-inducing situations, male heart-rate and blood pressure remain high but are reduced in a retaliation condition while the opposite was true for females.

In summary, diffuse physiological arousal means that conflict is harder to resolve when males are aroused and agitated. A controversial claim is that in happy marriages, women are more likely to use an editing function in resolving conflict, as they are more likely to deescalate conflict by using validating statements, agreements, and positive emotional or nonverbal affect (happy voice tone) as they state their views. Furthermore, in using the editing function, women are trying to calm men down if they are agitated. Gottman claims that it is harder for men to soothe themselves once they are aroused and that women are better at calming themselves. These findings are still debated in the literature with varying levels of support.

Imagined Interaction Conflict Management Theory

One current direction in conflict resolution involves the use of mental imagery about arguing through imagined interactions. Imagined interaction Conflict Management Theory explains how conflict persists in interpersonal communication through mental imagery and imagined interactions. Imagined interactions are mental dialogues that people have in which they relive prior conversations while anticipating new encounters. Conflict-management theory provides a mechanism explaining why conflict

is enduring, may be constructive or destructive, and can erupt anytime in relationships. This theory consists of a series of axioms and theorems derived from empirical support that explain the daily persistence of conflict. For example, one theorem indicates how retroactive and proactive imagined interactions help keep conflict alive within the human mind. A retroactive imagined interaction occurs when a person replays a previous argument in their mind, whereas a proactive imagined interaction involves anticipating conversations before they occur in order to rehearse more constructive strategies.

Importance of Resolving Conflict

The causes of conflict are important to understand in order to devise constructive resolution strategies. There are multiple causes including biological and biochemical causes as well as personality and situational determinants. To the extent that biology and personality comingle, there is debate over the veracity of time-out as a conflict resolution strategy. According to Conflict Management Theory, many arguments are repetitive, as people ruminate over past grievances. Furthermore, during time-out sessions, individuals are likely to stay agitated as they replay the arguments in their minds, creating further distress. A continuing avenue for research involves assessing forgiveness or nonforgiveness for long-standing grievances.

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See also Communication Skills; Conflict, Marital; Conflict Patterns; Vengeance

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CONNECTEDNESS, TENSION WITH AUTONOMY

In a symbolic sense, humans, like birds, need both a nest for stable connections and wings to soar freely toward greater autonomy. This comparison underscores how important it is for people both to become securely connected and to explore greater autonomy within marriage, parent–child, dating, friendships, workplace, and other intimate relationships. Consistent with these ideas, this entry describes autonomy and connectedness, with a special focus on whether individuals experience either tension or compatibility between these aspects of their intimate human relationships.

Autonomy is a component of individualism, or an assortment of socially valued qualities that allow a person to become more self-directed and self-governing. The development of personal autonomy consists of several aspects of relationships including (1) affirming one's personal rights, (2) exercising freedom of choice in life decisions, (3) demonstrating self-initiated behavior, (4) experiencing and controlling personal emotions separate from the emotions of others, and (5) developing one's own system of values and beliefs. Autonomous qualities are believed to be central features of relationships in Westernized societies such as the United States and Western Europe but are present in other cultures to a lesser degree. In contrast, connectedness is a component of collectivism, or an assortment of socially valued qualities that emphasize the importance of social responsibility, attachment to others, and group togetherness. Personal connectedness involves several aspects of relationships including (1) seeking frequent contact and emotional closeness with others, (2) expressing affection, (3) striving for harmony within groups, (4) emphasizing one's responsibility to other group members, and (5) complying with group expectations and promoting group interests. Aspects of connectedness are believed to be most common among members of Asian and Hispanic societies but are present in other cultures to a lesser degree. Evidence is growing that people in most, if not all, societies encourage some degree of balance between autonomy and connectedness.

Different Views of Autonomy and Connectedness in Relationships

How a person experiences autonomy and connectedness within intimate relationships is commonly described in terms of three perspectives: (1) tension or conflict, (2) compatible development, and (3) mixed patterns of tension and compatibility.

Tension Between Autonomy and Connectedness

The belief that people experience tension between autonomy and connectedness is the traditional and increasingly the most criticized of the three perspectives. A tension point of view represents autonomy

and connectedness as general aspects of relationships that are in conflict with each other. This means that increases in autonomy of any kind often lead to proportionate decreases in connectedness of any kind.

A tension viewpoint is illustrated in classical and more recent versions of psychoanalytic theory, which propose that gains in children's autonomy occur as they separate from earlier bonds they have formed with parents. During childhood and adolescence, this separation process is a normal feature of growing up that is proposed to have positive consequences for the progress of youth toward adulthood. During adolescence, for example, the young are supposed to gain autonomy by separating or becoming less connected to parents as they spend more time with peers, begin to date, experiment with sexuality, and become committed to their own values. They also learn to make more of their own lifestyle choices about such things as entertainment, music, and styles of dress.

A tension viewpoint portrays adolescents as achieving autonomy through a separation process as they spend less time with and reduce the quality of ties they have with parents. Gaining autonomy through separation provides the young with greater freedom from the physical and emotional controls of parents so they can make their own life decisions and engage in intimate relationships with people outside their families. A common feature of parent-adolescent relationships that fosters this separation process is the increased level of tension, conflict, and turmoil that is supposed to be common during this developmental period. Conflict and turmoil contributes to increased adolescent separation, which creates the conditions for greater youthful autonomy at the expense of connections with parents.

Compatibility Between Autonomy and Connectedness

Contrasting with a tension perspective is the more recent viewpoint that people experience autonomy and connectedness as compatible and as developing together. A compatibility perspective proposes that individuals do not routinely become more autonomous by sacrificing connections with others. Instead, some degree of balance or essential harmony between autonomy and connectedness is

a normal experience within intimate relationships that are healthy. Humans are viewed as products of both their individual or private experiences as well as their connections with spouses, children, work colleagues, friends, and others within relationships. A compatibility viewpoint focuses primarily on how people experience autonomy and connectedness in similar ways and less on how these aspects of relationships differ from one circumstance to another.

An example of a compatible viewpoint is provided by Attachment Theory, which can be used to explain how people develop and experience connectedness and autonomy during the entire lifespan. The emergence of attachment behavior by infants, an early form of connectedness, contributes to close ties between infants and attachment figures (e.g., parents) or people who serve as sources of security and protection. Infant-to-parent attachment involves such behaviors as crawling and eye contact to maintain close proximity, clinging responses for protection, and affectionate behaviors (e.g., cuddling, snuggling, and smiling) for emotional support. Attachment relationships also may provide the young with an internal working model or a set of beliefs about what to expect from relationships and how they will work in the future. These expectations for relationships are believed to provide a basic model for later life about how to balance connectedness and autonomy within dating, marriage, friendship, and other intimate associations.

Concerning the compatibility issue, Attachment Theory offers the idea that most people who have experienced secure attachment relationships are less likely to experience conflict between autonomy and connectedness in either their early or later relationships. Instead, autonomy is not only portrayed as being compatible with connectedness but also as springing from the close ties that a person has experienced in secure attachments with others. Autonomy begins early in development, as infants gradually expand the distance they crawl away from their parents to explore objects in the environment. During childhood, adolescence, and adulthood, the process of gaining autonomy retains this common theme of constantly expanding explorations through increasingly more complicated behaviors. Individuals use parents, friends, dating partners, and spouses as sources of security and

springboards for more elaborate excursions into the social world. For example, most teenagers do not simply reject positive relationships with parents as they gain greater freedom from parental connections. Instead, teenagers often expand the number and complexity of their peer relationships, while maintaining close ties with parents. Greater autonomy is not achieved, therefore, as a zero-sum game in which gains in self-direction necessarily mean losses in connections with parents. Most adolescents report that they value making more of their own lifestyle choices and desire to spend more time with peers but without suffering dramatic declines in the love and respect they feel for parents. The development of autonomy and connectedness are not in conflict but indeed are compatible and essential aspects of human relationships that develop together.

Mixed Patterns of Compatibility and Conflict for Autonomy and Connectedness

A third perspective is that both autonomy and connectedness may occur in mixed patterns from one culture or circumstance to another. Although recognizing that autonomy and connectedness are experienced in most if not all cultures, a mixed pattern viewpoint questions the idea that autonomy and connectedness are always experienced in the same way from one culture to another. This perspective combines elements from both the tension and compatibility perspectives but without proposing that autonomy and connectedness necessarily develop together in some general way. Instead, these aspects of interpersonal relationships may contradict, complement, or function independently of each other. In doing so, greater attention is focused on the differences rather than the similarities about how autonomy and connectedness are experienced.

A mixed pattern occurs in societies that have a dominant way the majority experiences autonomy and connectedness as well as different patterns of experience within ethnic-minority communities. A specific example is the dominant experience of the White, middle-class population of the United States, which often balances these relationship qualities by assigning priority to autonomy over connectedness within family and interpersonal relationships. In contrast, the Chinese-American

ethnic community within the United States often places greater value on connectedness by assigning priority to group interests, supporting family cohesiveness, and seeking harmony with others over autonomy. Given their minority status, however, Chinese Americans often benefit from adapting to both cultures and by shifting back and forth in mixed patterns between the dominant and ethnic expressions of autonomy and connectedness as circumstances require. Consequently, Chinese Americans may practice a mixed pattern by emphasizing strong bonds of connectedness within their family lives by deferring to parental authority, avoiding conflict, and maintaining harmony among family members. However, when Chinese Americans venture into the individualistic world of the U.S. workplace, they often recognize the benefits of becoming more autonomous. Specifically, they pursue their individual self-interest by striving for personal success and competing energetically with colleagues for career promotions.

A mixed-pattern perspective also proposes that some cultures emphasize different kinds of connectedness and autonomy that may be in conflict, compatible, or some combination of the two. For example, when cultures vary in the type of connectedness they emphasize, that is, either trust or assurance, mixed results often occur in the relationship between autonomy and connectedness. Although both forms of connectedness are probably present to some degree in most cultures, other circumstances often lead to either trust or assurance being emphasized more strongly than the other.

A key factor that determines whether either trust or assurance is favored depends on how much value also is placed on autonomy. Trust is the kind of connectedness that most people prefer to express in Westernized cultures where people also place high priority on becoming autonomous. Often expressed as encouragement and affection, trust supports the development of autonomy by seeking to build a person's confidence, tolerating relationship changes, and supporting the formation of new relationships. In contrast, assurance is a form of connectedness that is more common in collectivistic societies and involves communicating about the need for cooperation, togetherness, harmony, and loyalty within groups. Assurance conflicts with autonomy by emphasizing the importance

of conforming to group interests, stability in relationships, resistance to changes in relationships, and interpersonal harmony. When assurance is emphasized, autonomy and connectedness are likely to be experienced as conflicting, but when trust is favored, people often become autonomous without reducing their connections with others. Thus, exactly how autonomy and connectedness are experienced in a particular culture may depend on the specific types of these relationship qualities that are emphasized.

Debates about the meaning and the degree of compatibility or conflict between autonomy and connectedness are likely to continue in the future. Putting together the autonomy-connectedness puzzle may rely on pieces from the tension, compatibility, and mixed-patterns perspectives. A working conclusion is that most relationships can be understood, in part, as a nest that provides secure connections and wings that make greater autonomy possible.

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See also Collectivism, Effects in Relationships; Dependence; Dependency Paradox; Individuation; Security in Relationships; Self-Regulation in Relationships

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CONSCIENTIOUSNESS, EFFECTS ON RELATIONSHIPS

Conscientiousness, one of the Big Five dimensions, is thought to involve orderliness, dutifulness, achievement striving, self-control, and purposefulness. As such, high-conscientious persons are seen as dependable, self-disciplined, organized, and determined, whereas low-conscientious persons are undependable and easily distracted from tasks. Mary Rothbart further suggests that conscientiousness is linked with early appearing self-control processes that emerge as the frontal cortex begins to mature. In general, due to their poorer self-control, low-conscientious individuals seem to have difficulty maintaining standards and persisting in tasks in the face of obstacles. This entry describes the benefits as well as the limits of conscientiousness for childhood and adult relationships.

Is Conscientiousness Important for Relationships?

Researchers have focused most of their efforts on examining how conscientiousness relates to performance criteria. For example, conscientiousness has been related to improved task functioning across a wide range of contexts, including school and work, and has even been related to fewer driving accidents. However, recent research is beginning to understand the importance of being conscientious for maintaining high-quality relationships.

Conscientiousness in Childhood Relationships

Children and adolescents who are low on conscientiousness exhibit behavioral problems that interfere with relationships. For example, conscientiousness has been related to externalizing behaviors (e.g., impulsivity), which in turn has been associated with more friends, higher friendship quality, greater peer acceptance, and lower peer victimization. On the other hand, conscientiousness is thought to buffer against the negative effects of internalizing problems on interpersonal relationships. That is, conscientious children seem

better able to control their anxiety in interpersonal situations, a skill which leads to better relationship outcomes.

During late adolescence, conscientiousness has been associated with how frequently college-age students contact family members during their first year of school. Although the amount of contact with family members decreased for all students, the smallest decrease in contact was seen for conscientious students. Conscientious persons seemed better able to maintain relationships through more frequent communication even when separated from family members than nonconscientious persons.

Conscientiousness in Adult Relationships

Conscientiousness continues to have an influence on relationships in adulthood. Among adults, conscientiousness has been linked to higher mate desirability, higher relationship quality, and greater marriage stability. Conscientiousness also appears to play a role in how persons cope with stressors. When faced with an interpersonal stressor, persons high on conscientiousness are more likely to rely on coping strategies that help preserve the relationship during stressful periods than are persons low on conscientiousness. High-conscientious individuals are more likely than low-conscientious individuals to compromise, problem solve, seek support, and respond empathically. Due to their use of these relationship-preserving tactics, it is not surprising that individuals high on conscientiousness report fewer marital stressors than individuals low on conscientiousness. Conversely, adults who are low on conscientiousness disclose personal information more inappropriately, are less responsive to their partners in romantic relationships, have poorer interpersonal interactions, are more likely to cheat on their partners, and are more likely to divorce.

Conscientiousness is also linked with parenting. For example, conscientious mothers are more responsive to their child's needs and less likely to use power assertive tactics (e.g., spanking, threats) with their child than low-conscientious mothers. Higher levels of parental conscientiousness seem to create a supportive environment in which the child can learn about, explore, and test his or her world. However, there do seem to be limits; extremely

high levels of parental conscientiousness can place unreasonable demands on children leading to more adjustment problems. Interestingly, in collectivistic cultures (but not individualistic cultures), conscientious mothers viewed themselves as being more competent as parents than low-conscientious mothers.

Levels of conscientiousness are also influential when conflict situations escalate to anger. It has long been known that when persons become angry, they are more likely to be aggressive. However, recent laboratory research has found that this anger-aggression link is attenuated for persons high on conscientiousness. That is, there was only a relationship between anger and aggression when persons were low on conscientiousness (and most likely lower on self-control). Conscientiousness thus appears to be important in behavioral inhibition of emotions that can potentially damage relationships. In other words, given that persons who are lower on conscientiousness are more impulsive, they are more likely to lash out when frustrated by others rather than control their emotional reactions. This lack of impulse control can lead to poorer interpersonal interactions.

Conscientiousness is also important in informal organizations. For example, conscientiousness is positively correlated with peer-reported social influence and social reputation such that high-conscientious persons have greater social influence than low-conscientiousness persons. It is possible that conscientious persons are better able to present themselves as role models and regulate how others perceive them in leadership roles. In addition, conscientious individuals are often perceived to be better group members. For example, they are more likely to commit to continuing with a group, are less likely to be late or absent from gatherings, and can be counted on to meet group obligations.

Is There a Dark Side to Being Conscientious?

Given that conscientiousness is composed of many facets, the relation between conscientiousness and interpersonal relationships may take many paths. Some aspects of conscientiousness (e.g., achievement striving, order, dutifulness) may not always lead to positive interpersonal outcomes. For example, among college roommates,

persons are more likely to identify the source of conflict as a high-conscientious roommate rather than a low-conscientious roommate. In addition, similarity on conscientiousness between partners has been linked with poorer relationship satisfaction in early and middle adulthood (but not in later adulthood). These increased negative outcomes may trace back to the task-directed nature of conscientious persons. Both college and midlife are times in which persons are focused more on reaching individual goals and completing tasks (e.g., raising families, achieving high grades, and earning promotions). High-conscientious persons are more likely than low-conscientious persons to have a plan of how to best achieve their goals and complete tasks. When these plans clash, increased conflict and lower relationship satisfaction can result.

Given that conscientiousness also involves order and dutifulness, it is no surprise that conscientiousness has also been linked to right-wing authoritarianism (an adherence to conventional norms and values and an uncritical subjection to authority). Indeed, higher levels of conscientiousness have been linked to less tolerant attitudes toward illegal immigration. Although conscientiousness does not appear to have a direct association with prejudice and racism, its influence is indirect via right-wing authoritarianism.

Finally, one could speculate that because high-conscientious people are more planful and ordered, it might influence their willingness to let go and have fun. Thus, they may be perceived as less entertaining and enjoyable to be around in certain social situations. Indeed, there is some evidence that extremely high levels of conscientiousness are associated with obsessive-compulsive disorder. Further research needs to empirically examine whether different facets of conscientiousness (e.g., achievement striving, competence, order, self-control) predict positive and negative relationship outcomes.

Jennifer M. Knack and Lauri A. Jensen-Campbell

See also Marital Satisfaction and Quality; Mother–Child Relationships in Adolescence and Adulthood; Mother–Child Relationships in Early Childhood; Personality Traits, Effects on Relationships; Self-Regulation in Relationships; Temperament

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CONTEXTUAL INFLUENCES ON RELATIONSHIPS

Studying personal relationships requires that researchers focus attention on agency. Relationships do not just happen. They are built through people's actions or, more accurately, through their interactions over time. They are, in other words, active constructions consequent in part at least on the emergent thoughts, reflections, choices, and decisions people make across time about the involvement they want to have with others. Yet at the same time, relationships are not just about agency; they involve more than simply the individual choices and decisions that those involved make. Or to put this a little differently, the choices and decisions people appear freely to make about the content and patterning of their relationships are not as free as a focus on agency alone would suggest. Rather these choices and decisions are structured by aspects of their lives over which they have little if any direct control. This entry is concerned with exploring those factors external to personal relationships that nonetheless influence their content and form. After discussing why context is important in understanding personal relationships, the entry outlines

different levels of context that impact relationships, briefly using the example of courtship to illustrate the arguments.

One element of how personal relationships are structured stems from what can be broadly termed psychological dispositions and dynamics—personality traits, attachment characteristics, and the like—which influence how individuals behave in their different relationships and in turn frame subsequent interactional responses within these relationships. But equally, the contexts in which different relationships are developed and sustained are also important in structuring these relationships. Even though at times they may be presented as entirely personal, in reality, personal relationships do not exist in a decontextualized void. Whether talking about relationships between lovers, friends, workmates, family, neighbors, spouses, or whatever, the way people “do” their relationships will be patterned by a wide range of factors external to the individuals and relationships in question. Such contextual influences are not determinate of relationships; there is always the interplay of agency and structure. Nonetheless, the contexts in which relationships are embedded provide the framework within which people actively construct their relationships.

The notion of context is inherently complex. Although the broad idea of context patterning personal relationships is largely uncontentious, it is far more difficult to be precise about the ways that different elements of context impact relational outcomes. The difficulty is that by its nature, context refers to a wide range of features external to relationships. It incorporates any and all aspects of the circumstances pertaining to a personal relationship and the individuals party to it that are not integral elements within that relationship. Potentially, context incorporates everything from the settings in which interactions occur to the sub-cultural mores of the participants to the sociohistorical structures of the period. As a consequence, the boundaries of context, and the boundaries between different aspects of context, are inherently fuzzy. Specifying those features that should be included in analyzing why particular relationships are as they are is consequently somewhat arbitrary in that it depends in large measure on the focus the researcher chooses to take.

Levels of Contextual Influences: A Schema

In discussing friendships, Rebecca Adams and Graham Allan produced a schema that attempts to clarify the different elements of context that can influence personal relationships. They highlight four conceptually distinct levels of context. They term the first of these the personal environment level. By this, they mean all those immediate features of a person’s life that structure the possibilities he or she has for developing and sustaining different relationships in particular ways. Among other things, this includes, for example, their work commitments, their domestic and family obligations, their mobility, their economic well-being, their housing circumstances, and their access to different leisure pursuits. All such features of an individual’s social and economic location play a part in shaping their patterns of social participation and, consequently, the specifics of the different personal relationships in which they are involved at any time.

The second level they identify is the network level. This level refers to the overall set of relationships that an individual sustains. Clearly, the characteristics of different people’s networks vary. Some are more extensive than others; some are more varied in the types of relationship they include; some have a greater network density than others (i.e., a higher proportion of network members who have relationships to one another). These characteristics will be partially consequent on the factors operating at the personal environment level. But network configuration can also have an independent effect on people’s relationships. That is, network characteristics themselves form part of the context in which individual relationships are—or are not—sustained. Equally, they have an impact on the opportunities people have to develop new relationships. As an illustration, people who have relatively small and configurationally dense personal networks are likely, as a direct consequence, to have fewer opportunities for developing new relationships than those whose existing networks are more loose knit and more extensive.

The third and fourth levels of context that Adams and Allan identify are the community level and the societal level. The community level focuses on how people’s lives, including their personal relationships, are influenced by the socioeconomic

and cultural practices that arise among different groups at different times. The most obvious examples here relate to the patterning of personal relationships emergent in economically deprived localities and in ethnic communities. Research has frequently shown how cultural norms and/or economic necessity influences the organization of the different family and nonfamily personal relationships sustained by people in these settings. Although not always so apparent, among any social grouping, shared cultural norms develop that shape people's understanding of how personal relationships should be framed and consequently influence their relationship behavior.

Similarly, at the level most removed from the individual, the societal level, larger scale socio-historical and macroeconomic factors shape the assumptions people make about how personal relationships should be routinely ordered. A classic example here concerns the impact that industrialization had upon people's familial and community involvement. Despite all the detailed debate there has been about the processes involved, few would deny that family and community solidarities were fundamentally altered as an agrarian economy gave way to an industrialized one. A quite different example concerns the recent rise in cohabitation and the concurrent deinstitutionalization of marriage. As a result of changed understandings of sexuality and individual rights, what was once "living in sin" has over a period of some 30 years become an appropriate and acceptable mode for developing romantic, sexual, and domestic commitment. Such changes in the patterning of personal relationships cannot be explained simply by individual volition. Their roots lie more broadly in the shifting sociohistorical conditions that frame normative and legal conventions governing the legitimacy of different behaviors.

It is evident that the divisions between the different levels of context identified by Adams and Allan are somewhat arbitrary. Indeed, given the nature of context, specifying precisely where one level ends and another starts is often problematic. Similarly, there is nothing special about this schema *per se*. Other ways of exploring the different components of context could be devised. This though does not undermine the main issue being raised here: Personal relationships are not just personal. Although individual agency is important in their

organization, it alone cannot account for the content and form that different personal relationships take. As argued above, the interplay of diverse contextual factors implicitly frames the ways that individuals (choose to) construct their various personal relationships.

As a brief example to illustrate the influence of context, consider here courtship, that is, forms of relatively committed premarital romantic and/or sexual relationships. Clearly courtship has taken quite different forms in different societies at different times. In part, how courtship is patterned depends on the controls over sexuality exercised within a given society and the ways in which young males and females are generally allowed to associate with one another. In cultural settings where marriages are arranged, for example in much of southern Asia, the potential spouses tend to have rather little to do with one another before the wedding, with relatively few meetings occurring. In other cultures, the courtship period may be more prolonged and involve greater individual selectivity, based upon attraction and emotional commitment (whether or not this is termed love), but with the couple still routinely being chaperoned. This, for example, was a common pattern in many areas of southern Europe in the first half of the 20th century. In contemporary Western society, in contrast, there is greater emphasis on individuality and greater acceptance of the couple's right to develop their relationship with a high degree of privacy.

From these examples, it can be recognized that community and societal levels of context shape the ways in which couples organize and manage their courtship. The freedoms granted to individuals differ significantly. Even if these examples just focus on contemporary Western courtship, they can illustrate the different ways in which context influences relationship development. Consider just two aspects of contemporary courtship: its timing and its sexual content. Taking the latter issue first, one of the more remarkable features of the last 30 years has been the changes occurring in sexual mores. While in the mid-20th century, some degree of sexual interaction was tolerated between fiancées, such activity was generally rather furtive. By the turn of the 21st, not only was virginity at marriage no longer prized by most, but more interestingly premarital cohabitation had become the

norm. To put this differently, explicit sexual involvement within committed partnerships was no longer stigmatized either by those others in the couple's social networks or by the social institutions with whom they had dealings.

This example provides a very concrete example of how the contexts in which relationships develop influence their patterning. But on the issue of timing, increases in the average age of first marriage also illustrate how changing contextual factors shape the apparently personal decisions people make. Of consequence here are changes in young adulthood and, in particular, the new opportunities available to women. Increased participation in higher education, greater control over fertility, and access to a wider range of employment opportunities have significantly altered young women's life-course options, creating greater financial independence and offering choices that were not so readily available to earlier generations. In turn, normative pressures from family and friends reflect these changes. Rather than being a period for settling down, young adulthood has come to be seen more as a period for exploring options. In these ways, personal environment and network levels of context re-enforce shifts at the community and societal levels. Early marriage now tends to be discouraged, with the early and middle 20s being seen as more a period for exploring possibilities, building careers, and gaining greater relational experience; in a sense, a time for becoming an adult rather than being an adult. In this context, marriage has tended to be postponed until a later age.

Concluding Remarks

In summary, although personal relationships are indeed personal and individual, they are nonetheless patterned by the contexts in which they are developed and sustained. The forms they take, the ways people behave in them, and the feelings people have about them are all influenced by the broader settings in which they are enmeshed. At times, people are quite conscious of how particular features of a relationship's context influence their involvement in it. More generally though, contextual factors operate as background features, without people really being aware of their impact. People simply "do" their relationships in

an unquestioning fashion, building on taken-for-granted assumptions and conventions. As social scientists though, researchers need to be aware that different contextual factors implicitly, yet inevitably, pattern the organization of personal relationships. In particular, ignoring the place of context in personal relationship research can lead to poor science by encouraging inappropriate generalizations.

Graham Allan

See also Economic Pressures, Effects on Relationships; Families, Demographic Trends; Norms About Relationships; Social Networks, Effects on Developed Relationships; Socioeconomic Status

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CONVOY MODEL OF SOCIAL RELATIONS

The Convoy Model of Social Relations is an interdisciplinary concept that describes the formation of social relations and how they affect health and well-being. The term *convoy* is borrowed from anthropologist David Plath who used the term to describe the birth cohorts of children he observed in Japan. From birth through adulthood, these children were consociates or members of a convoy that provided the indispensable feedback that

leads to maturity. Robert Kahn and Toni Antonucci used the term to describe the group of close social partners who surround an individual providing protection, care, and socialization, which in turn influence their health and well-being. The Convoy Model is an integration of developmental, social, and organizational psychology concepts. It strongly emphasizes the life-span cumulative aspects of development and the life course situational context; that is, the roles and organizations. This entry describes the different types of social relations, their antecedents and consequent characteristics, as well as supporting empirical evidence.

The Convoy Model identifies multiple dimensions of social relations: social networks, social support, and support satisfaction or adequacy. Social networks refer to the objective descriptive characteristics of social relations such as age, gender, relationship, and years known. Social support refers to the actual exchange—that is, provision and receipt—of support. Social support has been defined in many ways but generally includes aid, affect, and affirmation. Aid is most commonly understood as tangible support but can also include less tangible support such as advice and information. Examples include lending money, providing sick care, helpful suggestions, and problem solving. Affect refers to emotional support such as love and affection. Affirmation is the communication to the supported person, an affirmation of his or her perspectives, values, or norms. And finally, support satisfaction or adequacy refers to the individual's evaluation of the support he or she receives. This construct is meant to recognize the importance of the psychological evaluation of objective social network structure or support exchanged. For example, one individual might evaluate the receipt of \$100 as sufficient support and another consider \$1,000 insufficient. Similarly, one expression of love per week might be considered adequate to some, whereas daily expressions of love might be considered woefully inadequate to others.

The original Convoy Model identified two kinds of antecedent characteristics, personal and situational, that fundamentally influence social relations. Personal characteristics refer to individual factors such as age, gender, race/ethnicity, religion, and education. These characteristics affect the type

of social relations individuals require, expect, and value. Situational characteristics refer to the norms and expectations of the roles and environment in which the person is situated—the overall context within which the individual lives. Situational characteristics recognize the group or cultural context within which the individual experiences his or her personal characteristics. Examples might include the difference between living in Montana as compared to Manhattan, working in a factory versus at a university, or being on the “Mommy” track rather than the corporate track. The combination of personal and situational factors is important for social relations and health. Thus, for example, being Catholic in Boston, Asian in California, or a high school graduate in a factory town are all very different from being a Catholic in Kansas, Asian in Idaho, or a high school graduate in a high-tech locale such as in the Silicon Valley. Personal and situational characteristics influence the type of social relations that one is most likely to experience. These characteristics are ultimately considered antecedent factors that affect health and well-being, defined broadly to include psychological, physical, and mental health.

When considering the ways in which social relationships influence health and well-being, the social support literature addresses issues of direct and indirect or buffering effects. Thus, the direct effect posits that social relations might affect how one feels irrespective of stress. On the other hand, social relationships may influence how one copes with stress—the indirect or buffering effect. The Convoy Model addresses both direct and indirect effects. That is, social relations can influence general health and well-being directly at any given time and cumulatively over time. But also important is the fact that social relations can influence how an individual copes with a particular stress. To be clear, the model does not suggest that people with positive relations will never encounter stress or never have health problems but that they probably will encounter less stress and be less negatively affected by the stress they do experience.

Empirical Evidence for the Convoy Model

Recent empirical evidence has supported many aspects of the model. The association between

social relations with close significant others and health has been consistently noted and highlights the importance of core network relations to mental health. Other findings support many aspects of the original model and indicate that personal (e.g., age, gender, race, and socioeconomic status) and situational (roles, expectations) characteristics as well as stress (e.g., daily hassles, life events) influence multiple aspects of social relations (e.g., social network, social support, support quality) and health (e.g., self-rated health, diagnosed illnesses, depressive symptoms, self-esteem, life satisfaction). For instance, there are clear gender differences in social networks, especially negative aspects of social relations. Men were less happy if they wished they had more people to rely on or if their network members were too demanding, whereas women were less happy if they reported that their network members “got on their nerves.” As people age, they report less negative relationships with their children and friends, but negative relationships with spouses remains about the same. At the same time, people who are married are much more satisfied with life and tend to be healthier than people who are divorced, separated, or never married. The quality of a mother’s social relations with others affects her relations with her child, both of which influence mother and child’s well-being as indicated, for example, with depressive symptoms. Other findings indicate that support exchanges are related to quality of support, which is negatively related to stress and positively related to mental health. Fortunately, however, poor quality spousal relationships and health may be offset by high-quality friend and family relations. Self-efficacy, which can be encouraged by strong, positive social relations, can offset the negative effects of stress.

Overall, the Convoy Model is designed to highlight the importance of a long-term, longitudinal and cumulative effect of social relations, the importance of quality of relations over type or structure of relations, and the influence of social relations on health and well-being. Future work should examine these associations longitudinally in order to understand how social relations change over time and influence health and well-being.

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See also Closeness; Criticism in Relationships; Social Support, Nature of; Social Support and Health; Social Support Interventions

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COOPERATION AND COMPETITION

Cooperation and competition are basic properties of human social life. Whenever an individual interacts with relatives, friends, intimate partners, or business associates, their relationship will normally contain a mixture of cooperative and competitive elements (i.e., mixed-motive interactions). On the one hand, people take pleasure and pride in collaborating with others to achieve mutual goals such as raising children, creating a successful business, or winning a sports match. On the other hand, people often compete with each other to get credits for joint achievements. Cooperation can be broadly defined as a motivation to further joint interests (e.g., doing well together), whereas competition concerns a motivation to maximize personal interests relative to that of others (e.g., doing better than others). Cooperation and competition can be thought of as two contrasting motivational or behavioral strategies employed in situations in which people’s outcomes are mutually dependent. They also sometimes refer to the relationship itself. For instance, a cooperative relationship is characterized by a positive correspondence between people’s outcomes (win-win relationship), whereas

a competitive relationship is characterized by negative correspondence in outcomes (win-lose relationship). This entry investigates the origins of human cooperation and competition and some factors that promote cooperation in social relationships, based on the latest research findings in psychology and adjacent disciplines.

Issues of cooperation and competition have been of interest to behavioral scientists across many disciplines, such as in psychology, economics, biology, political science, and sociology. Researchers often use experimental game methodology to test their hypotheses. Arguably the best-known game is the Prisoner's Dilemma (PDG), a classic example of a social dilemma that pits individual against collective interests. The PDG was developed by scientists in the 1950s. The cover story for the game involved two suspects accused of committing a crime together who are independently offered the choice to testify against each other or to keep silent. The payoffs are such that each one is better off testifying against the other (the competitive or noncooperative choice), but if they both pursue this strategy, they are both worse off than by remaining silent (the cooperative choice). Thus, their best individual strategy results in a deficient collective outcome.

Theories

Historically, the dominant theory to explain cooperation and competition is (economic) game theory, which provides the logic behind experimental games and assumes that individuals are rational actors who are motivated to maximize their self-interest. Game theory predicts that players will compete in a PDG (or an equivalent game) because this, on average, gives them the best payoffs. Although this is a useful starting premise, there are many conditions under which people may deviate from narrow self-interest. As such, complementary frameworks are needed to understand broader interpersonal motives and mechanisms.

Evolutionary and social psychological approaches provide useful, complementary insights into why people cooperate versus compete. The selfish gene perspective suggests that people are motivated to cooperate if it furthers the survival of their genes. For example, Kin Selection Theory assumes that

people are more inclined to share with close kin because of overlapping genetic interests. There is considerable evidence in support of this evolutionary theory; for instance, people are more willing to share food or money with siblings (50 percent genetic relatedness) than with cousins (12.5 percent). Reciprocal Altruism Theory provides an alternative explanation for the evolution of cooperation. When people interact repeatedly with the same person, cooperation can develop because players can reward each other for cooperation and punish each other for competition (the tit for tat strategy). What about cooperation in larger groups? There are various promising evolutionary models of large-scale cooperation being developed at the moment, such as Indirect Reciprocity Theory—the idea that people cooperate so as to earn a positive reputation—and Multilevel Selection Theory—the idea that groups of cooperators have an evolutionary advantage. Yet these models wait further testing.

Psychological theories of cooperation also question the game theory assumption that individuals are inclined to compete in mixed-motive social interactions. The most prominent is Interdependence Theory, which suggests that different people interpret a particular situation differently under the influence of particular social motives, social norms, or aspects of the decision situation. Playing a prisoner's dilemma with an identical twin, for instance, changes the PDG into a game in which cooperation is considered the most attractive strategy. Also, players with cooperative dispositions attach greater weight to a cooperative outcome, thus transforming the game into one in which cooperation is rational. What are the factors that might lead to such transformations that promote cooperation? Generally, there are motivational, strategic, and structural factors.

Motivational Factors

There is overwhelming evidence for stable individual differences in how much people value certain ways of distributing outcomes between themselves and others. The literature distinguishes among three primary social orientations: (1) cooperation—maximizing joint outcomes (doing well together), (2) individualism—maximizing

own outcomes regardless of what others get (doing best for oneself), and (3) competition—maximizing own outcomes relative to others (doing better than the other). Findings reveal that most people have a cooperative orientation, which has implications for the way they behave in social settings. For instance, they are more willing to sacrifice in an intimate relationship, do volunteer work, donate money to a charity, and save the environment. They also weigh the moral implications of their decisions more heavily and perceive cooperation as the more intelligent choice. One interesting puzzle is where these individual differences come from. There are some indications that cooperators are more likely to grow up in larger families (with sibling sisters, in particular), and they are more prevalent in East Asian than in Western cultures and among women than men, and apparently, they are less prevalent among economics than psychology students. Like any other personality variable, these orientations are presumably the product of a complex interaction between genetic and cultural factors. Examples of other personality traits that have been found to increase cooperation are trust, collectivism, egalitarian values, and a secure attachment style.

A second motivational force in cooperation is people's social identifications. For example, when people highly identify with a particular social group (such as a sports team or social movement), they are more likely to contribute to their group and trust that other ingroup members will do so as well. Social identifications have an even more powerful effect in case of intergroup competition. When social dilemmas involve two groups of players, there is much less cooperation between them than when two individuals play. However, intergroup competition also drives intragroup cooperation, especially among men, and competition within groups is much less severe in the presence of an outgroup. Yet intergroup competition can be a double-edged sword. Encouraging competition between groups might serve the temporary needs of ingroup members, but the social costs of intergroup competition (e.g., prejudice, aggression, violence) can be severe for all involved parties.

There is also evidence that social norms can play an important role in eliciting cooperation in society. Norm violation can result in social disapproval or even ostracism, which are powerful

incentives to cooperate. Social norms also facilitate cooperation through protecting the weak in society from being exploited (such as norms about charity and rules about taxes and social security), and these norms create a sense of justice and fairness in society. It is noteworthy that people are concerned not only about fairness in the outcomes they receive (distributive justice) but also about the fairness in the procedures producing these outcomes (procedural justice). For instance, cooperation with authorities is much higher when people feel they have been listened to and treated with dignity and respect.

A final factor is communication. Cooperation generally increases when players are allowed to communicate. There are several reasons for this. Communication fosters a shared identity between individuals so that they are more concerned about each other's fate. It also offers an opportunity for people to persuade each other to do what is morally right. Finally, communication gives people a chance to make promises and explicit commitments about what they will do.

Strategic Factors

As previously mentioned, communication can have a strategic benefit, as it allows people to make commitments. Furthermore, particularly in repeated interactions between the same players, cooperation can stabilize on the back of a strategy called tit for tat. This strategy commences with a cooperative choice and subsequently imitates the other person's previous choice. Thus, if one partner competes, the other copies the move until the partner starts to cooperate. Tit for tat is one of the most effective means for eliciting stable patterns of mutual cooperation in all kinds of social interactions, for instance, between romantic partners, friends, business partners, and even between nations. It works well because it is nice, but firm. Yet it can be quite an unforgiving strategy, and a more forgiving strategy that does not involve immediate retaliation sometimes produces better results—for instance, in real life, people sometimes accidentally make a noncooperative decision.

Another strategic variable concerns a person's reputation. In environments in which people can freely choose social interaction partners, it may

pay for someone to develop a positive reputation through consistent levels of cooperation. Research suggests that in such environments cooperators may be better off in the long run because they are selectively favored for social exchanges from which competitors are excluded. There is even some evidence that cooperators are selectively preferred as partners for intimate relationships. Perhaps the most common manifestations of reputational cooperation are public charitable displays such as philanthropic giving or bystander helping, which usually attract large audiences.

Structural Factors

Cooperation is enhanced when there is greater correspondence in outcomes between interaction partners. Thus, interventions by which cooperation becomes structurally more attractive (reward) and competition less attractive (punishment) are instrumental in inducing cooperation. A successful example from the real world is the so-called Jigsaw class room in which students of mixed ethnicity work together in small groups on a variety of tasks in which their individual contribution is recognized rather than compete. Such cooperative activities improve educational levels and reduce intergroup prejudices. Rewards may not always be effective because they sometimes undermine people's intrinsic motivation to cooperate. Some people get a warm glow from cooperating and the provision of selective incentives might crowd out their prosocial motivations. Similarly, punishment strategies might erode people's trust in each other and backfire.

Another structural feature involves people's dependence on a relationship. In ongoing social relationships, cooperation is enhanced to the extent that people experience greater commitment to the relationship, that is, when they feel more strongly attached to the relationship and at the same time, perceive a lack of viable alternatives. Commitment is important for social cooperation in romantic relationships, friendship groups, and even in large formal organizations. For instance, people are more willing to engage in organizational citizenship activities such as organizing an office party when they feel committed to the organization that employs them.

A final structural feature is group size. Cooperation is generally higher in smaller groups. In larger groups, people may feel less personal responsibility for the collective interest and perhaps rightly believe that their cooperative contributions makes little overall impact (personal efficacy). Even so, cooperation in large groups is possible, particularly through enhancing feelings of group identity, effective communication, and strengthening social norms. Alternatively, punishment strategies might be quite effective in fostering cooperation in larger groups.

Conclusion

Cooperation and competition are vital themes in human affairs. As emerging research themes, scientists are developing novel games to study cooperation and competition, for instance, using games in which (a) participants can enter or leave, (b) be included or excluded, and (c) play multiple games either sequentially or simultaneously. There is also blooming neuroscience literature studying brain correlates associated with cooperation and competition, reward and punishment, and violation of social norms. Finally, there is an enhanced interest in applications to areas such as close relationships, organizational welfare, education, public health, national security, and international relations.

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See also Commitment, Predictors and Outcomes; Commitment, Theories and Typologies; Evolutionary Psychology and Human Relationships; Interdependence Theory; Justice Norms Applied to Relationships; Social Exchange Theory; Social Identity Theory; Trust

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COPING, DEVELOPMENTAL INFLUENCES

Whether it is the stress of separating from a loved one, the experience of failure, or witnessing a life-threatening event, coping is necessary from the first to the last days of life. Coping describes the transactional processes through which people deal with actual problems in their everyday lives and includes such strategies as problem solving, social support seeking, distraction, and escape. Although coping has been considered an individual affair, influenced largely by personal resources (such as efficacy or optimism), it is clear that coping is profoundly social in nature. Social environments (such as families) can create stress. They shape the specific demands to which people will be exposed or from which they will be sheltered. Social relationships are the contexts through which stressors are filtered and from which coping resources may be drawn. Moreover, social partners may be directly involved in individuals' coping interactions, and they form the back-up systems that will protect people (or leave them vulnerable) when their own coping capacities prove inadequate.

Not only do social contexts and relationships shape how people cope at every age, but they also

influence how coping develops. Recent theoretical and empirical progress in the field has facilitated the study of the reciprocal connections between personal relationships and coping. This entry provides a brief overview of emerging conceptualizations of coping as a backdrop for explaining the multiple levels at which social contexts and interpersonal relationships shape how coping develops. The entry focuses on infancy, childhood, adolescence, and early adulthood.

Conceptualizations of Coping

In recent years, theorists have converged on definitions of coping as regulation under stress, arguing that coping encompasses how people of all ages mobilize, guide, manage, coordinate, energize, modulate, and direct their behavior, emotion, and orientation (or how they fail to do so) during stressful encounters. Coping is also an organizational construct, involving the coordinated regulation of all these elements. When dealing with stressful events, people attempt not only to shape emotional experience and expression, but also to manage their physiological reactions, motor behavior, attention, and cognition; they may also attempt to influence reactions from the social and physical environments. As a result, coping has been considered action regulation, with action referring to organized patterns of behavior, emotion, attention, and motivation.

A diverse range of regulatory strategies can be identified, as reflected in the long lists of coping strategies used in research on stress and coping. In one review, over 400 coping categories were identified, with surprisingly little overlap in the taxonomies that have been suggested to categorize them. To organize these many ways of coping, theorists have proposed a set of hierarchical families of coping, with each having particular adaptive functions and each encompassing multiple lower-order ways of coping. An analyses of the literature suggests 12 primary families, including those typically considered to be adaptive responses to stress, such as problem solving, information seeking, negotiation, accommodation, support seeking, and self-reliance, as well as those typically associated with distress or maladaptive responses, such as helplessness, escape, opposition, submission, delegation, and social isolation.

Developmental Level and Coping

Developmental level is one of the most interesting factors that shape the exercise of coping. In fact, developmental capacities decisively constrain the ways in which particular adaptive functions can be expressed. Because age and experience influence how stress is appraised and how regulatory strategies are enacted, researchers have tended to focus on narrow age ranges when studying stress and coping. Hence, there are studies of how infants, toddlers, preschoolers, children, adolescents, or adults react to and cope with a variety of stressors, but few studies specifically address how coping changes across developmental levels.

Nevertheless, when research on regulation and coping is integrated, it is clear that there are several broad developmental phases characterized by different mechanisms of regulation. Infancy begins with stress reactions governed by reflexes, soon to be supplemented by coordinated action schema. For example, infants become able to display more differentiated emotions and coordinate these with actions that can soothe distress, such as reaching for a caregiver or a favorite toy. During toddlerhood and the preschool years, coping is increasingly carried out using direct actions; this is the age period at which voluntary coping actions first appear. That is, although children may have difficulty using cognitive coping strategies, toddlers and young children develop behavioral methods for alleviating distress, such as pretend play and behavioral distraction. During middle childhood, coping through cognitive means solidifies, as described in work on distraction, delay, and problem solving. Children's thoughts about positive things (cognitive distraction) provide comfort, and they can work through possible responses to a problem without enacting them. By adolescence or early adulthood, coping through metacognitive means is added, in which youth become increasingly capable of regulating their coping actions based on future concerns, including long-term goals and strategies to prevent or avoid subsequent stress.

At the same time, these broad developmental phases are characterized by changes in the participation by social partners. Starting at birth, other people, especially sensitive and responsive caregivers, are a fundamental part of the neonate stress reactivity system, influencing not just how infants

respond but whether they even physiologically register an event as stressful. During this period, caregivers carry out coping actions based on their reading of the stress responses of their infants. During toddlerhood and preschool age, as children become more self-reliant, they can more intentionally enlist the participation of social partners. For example, they can physically seek out others when distressed, and they can use emotions and language to advertise their needs for help. Social partners participate actively with children as they deal with challenges and threats, and their mere presence may support more adaptive coping. During middle childhood, children are increasingly self-reliant and able to coordinate their coping efforts with those of others, although social partners remain key backups. By adolescence, children can deal with a variety of normative stressors on their own, but they selectively rely on others for help and advice. Youth are increasingly capable of regulating their coping actions based on their effects on others. Hence, one of the most interesting developments in coping is how the use of social support seeking changes with age.

Development of Seeking Social Support

Support seeking can be considered an all-purpose adaptive family of coping strategies, commonly called upon by people of all ages to deal with all kinds of stressors. Support seeking, which includes seeking emotional support, comfort, help, information, or advice, is the most commonly used coping family among infants, toddlers, children, and adolescents. However, it is still possible to discern typical (i.e., average) patterns of support seeking that change with age. For example, infants quickly progress from generalized expressions of distress that bring a caregiver to their aid to intentional appeals (through focused gaze or vocalizations such as crying) to caregivers for aid, attention, and information. Infants also are sophisticated at looking to others for cues about responses to stress (i.e., social referencing), which can diminish negative stress reactions or ease distress.

Starting at about age 4, decreases in seeking support from adults are the rule, especially during the 5-to-7-year shift and the transition to adolescence (ages 10–12). At the same time, children and adolescents report greater preferences for self-reliance

and peer support as they get older. Hence, declines in seeking support from adults are found during the late childhood and adolescent years. These decreases are accompanied by increases in self-reliance and in attempts at problem solving and seeking peer support (especially emotional support).

Stressors that are uncontrollable and over which adults have authority (e.g., medical stressors) are one exception to this pattern; for these events, children show increasing preferences for seeking adult support as they get older. This is part of a general shift across ages 10 to 16, during which children become better able to determine who would be the best source of support for dealing with specific kinds of stressors rather than relying on support from caregivers for most of their informational and emotional support. Taken together, these trends suggest that individuals are more organized and selective in their use of social support as a coping strategy as they get older; they seek out support that will meet their particular needs at the time and use few or multiple sources of support depending on their distress, self-reliance, and other needs.

Social Influences on the Development of Coping

It is almost impossible to overstate the importance of social relationships (including parents, siblings, extended family members, friends, peers, teachers, classmates, and neighbors) to children's coping. Social partners play a role in determining the stressors, both chronic and acute, to which children will be exposed; partners' problems can become stressors for children; social partners contribute to the development of children's coping resources, such as self-efficacy or social skills; they shape children's stress reactivity, for example, through quality of attachment; social partners participate in children's coping, through their own stress reactivity (e.g., panic or blame) and coping actions; and social partners help children learn from bad experiences, including planning proactive coping to prevent their reoccurrence. Research on attachment, social support, parenting, family processes, peer relationships, teaching, and parent-child interactions have all shown links between the availability of supportive relationships and children's reactions to stress, regulation, and coping.

Nowhere is the importance of interpersonal relationships seen more clearly than in research on how parenting influences the development of coping. Parents socialize coping explicitly through modeling, teaching, and coaching. Moreover, they also shape children's coping implicitly through availability, involvement, comforting, soothing, and helping. Family climate and parenting style play a role in the ways that children learn to cope with stress. For example, parents who are more warm and involved, who provide clear and consistent guidelines, and who assist their children to make their own age-appropriate decisions have children who are lower in negative emotionality and who use more active coping behaviors, such as problem solving and direct action. Children who grow up with such positive parent-child relationships also report less avoidant coping responses when dealing with stress and have better mental health outcomes when stress does occur. Similar results have been found for teacher-student relationships and children's coping with academic stress.

Research is just beginning to explore exactly how social forces shape children's coping. One guide for organizing this research is the idea that social partners shape children's coping by facilitating or impeding the development of children's regulatory resources and how they are deployed under stressful conditions. An intriguing direction in this work is that the kinds of parent behaviors that are effective in promoting the development of adaptive coping and regulation depend on children's temperamental characteristics. For example, a child who has a temperamental tendency to be overcontrolled (e.g., inhibited, anxious, or shy) will benefit from parenting strategies that include high levels of modeling and supported behavior as the child slowly attempts to add to a repertoire of adaptive coping strategies while managing high arousal. In contrast, a child who has a tendency to be undercontrolled (e.g., high impulsivity) may require a different kind of parental availability, which includes coaching the child to stop to think about alternative coping strategies before acting and involves more direct action to repair situations when a child's coping actions go awry.

Future studies can use research on parents as a template for studying the effects of other adult social partners, such as grandparents, aunts and uncles, teachers, coaches, and neighbors. The

effects of other children and youth, such as siblings, peers, friends, and classmates, may take different forms or additional pathways. In every case, it is important to remember that the mere existence of supportive others can have an enormous impact on experiences of stress and processes of coping.

Conclusion

Patterns of coping with stress are diagnostic of the entire human system of which it is part—adaptive coping reveals that demands are developmentally appropriate, social resources are sufficient, and individual capacities are well developed. Moreover, coping is more than a symptom. It is a player in processes of risk and resilience. Coping, because it describes the ongoing transactions between humans and the demands present in daily life, can be considered a proximal process—that is, a major driver of development. How a toddler, child, adolescent, or adult deals with the normative stressors he or she encounters at home, at school, at work, and in the neighborhood plays a decisive role in the ongoing development of appraisals of stress, coping resources, and vulnerabilities. This is especially true for children and adolescents, but stress and coping likely play significant roles in emotional, social, cognitive, and personality development all across the life span.

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See also Approach and Avoidance Orientations; Emotion Regulation, Developmental Influences; Families, Coping With Cancer; Resilience; Social Support, Nature of; Stress and Relationships; Vulnerability-Stress-Adaptation Model

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COUPLE IDENTITY

As close relationships progress over time, relationship partners may develop a couple identity and begin thinking of themselves as part of a couple rather than as separate individuals. Couple identity is at least somewhat consciously accessible, involving a sense of overlap with one's partner and the perception of the self and partner as a team or collective unit. Couple identity may also operate automatically and outside of conscious awareness. For instance, people with a strong couple identity are more likely to spontaneously use plural pronouns (we, us, ours) instead of singular pronouns (I, me, mine) when talking about their relationships. This entry discusses the nature of couple identity, how it develops, and its implications for individuals and their relationships.

Couple identity frequently manifests itself in observable behaviors and aspects of the couple's shared environment that reflect the blurred boundary between self and partner. Close relationship partners often share a social environment of mutual friends and engage in shared interests and activities together. They may cohabit, merging their possessions and creating a shared physical environment. They may even share bank accounts. Close relationships are often characterized by reduced

personal borders, as revealed by frequent touching, sharing food, and close physical contact.

Couple identity also influences information processing in that information about close relationship partners tends to be processed similarly to information about the self. For instance, cognitive biases that normally favor the self over others are attenuated for close relationship partners, presumably because the formation of a couple identity minimizes the distinction between oneself and one's partner. Individuals with a strong couple identity tend to respond to a partner's successes and failures as their own. Evidence also suggests that mental representations of the self overlap with those of close partners. For instance, people are faster at judging whether a trait describes the self if it also applies to a close partner than if it does not, suggesting that shared traits are more accessible to the self-concept. Other research suggests that individuals make inferences about their own attributes by observing the behavior of others with whom they have a sense of merged identity. Close relationship partners even tend to encode, store, and retrieve information from each other as though they are drawing on a shared memory system.

Development of Couple Identity

Couple identity is positively correlated with relationship length and develops gradually over time as relationship partners grow closer and more committed. Research suggests that couple identity is not just an outcome of commitment, but that commitment and couple identity influence each other in a cyclical pattern. That is, commitment is associated with changes over time in couple identity, and couple identity is associated with changes over time in commitment. Arthur and Elaine Aron's Self-Expansion Model argues that as a relationship develops, the resources, perspectives, and identities of one's partner are to some extent experienced as one's own and thus included in one's sense of self. As a result, the individual experiences a sense of closeness or overlap with the partner and treats the partner similar to the self. This merging of self and other is theorized to emerge from the interdependence and correspondence of outcomes that characterize close relationships—partners tend to mutually influence

each other, and one partner's good or bad news may strongly affect the other.

In addition to relationship-specific couple identities, people also differ in the degree to which they generally define themselves in terms of their close relationships rather than their unique personal attributes. Not surprisingly, this chronic tendency to define oneself in terms of close relationships is associated with a greater likelihood of developing a couple identity within a particular relationship. Several studies have found gender differences in this tendency: women are slightly more likely than men to chronically define themselves in terms of their relationships and spend more time thinking about their relationships. These gender differences are generally small, and there are members of both genders with relatively strong and relatively weak couple identities.

Relational Implications

In addition to being more committed, men and women with strong couple identities tend to be more satisfied with their relationships and are less likely to break up or divorce. Couple identity predicts greater positive relationship thinking, which is thought to increase the likelihood that an individual will act in ways that benefit the partner or relationship rather than just the individual's own immediate self-interest. One study found that for males, couple identity was associated with viewing sacrifice for the partner as more satisfying and less harmful to the self. To the degree that a strong couple identity allows one to share a partner's perspective, it is also likely to facilitate conflict resolution and result in more charitable explanations of a partner's behavior. For example, a study of married couples found that both husbands and wives with strong couple identities became less physiologically aroused and showed less contempt and belligerence while talking to their spouses about problems in the marriage. Recent research has also examined the role of couple identity in coping with stressors. One such study found that couple identity helped minimize the negative mental health outcomes associated with caring for a chronically ill partner. In addition to these correlational findings, several studies have established that manipulating couple identity influences other

relationship variables. For instance, individuals asked to talk about their relationship using plural pronouns rated their relationship as more intimate, important, and close than individuals asked to use singular pronouns. In fact, some forms of couple therapy attempt to cultivate the sense of couple identity in the hope that this shared sense of identity would facilitate other positive changes in the relationship.

Although the formation of a couple identity is generally conceived of as an expansion of one's individual identity to include a partner, psychodynamic and feminist theorists have argued that entering a close relationship may sometimes lead to the loss of one's individual identity, particularly if one's individual identity is poorly developed or one feels compelled to sacrifice important aspects of the self to maintain the relationship. Others have argued that there is an optimal level of couple identity and that exceeding this level may result in feeling too close to a partner. Couple identity may also have detrimental consequences when a relationship ends and the individual loses aspects of the self that were previously defined through the relationship, potentially resulting in a sudden retraction of the identity. One study of women who had lost a spouse through either death or divorce found that women who reported a strong couple identity after the loss experienced greater psychological distress and disruption in their sense of self. Despite these negative implications, a growing body of research supports the conclusion that couple identity is both an important outcome and causal agent in the positive development of close relationships.

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See also Closeness; Commitment, Predictors and Outcomes; Individuation; Interdependence Theory; Self-Concept and Relationships; Self-Expansion Model

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COUPLES IN LATER LIFE

In later life, persons continue to desire and form intimate relationships that afford love, companionship, and physical intimacy. These relationships have diversified in recent decades. Older persons still may marry or remarry, but increasingly they are entering into dating, cohabiting, and living apart together (LAT) relationships instead. This entry describes these relationships; examines how experiences in these relationships differ by gender, race/ethnicity, and sexual orientation; and discusses the consequences of these relationships for well-being.

General Influences on Couples' Relationships

In all types of relationships, persons strive to balance their needs for love, companionship, sex, and emotional and financial security with needs for autonomy and independence. Their ability to do so is influenced by social inequalities, such as gender relations. The term *gender relations* refers to inequalities of wealth, authority, labor, and esteem, supported by ideologies that justify men's greater privilege in most settings. Among today's older couples, for example, men tend to control finances and decisions (except mundane ones), and women tend to maintain social networks and provide domestic labor, including care work. Gender inequality is lessened over time, however. Gender relations combine with inequalities of race/ethnicity and sexual

orientation to shape couples' experiences in later life. In addition, persons' past and present circumstances influence their choices to pursue particular intimate relationships.

Marriage

Among those age 65 and over, marital status has changed little since the 1970s. The percentage of women married has risen slightly due to longer life expectancy for all, and more recently for men. Asians/Pacific Islanders and then Whites are the most likely to be married, followed by Hispanics, Native Americans, and Blacks. Men of all races are more likely to be married than are women of any race.

Most couples in long-term marriages have relatively high marital satisfaction, regardless of whether they share interests and values or lead more independent lives. Some, however, have emotionally distant independent relationships and low marital satisfaction. Overall, older men are more satisfied with their marriages than older women are. Older wives, but not older husbands, are more satisfied with marriage when they share decision making equally. Both husbands and wives mention leisure activities and intimacy (sex and communication) as areas of disagreement. Women are more likely than men to mention personal habits and health matters; men are more likely to mention financial matters or to say their relationship has no problems. Finally, older Blacks report more marital conflict than do older Whites, and older Black women report lower marital satisfaction than do White women (partly because of greater financial strain).

Experiences common to later life, such as retirement or caregiving, do not seem to make late-life marriages more equal. For instance, despite White women's increased labor force participation, the division of domestic labor among retired persons remains traditional. Men who increase their domestic labor usually do more stereotypically masculine tasks, unless their wives are disabled. Even when men choose to perform such traditionally feminine tasks as cooking, their wives retain ultimate responsibility. Notably, while both Black and White wives do more domestic labor than their husbands, African Americans divide domestic

labor more equally and flexibly over the life course.

Spousal caregiving may not change the balance of power either, even if husbands or wives take on gender-atypical tasks. Caregiving spouses usually must perform the other's tasks, and caregiving husbands provide the same amount and type of personal care as wives do. Traditional gender relations can persist, however, depending on the nature of the illness. For instance, among husbands and wives with physical impairments, wives receiving care express gratitude because they are aware of the labor involved. By contrast, husbands receiving care are more demanding and difficult. Not only are they less aware of the labor involved, but they also seek to remain the head of the household and to exert more control.

Gender relations and race influence the benefits of marriage. Being married often provides financial security, especially for White women, given White men's higher income and retirement benefits. Marriage benefits older men's and women's mental and physical health because spouses encourage healthier behavior. But it benefits men's physical health more because women's caretaking roles make them more likely to engage in self-care and encourage their husbands to make lifestyle changes and follow doctors' advice.

Wives also do more to help keep husbands socially integrated because women provide more emotional support and do more kinkeeping (i.e., maintaining contact with children, other relatives, and friends). Husbands rely solely on wives as confidants more than the reverse. Hence, married men have more social interaction both within and outside the home than widowed, divorced, and never-married men. Divorced men in particular tend to have attenuated social networks, less close relationships with their children, and less interaction with neighbors and others because they often move after divorce.

Race, too, influences how much social integration marriage provides. African-American husbands tend to have less informal social support in later life than their wives if they previously were divorced because divorce often severs men's family ties. African-American men who are married to their children's mother have larger networks that include their children and other kin.

Remarriage

Remarriage is uncommon in later life in the United States and throughout the Western world. Rates of remarriage in later life are low because of declining health, financial problems, lack of need to marry for childbearing and childrearing, a desire to protect one's inheritance or estate, and unwillingness to relocate. Remarriage is more common after divorce than after widowhood. Men are more likely to remarry than women are. Because women live longer than men, men have more opportunities to meet potential mates, whereas women face a shortage of available, healthy partners. Remarriage rates also are higher at younger ages for Whites and for persons with higher incomes.

Gender and race influence desire and motivations for remarriage. Overall, widowers express more interest in remarrying than do widows, and they have different motivations for doing so. Widowed men and women alike tend to be lonely. Nevertheless, because women generate more support from kinkeeping and other activities, they are less depressed and less motivated than men to remarry for emotional support. Many widows are reluctant to remarry because of the burden of domestic labor and care work that remarriage can entail, preferring their newfound freedom instead. Older cohorts of men, in contrast, are motivated to remarry because they lack domestic skills. Having a readily available sex partner also tends to be more of an incentive to remarry for men than for women. Widowers who express disinterest in remarriage often do so because they realize their advanced age and poor health make them less marriageable.

By contrast, because widows are more vulnerable to poverty than widowers, they are more motivated to remarry for economic security. Remarriage, however, can mean the loss of income related to the deceased spouse. Black women are less likely than White women to remarry for economic security. In old age, some Black women see remarriage as entailing financial burdens. In addition, Black women are raised to be more economically independent than White women, and they view their economic security as less dependent on marriage.

Older adults, especially women, may be uninterested in late-life marriage but may still want a long-term, intimate relationship. Dating, cohabitation,

gay and lesbian relationships, and LAT relationships are alternatives.

Dating

The percentage of older persons in dating relationships declines with age. Older women are far less likely to date than are older men, mostly due to the lack of available partners. Primary motivations for dating in later life are companionship and intimacy. In seeking dating partners, older men and women alike want a pleasing personality, sense of humor, common interests, and moral values. In line with contemporary gender relations, women are more likely than men to want a financially secure partner who practices a religion. Men are more likely than women to seek sexual satisfaction and physical attractiveness. Regarding rewards from dating, men are more likely to cite intimacy and emotional support, and women are more apt to mention status. Gender differences seem to be slowly eroding. For example, dating scripts among older persons have changed in recent years: Although women like men to initiate dates, they prefer to meet their dating partners in public places and to pay their own way.

Not surprisingly, widowers express greater interest in dating than do widows, especially if they lack adequate social support. Dating appears to benefit mental health. Widows and widowers who are involved in a dating relationship report fewer depressive symptoms than those who are not.

Cohabitation

Cohabitation has increased across all age groups in recent decades, but is still rare among persons aged 65 and older. Some older women prefer cohabitation to marriage, because it tends to be more equitable. Compared to younger cohabitators, middle-aged and older cohabitators view their relationships as fairer and more stable, spend more time together, argue less often, and are more likely to view their relationship as an alternative rather than a prelude to marriage.

Cohabitation appears to provide fewer mental health benefits than marriage, especially for men. Compared to older married persons, older cohabitators report more depressive symptoms. Partly this is

because they tend to have fewer financial resources, less social support, and poorer physical health. When these factors are taken into account, cohabiting and married women have similar levels of depressive symptoms, but cohabiting men still have more depressive symptoms than married men.

Gay and Lesbian Relationships

Gay and lesbian relationships are alternatives because marriage is not usually possible. Overall, older gay men and lesbians value couple relationships but experience difficulty finding partners with advancing age. Couple relationships among gay men and lesbians reflect the high values they place on egalitarianism and friendship, as well as on independence. The lack of social legitimacy afforded gay and lesbian couple relationships can produce unique stressors, such as limited support from family, or tensions, such as one partner's reluctance to publicly acknowledge the relationship.

Gender relations also shape gay and lesbian couples' experiences. For instance, in line with more feminine ideas about love, lesbians tend to prefer monogamy, whereas gay men do not. In later life, though, gay men increasingly prefer committed, monogamous relationships. Gays and lesbians in committed, monogamous relationships are happier than those not in such relationships. Long-term relationships, while less prevalent, are equal in quality to those of heterosexuals.

LAT Relationships

LAT relationships are long-term, committed relationships in which partners maintain separate dwellings. This arrangement, common in Northern and Western Europe, is emerging in the United States. Like marriage, LAT relationships are based on love and attraction, and they provide intimacy and emotional support. Because persons in LAT relationships typically do not pool resources or meld their family networks, they can have both intimacy and autonomy while protecting their children's inheritance.

Women are especially interested in LAT relationships because they lose less autonomy than they typically would in a more conventional relationship. By maintaining their own residence,

women can resist performing domestic labor for partners, keep their own routines, and sustain relationships with friends and family apart from their partners if they choose.

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See also Aging Processes and Relationships; Alternative Relationship Lifestyles; Cohabitation; Dating and Courtship in Midlife and Later Life; Social Inequalities and Relationships

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COUPLES IN MIDDLE AGE

Marriage (and marriage-like relationships such as long-term cohabitation, gay unions) is perhaps the most important interpersonal relationship across the adult life span. Marital relationships are not static but dynamic; they change as the individuals

in them grow older. Research on long-term marriages shows that as people age, their marriage continues to provide emotional support and to act as a valuable source of positive feelings. New life transitions, however, can bring new responsibilities that, in turn, can have a cascading influence on the quality of the marriage. This is perhaps most true of the middle adulthood years, a period during which it is not unusual for individuals to experience important personal life transitions (e.g., menopause or an empty nest) and to occupy new roles (e.g., providing care to an ill or disabled parent or becoming a grandparent). This entry focuses on marriage during the middle adulthood years and examines the quality of marital relationships, factors that play a role in shaping marriage, and the role of marriage in the health domain during this life stage. Although most of the research on long-term intimate relationships has focused specifically on marriage between heterosexual adults, it is likely that the issues discussed here also pertain to other midlife couples such as long-term cohabitators and gay and lesbian partners.

Conceptualization and Measurement of Marital Quality

Although marriage as a social institution is widespread in the United States, measuring the quality of marriage remains a formidable challenge because researchers have difficulty in achieving a consensus definition of marital quality. Early on, some researchers focused on marital satisfaction or marital adjustment as indicators of the quality of a marriage, while others focused on more negative dimensions such as marital disagreement and marital conflict. Today, marriage researchers widely accept that people routinely experience both positive and negative feelings about their marriage. At a minimum, then, marital quality is a two-dimensional construct incorporating both positive processes (e.g., happiness or satisfaction) and negative processes (e.g., level of disagreement or conflict). Researchers can choose from among several different scales to measure marital quality and its different dimensions. Some of these scales measure specific behaviors that occur in marriage (e.g., “How often do you and your partner quarrel?” or “Do you kiss your spouse?”), whereas

others include more global and evaluative items regarding one’s marriage (e.g., “All things considered, how happy are you with your marriage?”).

Marital Quality in Middle Adulthood

Studies comparing positive dimensions of marital quality (e.g., marital satisfaction, marital happiness) across young, middle-aged, and older adults have found support for a U-shaped trend with marital satisfaction and happiness lower among middle-aged adults compared to those who are younger or older. However, longitudinal studies spanning extended periods of time have found that marital satisfaction and happiness typically decline after the newlywed years and into middle adulthood and then either stabilize or continue to decline after midlife.

Researchers have tried to uncover underlying reasons for the dip documented in the positive evaluation of marriage during middle adulthood. Some have attributed this dip to having and rearing children, inequities in household responsibilities, and conflicting demands due to multiple roles (e.g., balancing work and family demands, being sandwiched between assisting one’s children and one’s aging parents). Others have identified strained relationships with one’s children and midlife identity issues as contributing to the drop in positive marital processes in middle adulthood. Sexual intimacy and sexual satisfaction also play an important role in positive evaluations of marriage at midlife. Higher sexual satisfaction is related to greater marital satisfaction that, in turn, is related to lower marital instability in both husbands and wives. Women, in particular, experience changes in sexual response and sexual desire at midlife due to the menopause-related physiological changes they undergo. Middle-aged women’s marital satisfaction is linked to greater enjoyment of sexual activity with the spouse, higher rated pleasantness of sexual activity, and greater overall satisfaction with the sexual relationship in marriage.

Trends in negative marital processes over the life course generally show that middle-aged and older persons report less marital conflict than young adults do. It is important to keep in mind, however, that declining trends in marital conflict may be illusory as the most conflictual marriages are likely

to have ended in separation or divorce prior to middle age. Moreover, a declining trend does not mean that marriages at midlife are free from conflict. Indeed, marital disagreement and heated arguments are not altogether absent from marriage at midlife, and in some cases, middle-aged adults report levels of negative marital processes comparable to those of their younger counterparts. In terms of resolving marital conflicts, middle-aged adults tend to be more emotionally negative and less affectionate than their older peers.

Researchers have found that the most common area of disagreement between spouses during the midlife years centers on the couple's children. Middle-aged parents' problematic relations and conflict with their adult children are related to greater marital conflict at midlife. Another important contributor to marital conflict in middle adulthood is spouses' (dis)satisfaction with the division of household labor. At midlife (and throughout the family life cycle), women are less satisfied than men with the division of household labor. This dissatisfaction with division of household labor is related to greater marital conflict (as well as lower marital happiness) for both women and men.

Marriage and Midlife Transitions

Midlife is typically marked by numerous changes including children leaving the home (i.e., the empty nest), adult children returning to live at home, taking on the caregiver role for an ill parent or parent-in-law, and for women, menopause. Although early cross-sectional research reported lower levels of marital happiness immediately following the departure of children from the home, more recent longitudinal research indicates that the empty nest is associated with significant increases in marital happiness, especially soon after the children leave. Although the passionate type of love for one's spouse tends to be lower during the empty nest phase compared to the earlier phases of marriage, this difference in absolute terms is small and passionate love is far from absent during midlife. As a matter of fact, the return of adult children to their parents' home can have a detrimental impact on their parents' marital satisfaction, especially for parents whose children make more frequent returns to the parental home.

Nevertheless, the empty nest transition can be a risk factor for marital disruption in the form of separation or divorce. Data from a U.S. sample of middle-aged women found this to be the case for those who married at a younger age, did not own their home, had marriages of shorter duration, and were employed during the empty nest transition. Indeed, divorce during the middle-adulthood years has been on the rise in recent decades. A recent survey found that during the midlife years divorce is often initiated by women, with men often being caught by surprise by their divorce. The most common reasons for divorce after long-term marriages include some form of abuse (verbal, emotional, or physical), differences between spouses in terms of values or lifestyles, and infidelity.

For midlife women, menopausal changes tend to make this period of transition especially significant. A study on the relationship between menopause and marriage found that nonmarried women reported more feelings of depression than married women during the menopausal years. However, among married women, those who were less satisfied with their marriage reported more negative moods than women who reported moderate or higher marital satisfaction. Middle-aged women also quite commonly find themselves sandwiched between two forms of care provision—supervising their teenagers and caring for a parent or parent-in-law. Studies show that taking on the added role of caregiver to one's parent can be quite challenging for middle-aged married women who also are employed and have responsibilities for their own children. Studies also show that caring for an ill or frail parent is related to less marital satisfaction during the middle-aged years, especially among those who have been long-term caregivers.

Marriage and Health at Midlife

Several studies have linked being married and, more specifically, being in a good marriage with better physical and mental health during the midlife years. Being married during the midlife years is linked to greater psychological well-being, more health protective behaviors, fewer physical illnesses, better physical functioning, and fewer physician visits and hospital stays compared to being divorced, widowed, never married, or casually

dating. Being married also is linked to greater longevity in the second half of life compared to other marital statuses. A recent longitudinal study on the relationship between marital history in middle adulthood and longevity found that those who were consistently married at midlife lived longer (over a follow-up period of approximately 40 years) than those who had experienced marital disruption even if the latter had remarried by middle adulthood. In general, the protective effects of being married on mortality are stronger for men than for women.

Although being married is associated with multiple health benefits, the quality of the marriage also plays an important role in shaping health at midlife. Greater marital disagreement is related to more feelings of depression as well as diagnoses of clinical depression during middle adulthood. The link between marital disagreement and feelings of depression is stronger for middle-aged adults than for their younger counterparts. Also, higher levels of marital disagreement are associated with higher risk for excessive alcohol use at midlife. A poor quality marriage contributes to poorer physical health as well. In a study of middle-aged women, researchers found that women in high-satisfaction marriages had better heart health than both those in low-satisfaction marriages and those not currently married. Moreover, negative behaviors displayed by the spouse (e.g., criticism, hostility) are associated with more physical symptomatology, more chronic illnesses, poorer physical function, and worse self-reported physical health among middle-aged adults.

The health benefits of long-term marriage are not uniform for women and men. Among wives—but not husbands—higher marital satisfaction is related to better psychological and physical health. Whereas wives receive health benefits from marriage only if they are in a happy marriage, husbands gain health benefits merely from being married. Research also shows that the link between marital conflict and physiological changes (e.g., increased blood pressure, compromised immune function) is stronger and longer lasting for women than for men. Women may be more sensitive to marital conflict than men and may be exposed to more marriage-related stress by experiencing greater family demands and contributing disproportionately more time and effort to household responsibilities than men.

In sum, marriage (or a marriage-like relationship) remains an important source of emotional support and positive feelings during middle age. Marital satisfaction typically dips during the midlife years and although not free from disagreement, marriages become less conflictual. Midlife transitions play a significant role in shaping the quality of marriage during midlife, quality which in turn plays an important role in health.

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See also Aging Processes and Relationships; Change in Romantic Relationships Over Time; Couples in Later Life; Empty Nest, Effects on Marriage; Life-Span Development and Relationships; Longitudinal Studies of Marital Satisfaction and Dissolution; Marriage and Health; Marriage and Sex

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COUPLE THERAPY

Couple therapy refers to a diverse set of interventions provided to partners in an intimate relationship; it is intended to reduce various aspects of relationship distress and promote relationship satisfaction and well-being. Couple therapy typically is provided to partners in conjoint sessions (i.e., both partners meeting simultaneously with the same therapist). Couple-based interventions targeting relationship distress may be delivered not only to married heterosexual couples, but also to cohabiting or same-gender couples as well as to those in which partners live separately.

Couple therapy comprises an essential component of mental health services—emerging partly in response to a divorce rate of approximately 50 percent for first marriages in the United States. By far the most frequently cited reason for seeking mental health services is relationship difficulties. In addition to the high prevalence of couple distress in both clinical and community samples, the adverse impact of couple distress on both the emotional and physical well-being of adults and their children has contributed significantly to the increased stature of couple therapy as a component of mental health services. Although couple therapy most often aims to reduce overall relationship distress, couple-based interventions have also been developed to treat couples in which one or both partners struggle with individual emotional or behavioral disorders.

This entry provides an overview of basic objectives of couple therapy and brief descriptions of empirically supported approaches to treating relationship distress. Evidence supporting couple-based interventions for specific problems (e.g., sexual difficulties, substance abuse, physical aggression, infidelity) is summarized along with findings regarding predictors of treatment outcome.

Objectives of Couple Therapy

In general, couple therapy targets those individual and relationship characteristics that have been shown to differentiate distressed from nondistressed couples. For example, distressed couples are distinguished by (a) higher rates of negative

verbal and nonverbal exchanges (e.g., disagreements, criticism, hostility); (b) higher levels of reciprocity in negative behavior (i.e., the tendency for negativity in one partner to be followed by negativity in the other); (c) lengthier chains of negative behavior once initiated; (d) higher ratios of negative to positive behaviors, independent of their separate rates; and (e) lower rates of positive verbal and nonverbal behaviors (e.g., approval, empathy, smiling, positive touch). Distressed couples are also more likely than nondistressed couples to demonstrate a demand-withdraw pattern in which one person requests changes in behavior from the other partner and that partner withdraws, with the partners' respective approach and retreat behaviors progressively intensifying. Couples have higher long-term risk for distress or relationship dissolution when one or both partners exhibit criticism or contempt for the other or respond with defensiveness or withdrawal in response to disagreements.

Distressed partners also show a disproportionate tendency to blame each other for problems and to attribute each other's negative behaviors to broad and stable traits. For example, an argument about money late in the evening may be attributed to the other person's selfishness rather than to fatigue or an unexpected large bill that arrived earlier in the day. Distressed couples are also more likely to have unrealistic standards and assumptions about how relationships should work and lower expectancies regarding their partner's willingness or ability to change their behavior in some desired manner. Finally, consistent with findings regarding negative behaviors, distressed couples are distinguished from nondistressed couples by higher overall rates, duration, and reciprocity of negative emotions and, to a lesser extent, by lower rates of positive emotions.

The various approaches to couple therapy differ in their relative emphasis on these behavioral, cognitive, or emotional aspects of couples' functioning. However, nearly all approaches to couple therapy share the following common goals: (a) providing a safe environment in which relationship difficulties can be communicated and negotiated; (b) increasing mutual acceptance; (c) ameliorating individual and relationship crises; (d) improving communication, including decision-making skills as well as emotional expressiveness and responsiveness;

(e) building partners' friendship and emotional bonds; and (f) improving sexual and other physical intimacy.

Approaches to Couple Therapy

Numerous studies have demonstrated that couple therapy produces moderate, statistically significant, and often clinically significant effects in reducing couple distress. A meta-analysis of these studies indicated that the average person engaged in couple therapy was less distressed at termination than 80 percent of individuals who received no treatment. Moreover, when compared to alternative treatment modalities such as individual therapy and medical interventions, the mean effect size for couple therapy was generally comparable or larger.

Although the literature describes numerous theoretical approaches to couple therapy, only six have garnered empirical evidence of their effectiveness in controlled clinical trials. Traditional Behavioral Couple Therapy (TBCT) is a skills-based approach targeting decision-making communication as well as an increase in positive and decrease in negative behavior exchanges. TBCT has been studied more extensively than any other single approach to couple therapy, with findings indicating that the average individual receiving TBCT is better off at the end of treatment than 72 percent of individuals not receiving treatment. However, follow-up studies of TBCT indicate that approximately 30 percent of couples who initially improve in response to therapy subsequently show significant deterioration in the first 2 years after termination.

Cognitive Behavioral Couple Therapy (CBCT) builds upon TBCT by incorporating interventions targeting partners' relationship assumptions and standards, expectancies, and attributions that contribute to or maintain distorted emotions or maladaptive behaviors underlying couple distress. Initial studies of CBCT demonstrated effectiveness comparable to findings for TBCT. Various adaptations of CBCT have since been developed and shown to be efficacious for treating couple distress related to a variety of physical health and emotional or behavioral disorders.

Integrative Behavioral Couple Therapy (IBCT) goes beyond CBCT in emphasizing interventions

aimed at increasing acceptance by promoting tolerance and encouraging partners to appreciate differences and to use these to enhance their relationship. A large randomized clinical trial comparing IBCT with TBCT showed that both treatments produced clinically significant improvement by the end of treatment; 71 percent of IBCT couples and 59 percent of TBCT couples were reliably improved or recovered, based on self-reports of overall relationship satisfaction. At 5-year follow-up, separation and divorce rates for couples in the two treatment conditions were virtually identical at slightly over 25 percent.

Three approaches to couple therapy from non-behavioral perspectives have also garnered evidence of their effectiveness. Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy (EFCT) builds on an attachment perspective of adult intimacy and targets cyclical, self-reinforcing interactions that hinder secure, trusting bonds. In four randomized trials, EFCT was superior to a waiting-list control condition in reducing relationship distress, yielding improvement rates of 70 to 73 percent. Another approach, Integrated Systemic Couple Therapy (ISCT) seeks to disrupt repetitive, self-perpetuating negative interactional cycles by changing the meaning attributed to these cycles. In a clinical trial comparing ISCT with EFCT, both were found to be superior to a control condition and to be equally effective in alleviating couple distress; however, ISCT couples showed greater maintenance of gains at 4-month follow-ups in relationship satisfaction and goal attainment.

Finally, an insight-oriented couple therapy (IOCT) was compared with TBCT in a controlled clinical trial involving 79 distressed couples. The insight-oriented condition emphasized the interpretation and resolution of conflictual emotional processes related to developmental issues, collusive interactions, and maladaptive relationship patterns. Couples in both treatment conditions showed statistically and clinically significant gains in relationship satisfaction compared to a waitlist control group. However, at 4-year follow-up, 38 percent of the behavioral couples had experienced divorce, in contrast to only 3 percent of couples in the insight-oriented condition.

Despite the overall effectiveness of couple therapy, aggregate findings across the six empirically supported treatments indicate that a substantial

percentage of individuals fail to show improvement from these treatments; moreover, among those individuals who initially respond favorably to couple therapy, approximately 30 to 60 percent subsequently evidence significant deterioration. Such findings have led to development of integrative models of couple therapy incorporating the most effective elements of diverse treatment approaches. A depth-behavioral approach to Integrative Couple Therapy incorporates both behavioral therapy and object relations therapy, based on the premise that couples' interpersonal and intrapersonal worlds both need attending to and that partners must broaden their perceptions of interpersonal contact by exposing those aspects of themselves that are blocked from conscious awareness. An alternative pluralistic approach espouses a hierarchical approach to couple therapy incorporating behavioral, structural, and cognitive techniques earlier in therapy and insight-oriented techniques later in treatment if the couple distress is resistant to change earlier in therapy. The insight-oriented component of this pluralistic approach, labeled *affective reconstruction*, examines each partner's previous relationships to identify maladaptive patterns and ways in which coping styles established in previous relationships may obstruct emotional intimacy in the current relationship. Neither of these integrative approaches to couple therapy has been examined empirically, although both approaches build on techniques supported by previous research.

To date, there are no replicated studies that consistently favor one of these empirically supported couple therapy approaches over another. However, couple therapy will likely be more effective when rendered by therapists who are theoretically grounded and technically competent in diverse approaches and who can draw upon specific interventions from these different perspectives in a conceptually congruent manner.

Couple Therapy Targeting Specific Problems

Although the most frequent application of couple therapy is for reducing overall relationship distress and promoting couple well-being, couple-based interventions have also been developed for treating specific relationship problems and individual disorders shown to covary with couple distress.

For example, research indicates that individuals reporting moderate or higher global relationship distress are 5 to 6 times more likely than nondistressed persons to report problems in the areas of physical aggression, sexuality, finances, and childrearing. Moreover, persons in distressed intimate relationships are 2 to 3 times more likely than nondistressed persons to experience disorders involving mood, anxiety, or substance abuse.

The co-occurrence between overall couple distress and specific individual or relationship problems has led to three couple-based treatment strategies for addressing these comorbid difficulties. The first uses general couple therapy to reduce overall relationship distress based on the premise that relationship conflict serves as a broad stressor that contributes to the development, exacerbation, or maintenance of specific individual or relationship problems. The second strategy involves disorder-specific couple interventions that focus on particular partner interactions presumed to directly influence either the co-occurring problems or their treatment. The third couple-based strategy involves partner-assisted interventions in which one partner serves as a surrogate therapist or coach in assisting the other partner with individual problems.

Sex therapy is the treatment of choice for couples experiencing sexual difficulties. Treatment for sexual difficulties includes assisting couples conjointly in discussing and resolving specific challenges in their sexual interactions. Couple-based interventions have improved sexual functioning for women with orgasmic disorders at rates ranging from 65 to 90 percent. However, couples receiving couple therapy in addition to sex therapy demonstrate more pronounced and comprehensive treatment gains, including significantly more intense experiences of sex and sexual desire.

Physically violent couples are especially difficult to treat and require special attention to the safety of the partner(s) targeted by the violence. Couple-based interventions emphasizing anger management and communication skills have been effective in treating couples experiencing mild to moderate levels of physical aggression; however, most clinicians agree that couple therapy is inappropriate for couples characterized by severe physical aggression; for such couples, individual treatment for the aggressive partner is recommended. One finding suggests that the most effective venue for treating

mild to moderate relationship aggression is a multicouple group format of couple therapy.

Specific intervention strategies can be effective for couples struggling to recover from infidelity, particularly to address issues surrounding trust and forgiveness. Until recently, there has been almost no empirical study of interventions for couples dealing with affairs despite that couples report infidelity as a leading cause of divorce and therapists describe it as one of the most difficult problems to treat. A recent integrative approach for treating affair couples emphasizes three phases of treatment: (1) coping with initial emotional and behavioral disruption of individual and relationship functioning following discovery or disclosure of the affair; (2) exploring individual, relationship, and outside contextual factors contributing to the initial onset or maintenance of the affair; and (3) reaching an informed decision about how to move on, either individually or as a couple. A preliminary investigation of this treatment indicated that at termination the majority of participants reported less emotional and relationship distress, and individuals whose partner had participated in the affair reported greater forgiveness toward their partner.

Research has documented the effectiveness of couple-based interventions for a broad range of individual emotional and behavioral dysfunctions. Such interventions are based, in part, on findings that couple discord predicts (a) the onset and course of psychological disorders, (b) poorer outcome to treatment of these disorders, and (c) higher relapse and recurrence of the disorders. For example, Behavioral Couple Therapy for both alcoholism and drug abuse produces more abstinence and fewer substance-related problems, happier relationships, fewer couple separations, and lower risk for divorce than does individual-based treatment. Behavioral Couple Therapy has also been shown to be effective in relieving depression when provided to distressed couples with a depressed partner. Recent findings have emerged supporting the effectiveness of couple therapy in treating patients suffering from anxiety disorders, chronic pain, cancer, terminal illnesses in general, obesity, coronary artery disease, and post-traumatic stress disorder. There also exists a broad literature regarding the reciprocal effects of couple distress and behavioral problems (especially conduct disorders)

in children and adolescents—with related parent training and family-based interventions for these difficulties.

Predictors of Couple Therapy Outcome

A substantial body of research points to a number of predictors of treatment outcome. In general, lower relationship quality, greater negative relationship affect and disengagement, and greater desired change in the relationship are all associated with poorer outcome. Similarly, lack of commitment and steps taken toward divorce have also been associated with poorer treatment outcome in some studies. Gender-role attitudes have also been studied, with findings suggesting that couples adhering to traditional roles respond less favorably to couple therapy; conversely, interpersonal sensitivity and emotional expressiveness of both partners predict better outcome at termination and long-term follow-up. Although psychological disorders (e.g., major depression, substance use, antisocial, or borderline personality) in either partner likely relate to poorer outcome, few empirical findings in this regard exist due to the exclusion of such individuals from most controlled clinical trials of couple therapy.

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See also Behavioral Couple Therapy; Cognitive Behavioral Couple Therapy; Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy; Family Therapy; Insight-Oriented Couple Therapy; Integrative Behavioral Couple Therapy; Prevention and Enrichment Programs for Couples

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COUPLE THERAPY FOR SUBSTANCE ABUSE

As is widely acknowledged in the scientific and popular press, alcoholism and drug abuse are among the most deleterious and corrosive problems facing society; by virtually any standard, the personal, familial, community, social, and economic costs are staggering. Approaches to address alcoholism and drug addiction have ranged from

broad societal interventions (e.g., Prohibition, the War on Drugs) to narrowly focused biomedical treatments (e.g., use of Antabuse, which causes individuals to become ill when they consume alcohol); yet the backbone of this effort has been and remains psychosocial treatment. This entry describes the use of a particular type of psychosocial treatment, couple therapy, as an intervention for substance use disorders and includes a discussion of its theoretical underpinning, empirical support, limitations, and future directions.

Until recently, a widely touted and largely unchallenged axiom of agencies and providers who treat individuals with substance use disorders is that alcoholism and drug abuse are individual problems most appropriately treated on an individual basis. In the last quarter century, such thinking has gradually given way to a more systemic understanding of how addictive behavior evolves, is maintained, and may best be treated. This comparatively newer conceptualization has focused on how family interaction and dynamics influence substance abuse etiology, maintenance, relapse, and recovery. In turn, treatment providers have placed increased emphasis on treating the family as an approach to address a given member's or members' substance abuse.

Family-involved therapies for substance abuse can take many forms. They can focus on family issues with only one family member (e.g., the patient), they can include most or all members of the immediate family in treatment, or they may include family members from the patient's family of origin. Yet of the various family-based intervention approaches that have been developed and used by providers to treat substance abuse by adults, couple therapy has received the most attention from both the treatment and research communities. Indeed, among the various psychosocial interventions presently available to treat alcoholism and substance abuse, it could be reasonably argued that partner-involved treatments are the most broadly efficacious. More specifically, there is substantial empirical support for the use of couple-based treatments not only in terms of improvements in primary targeted outcomes, such as substance use and relationship adjustment, but also in other areas that are of clear public health significance, including intimate partner violence, children's adjustment, and cost-benefit and cost-effectiveness.

Conceptual and Practical Considerations

Theoretical Rationale

The interconnection between substance use and relationship distress appears to be marked by what can be best described as reciprocal causality. Alcoholism and drug abuse by a partner in a couple appear to contribute causally to the many relationship problems that are observed in these dyads (e.g., high levels of relationship dissatisfaction, instability, conflict, sexual dissatisfaction, psychological distress). At the same time, relationship dysfunction is strongly linked to substance use and appears to be a major contributing factor to relapse among alcoholics and drug abusers after treatment. Thus, the link between substance use and relationship problems is not unidirectional, with one consistently causing the other, but rather each can serve as a precursor to the other, creating a vicious cycle from which couples that include a partner who abuses drugs or alcohol often have difficulty escaping.

The strong interrelationship between substance use and couple interaction would suggest interventions that treat the dyadic system (versus an exclusive focus on the substance-abusing patient) hold much promise for being effective. Couple therapy approaches have two overarching objectives that evolve from a recognition of the nature and degree of interrelationship between substance use and partner interaction: (a) harness the support of the dyadic system to support positively the patient's efforts to eliminate abusive drinking and drug use and, relatedly, (b) alter dyadic and family interaction patterns to promote an environment in the home that is conducive to long-term stable abstinence. In essence, the goal of couple therapy for substance abuse is to create a virtuous cycle between substance use recovery and relationship functioning by addressing both arms of the cycle concurrently.

Elements of Couple Therapy for Substance Abuse

The couple therapy approach that has received the most extensive and consistent empirical support is Learning Sobriety Together (LST), which historically has been referred to in the empirical literature as Behavioral Couple Therapy (BCT) for alcoholism and drug abuse. For illustration, this

entry will use LST as the exemplar of couple therapy for the treatment of substance abuse.

When using LST as part of a general intervention package to treat a married or cohabiting alcoholic or drug-abusing patient, a therapist treats the substance-abusing patient with his or her intimate partner and works to build support for abstinence from within the dyadic system. The therapist, with extensive input from the partners, develops and has the partners enter into a recovery contract (which is also referred to as a sobriety contract). As part of the contract, partners agree to engage in a daily sobriety trust discussion in which the substance-abusing partner states his or her intent not to drink or use drugs that day. In turn, the patient's partner verbally expresses positive support for the patient's efforts to remain sober. For substance-abusing patients who are medically cleared and willing, daily ingestion of medications designed to support abstinence (e.g., naltrexone, Antabuse), witnessed and verbally reinforced by the patient's partner, is often a component of and occurs during the daily sobriety trust discussion. The patient's partner records performance of the sobriety trust discussion on a daily calendar provided by the therapist. As a condition of the recovery contract, both partners agree not to discuss past drinking or drug use or fears of future substance use when at home (i.e., between scheduled couple therapy sessions) during the course of couples treatment. Partners are asked to reserve such discussions for the couple therapy sessions, which can then be monitored and, if needed, mediated by the therapist. Many contracts also include specific provisions for partners' regular attendance at self-help meetings (e.g., Alcoholics Anonymous, Al-Anon), which are also marked on a calendar provided during the course of treatment.

At the start of a typical LST couple therapy session, the therapist reviews the calendar to ascertain overall compliance with different components of the contract. The calendar provides an ongoing record of progress that is rewarded verbally by the therapist at each session. It also provides a visual (and temporal) record of problems with adherence that can be addressed each week. For partners who have difficulty or otherwise are not compliant with maintaining a calendar, the therapist works with the partners at the beginning of each session constructing critical events since the previous session

and recording them on a calendar that the provider maintains and updates. When possible, the partners perform behaviors that are aspects of their recovery contract (e.g., sobriety trust discussion, consumption of abstinence-supporting medication) in each scheduled couple therapy session to highlight its importance and to allow the therapist to observe the behaviors of the partners, providing corrective feedback as needed.

Through the use of standard couple-based behavioral assignments, LST also seeks to increase positive feelings, shared activities, and constructive communication; these relationship factors are viewed as conducive to sobriety. An exercise titled "Catch Your Partner Doing Something Nice" has each of the partners notice and acknowledge one pleasing behavior performed by their partner each day. In a caring-day assignment, each partner plans ahead to surprise his or her significant other with a day when he or she does some special things to show his or her caring. Planning and engaging in mutually agreed-upon shared rewarding activities are important because many substance abusers' families have ceased engaging in shared pleasing activities; participating in such activities has been associated with positive recovery outcomes. Each activity must involve both partners, either as a couple only or with their children or other adults, and can be performed at or away from home. Teaching communication skills (e.g., paraphrasing, empathizing, and validating) can help the substance-abusing patient and his or her partner better address stressors in their relationship and in their lives as they arise, which also is viewed as reducing the risk of relapses. Relapse prevention planning occurs in the final stages of LST. At the end of weekly LST couple therapy sessions, each couple completes a continuing recovery plan. This written plan provides an overview of the couples' ongoing post-LST activities to promote stable sobriety (e.g., continuation of the daily sobriety trust discussion, attending self-help support meetings) and contingency plans if relapses occur (e.g., recontacting the therapist, reengaging in self-help support meetings).

Empirical Support

During the last 3 decades, couple therapy for substance abuse has received extensive empirical

scrutiny, with most research focusing on LST/BCT. In general, these studies have compared LST and BCT to some form of traditional individual-based treatment for substance abuse (e.g., coping skills therapy, 12-step facilitation). Findings from these studies have been consistent; compared to those who receive individual treatment, those who are randomly assigned to receive LST or BCT have (a) more time-abstinent and fewer drug- or alcohol-related problems, (b) happier relationships, and (c) a lower risk of relationship dissolution (e.g., separation, divorce).

Although not the primary targets of LST and BCT, other outcomes of clear public health significance have also favored couple therapy. Compared to individual-based treatments, participants who receive LST or BCT report significantly lower levels of intimate partner violence and improved psychological adjustment (e.g., lower levels of depression and anxiety). Recently, it has been shown that participation in LST or BCT improves the psychosocial adjustment of couples' children more than does individual-based treatment, even though children are not directly treated in either intervention. This appears to be the result of the improved family environment that comes with participation in BCT and LST (e.g., less substance use, reduced parental conflict), as well as tangible improvements in parenting behavior. Although most studies of LST and BCT for substance abuse have focused on male patients, results of more recent trials have shown that LST and BCT were more effective than other alternatives for female patients. Finally, the cost of delivering LST and BCT is comparable to that of individual-based treatments but yields significantly better clinical outcomes; as such, LST and BCT have a superior cost-benefit and cost-effectiveness profile than alternative interventions to which they have been compared.

Nearly all research to date has focused largely or exclusively on couples in which only one partner abuses alcohol or drugs; LST and BCT have been of limited effectiveness with couples in which both partners use. In addition, LST and BCT may also be less effective among couples with a substance-using partner that reports high relationship satisfaction, perhaps because relationship distress serves as a powerful motivator for change. Roughly a third of patients who would be good candidates

for BCT and LST refuse this kind of treatment, usually expressing concerns about disclosures in the presence of their partners.

Conclusions and Future Directions

Couple therapy as an intervention for alcoholism and drug abuse has made substantial strides in the last 3 decades. In particular, empirical support for its comparative effectiveness in terms of primary outcomes (substance use, relationship functioning) and secondary outcomes (partner violence, children's adjustment) is extensive. Yet despite clear evidence of efficacy, couple therapy has yet to be widely adopted in community practice. Barriers to dissemination of these approaches to community practice have been identified (e.g., limited opportunities for training in couple therapy, reimbursement problems), but research on approaches to overcome such barriers has only recently been pursued. Such research remains a critical next step to ensure dissemination of these effective approaches to those persons who may most benefit.

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See also Abuse and Violence in Relationships; Alcoholism, Effects on Relationships; Behavioral Couple Therapy; Communication Skills; Daily Diary Methods

Further Readings

Addiction and Family Research Group: <http://www.addictionandfamily.org>

Fals-Stewart, W., O'Farrell, T. G., Birchler, G. R., Cordova, J., & Kelley, M. L. (2005). Behavioral Couple Therapy for alcoholism and drug abuse: Where we've been, where we are, and where we're going. *Journal of Cognitive Psychotherapy*, 19, 231–249.

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couples wishing to legitimize their intimate unions and for different-sex couples wishing to legitimize their unions in ways other than through contemporary legal marriage. This encyclopedia entry provides information on these options. It begins with a very brief history of heterosexual legal marriage in the United States, followed by discussions of the recently implemented coupling policies.

Legal and Common-Law Marriage

Prior to the 19th century, legal marriage was the only method by which different-sex couples could achieve legal acknowledgment of their unions. A great deal of social control was exercised over marriage (and its participants) during the Colonial Era in particular, as the Puritans believed that orderly family life was the foundation for orderly community life. Indeed, during this time, adults wishing to live alone were fined, and community members did everything they could not only to find suitable spouses for single individuals but also to exert considerable control in keeping the spouses together no matter how unhappy they were or what marital crimes (such as adultery or abuse) were committed.

During the 19th century, however, as large numbers of individuals and families traveled west to settle the frontier, many who were desirous of legal marriage found themselves unable to do so, as they settled in geographic regions far from an official (such as a justice of the peace) with the authority to consecrate such unions. As a result, couples lived together as if they were legally married, engaged in activities commonly thought (at that time) to be the purview of only the legally married (such as childbearing and childrearing), and enjoyed the social status and respect that legally married couples enjoyed from other community members. These informal arrangements were so common that 24 states officially decreed such unions as common-law marriages and accorded to these couples all of the benefits and protections associated with legal marriage.

When the West became more populated, many state governments decided that common-law marriage was no longer a practical or necessary response to the geographic barriers associated with legal marriage and subsequently revoked the legal status

COUPLING POLICIES

Over the last 25 years, numerous legal options have emerged in the United States for same-sex

of common-law unions by statute or court decision. Today, common-law marriage is increasingly becoming archaic, as only 10 states (Alabama, Colorado, Iowa, Kansas, Montana, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, and Texas) and the District of Columbia continue to recognize this arrangement (Georgia, Idaho, and Ohio recognize only those common-law marriages created prior to a certain date, and New Hampshire recognizes these marriages for inheritance purposes only).

For couples to be common-law married, they must live together for an ill-defined period of time (not precisely defined by any state) in one of the aforementioned states, present themselves to the public as if they are legally married, and intend to marry eventually. Both legally married and common-law married couples enjoy over 1,000 federal rights associated with marriage, as well as the corresponding rights granted to them by their respective states. Furthermore, both legally married and common-law married couples must divorce if they wish to legally dissolve their unions. It is unclear, however, how many common-law married couples divorce (or are aware that they are required to divorce) to legally dissolve their unions.

Licensed Domestic Partnerships

The first relatively new coupling policy implemented as a sort of alternative to legal marriage was licensed domestic partnerships. These partnerships were first instituted in Berkeley, California, in 1984 and were originally intended to grant public acknowledgment to the unions of same-sex couples. Local government officials at that time determined that unmarried different-sex couples also needed legal acknowledgment of their unions, particularly with regard to protecting the weaker party in the relationship upon dissolution; thus, eligibility for participation in licensed domestic partnerships was extended to them as well.

Domestic partnership ordinances typically define partners as two financially interdependent adults who live together and share an intimate bond but who are not related by blood or law. Couples wishing to license their cohabiting unions complete an affidavit attesting that they are not already biologically or legally related to each other or legally married to someone else,

that they agree to be mutually responsible for each other's welfare, and that they will notify the local government records office if there is a change in the status of the relationship (either dissolution or legal marriage). Along with a fee, the affidavit is then submitted to the local records office or in some locales, may be notarized to register the partnership. To dissolve a licensed partnership, one partner simply must inform the office where the partnership was registered. Within 6 months after this notification, an individual in most locales may then register another domestic partnership.

Since the inception of the first domestic partnership ordinance, California (in 1999), Maine and New Jersey (in 2004), Washington (in 2007), Oregon (in 2008), and the District of Columbia (in 2002) have implemented domestic partnership ordinances, as have nearly 70 municipalities (11 counties and 55 cities). Both same-sex and different-sex couples are eligible to become licensed partners in the vast majority of municipalities (three counties and five cities restrict eligibility to same-sex couples) and in all states with the exception of New Jersey (in New Jersey, both same- and different-sex couples were eligible until 2007, when civil unions were implemented for same-sex couples). Most licensed domestic partners, regardless of locale, are in same-sex unions.

Age-eligibility requirements for entering into a licensed domestic partnership differ for same-sex and different-sex couples in California, New Jersey, and Washington. Specifically, the partners in same-sex unions must both be at least 18 years of age to qualify (this is also the case in Oregon, where only same-sex couples are eligible to participate); however, different-sex unions must include at least one partner who is at least 62 years of age to qualify. These differing eligibility requirements were implemented to encourage legal marriage among different-sex couples, while also recognizing that remarrying after the death of a spouse imposes financial costs in terms of reductions in Social Security benefits to those remarrying as opposed to remaining single. In Maine and in the District of Columbia, however, partners in both same-sex and different-sex unions need be only at least 18 years of age to qualify.

The extent to which tangible benefits are granted to licensed partners varies greatly from one locale

to another. Specifically in California (in 2005) and Oregon (in 2008), essentially all state-level rights and responsibilities of marriage were extended to licensed partners. Nearly all spousal benefits were also granted to licensed partners in the District of Columbia in 2006. In Maine, New Jersey, and Washington, however, licensed partners enjoy limited benefits, which may include protection under the state's domestic violence laws, the right to inherit property from a partner without a will, making funeral and burial arrangements for a partner, entitlement to be named the partner's guardian in the event he or she becomes incapacitated, or to make decisions regarding organ or tissue donation for a deceased partner. In most counties and cities, licensed partners receive no tangible benefits whatsoever.

Finally, in a majority of locales, couples are not required to be residents in order to register as licensed partners (13 municipalities require both partners to be either residents of the city or county, or couples must include at least one partner who is an employee of the city or county). Thus, couples throughout the United States may become licensed domestic partners in many locales, although they do not reside there. Their home city or county will not acknowledge their licensed status, however, and they will receive no benefits or protections that may exist where they registered their union as a function of being licensed partners. Couples who became licensed partners in one locale and relocate to another with a domestic partnership ordinance must register in their new locale to be acknowledged as licensed partners.

Reciprocal Beneficiaries

A second current legal option, available only in Hawaii, is reciprocal beneficiaries. According to Hawaii's Reciprocal Beneficiaries Law, implemented in 1997, same-sex couples, as well as unmarried relatives and friends of heterosexual and homosexual individuals legally barred from marrying each other, are eligible to register with the Hawaii Department of Health as reciprocal beneficiaries (although only two individuals may form a registered reciprocal beneficiaries union, extending eligibility to those individuals not in an intimate union makes Hawaii's policy

unique, and not a coupling policy like the others described in this entry). There is no state residency requirement; indeed, registrants are not required to be U.S. citizens. The law grants some of the benefits of marriage to reciprocal beneficiaries, including property rights, protection under the state's domestic violence laws, the ability to visit a beneficiary in the hospital and to make medical decisions for him or her, to sue for the wrongful death of a beneficiary, and to inherit property without a will. Because individuals in reciprocal beneficiaries are legally single, dissolving the relationship legally simply involves informing the Hawaii Department of Health of its termination.

Civil Unions

Vermont (in 2000), Connecticut (in 2005), New Jersey (in 2007), and New Hampshire (in 2008) have implemented civil unions legislation, a legal option available only to same-sex couples. With the exception of sexual orientation, couples must meet the eligibility requirements for legal marriage in their state to register their unions. At the state level, civil unions are the functional equivalent of legal marriage in that they provide to couples all of the benefits and protections of marriage afforded to spouses. Due to the federal Defense of Marriage Act signed into law by President Bill Clinton in 1996, however, which defines marriage as consisting of the legal union of one man and one woman, these couples do not enjoy at the federal level any of the benefits or protections afforded to the legally married. Furthermore, although nonresidents are eligible to form civil unions in these four states, only in New Jersey do couples in civil unions formed in other states receive any state-level legal acknowledgment, benefits, or protections associated with their unions (Vermont, Connecticut, and New Hampshire do not grant legal acknowledgment to civil unions contracted elsewhere, nor does any state without civil unions legislation).

Legally dissolving a civil union in one of these four states involves the same process as dissolving a marriage in that state in that one partner must file for divorce (and meet the eligibility requirements for filing). If a couple that entered into a

civil union either relocates to or are residents of another state, however, and they wish to legally dissolve their union, the lack of acknowledgment of civil unions in other states makes obtaining a legal divorce difficult if not impossible. The granting of a divorce appears to occur on an ad hoc basis.

Same-Sex Marriage

Another legal option is same-sex marriage. Currently, Massachusetts (since 2004) is the only state in the United States that permits same-sex couples to legally marry (same-sex marriage was legalized in the Netherlands in 2001, Belgium in 2003, Canada and Spain in 2005, and South Africa in 2006). The national Defense of Marriage Act, however, dictates that states are not required to legally recognize the same-sex marriages contracted in any other state. Currently, California recognizes same-sex marriages legally contracted elsewhere, whereas New Jersey translates these marriages into civil unions if couples relocate there. Both states provide to these couples all of the state-level benefits and protections of legal marriage.

Similar to civil unions, same-sex marriage in Massachusetts and California grants to couples all of the benefits and protections afforded to the legally married at the state level, but these couples do not enjoy any of the benefits or protections afforded to the legally married at the federal level as a result of the Defense of Marriage Act. Furthermore, because few other states currently legally acknowledge the same-sex marriages contracted in Massachusetts or California, couples may be prohibited from divorcing if they relocate to another state.

Covenant Marriage

Coupling policies in the United States have also taken a conservative direction in some states. In Louisiana (in 1997), Arizona (in 1998), and Arkansas (in 2001), different-sex couples only have the option of choosing either a covenant marriage or a contemporary marriage. A covenant marriage is a return to traditional marriage reminiscent of those prior to the 1970s and the

advent of no-fault divorce. In a covenant marriage, couples are required to undergo premarital therapy, the purpose of which is for partners to make clear to each other their expectations for marriage and to resolve any problems before the couple enters into the marriage. Furthermore, couples in a covenant marriage may only divorce under extreme circumstances, such as adultery, physical abuse, and long-term imprisonment or abandonment. A contemporary marriage does not require premarital therapy, and couples may divorce under no-fault grounds that are available in all states, such as irreconcilable differences. Couples in Louisiana, Arizona, and Arkansas who legally married prior to the implementation of covenant marriage have the legal option of converting their marriages to covenant marriages, and indeed, most couples in covenant marriages are those who were married prior to the legislation's implementation. Legislators in an additional 20 states have considered implementing covenant marriages, though to date, no other states have done so.

In sum, most of the recent coupling policies in the United States reflect the country's growing acknowledgment of intimate relationships that differ from the historical model of heterosexual legal marriage. Although covenant marriages are an exception to this trend, the momentum is clearly in a progressive and inclusive direction. Indeed, the rapid increase in the number of states implementing licensed domestic partnerships and civil unions, as compared to the much slower growth in the number of states implementing covenant marriages, further indicates that the United States is taking a more progressive stance with regard to intimate unions.

In terms of how the U.S. policies compare to those in other parts of the world, however, the United States continues to be a moderate model. Although space limitations prohibit a full discussion of coupling policies in other countries, a few comments are in order. Most importantly, Western industrialized nations vary greatly in the extent to which their coupling policies are inclusive. Coupling policies in Scandinavian countries, for example, provide a great number of benefits and protections to the couples who participate in nonmarital unions; indeed, in some cases, licensed cohabitators are virtually

indistinguishable from the legally married in this respect. In other countries, especially those that are Catholic (such as Ireland and Italy), policies continue to focus on marriage to the virtual exclusion of other types of families (families headed by single parents are increasingly receiving attention in Irish policies, though couples cohabiting outside of marriage, at the time of this writing, continue to be largely ignored). There does appear to be a sort of meeting in the middle, however, with regard to coupling policies. Conservative countries are slowly but surely implementing more inclusive policies, while policymakers in progressive countries are increasingly questioning whether their policies of inclusivity can be economically maintained.

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See also Cohabitation; Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Relationships; Marriage, Historical and Cross-Cultural Trends

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COURTSHIP, MODELS AND PROCESSES OF

Courtship can best be defined by its overall objective and the behaviors that characterize this period in human relationships. Traditionally, the objective of courtship is to develop a relationship that leads to marriage. As societal customs and practices change, however, the more accurate objective of courtship may be to develop a relationship that leads to a long-term commitment—marriage, cohabitation, same-sex union. Courtship behaviors include dating and other activities that provide couples with information that can lead to such a long-term commitment. It is important to understand courtship because the nature and quality of courtship can influence the quality of later marriage and other committed unions. Relationship scientists have offered courtship models that specify a series of time-ordered stages that lead to marriage or committed relationships. More recently, the focus has changed from stage models to a perspective that acknowledges the various pathways that people take to marriage or commitment. This entry discusses the models of courtship that have been developed by relationship theorists and researchers. The discussion focuses on elements of each model and any shortcomings that may exist.

Models of Courtship

In early America, the method of choosing a mate was fairly straightforward. Choice of a partner was based on relatively rational factors: whether the man had sufficient resources to support a wife, whether they were of similar social status, and whether their parents approved of the potential marital partner. These factors were likely somewhat easy for potential partners to determine, but there is little doubt that deception was common between courting pairs. Over time, these rational factors became less important in choosing a mate; while at present, in the Western world, relatively intangible factors are more important in this choice. People seek relationships that promote love between partners, compatibility, and the potential to make each other happy. These less

tangible factors are not as easily determined by a courting couple. Consequently, relationship scientists have proposed several models of how relationships move to marriage. The following sections discuss these models.

Compatibility Models

The first formal models of courtship assumed that individuals search for potential partners on the basis of compatibility, that is, how similar or different two potential partners are to each other. One of the earliest models of courtship was the complementary needs model, which embodies the idea that opposites attract. The complementary needs model suggests that individuals have needs that must be met, and therefore, people seek partners that are able to fulfill these needs. For example, if Jack has a need to be dominant in a relationship, the ideal partner, Jill, would have a low need for dominance so that Jack is able to be the dominant partner in the relationship. The perception that one's partner complements one's needs leads to development of the courtship.

In contrast to the complementary needs model, the similarity model suggests that potential mates are attracted to each other because they are more alike than different in social characteristics, values, and attitudes. This model represents the popular notion that birds of a feather flock together. According to this model, ideal partners are those who are similar on traits such as religion, age, ethnicity, values, and so on. For example, if Jack is a 20-year-old White Catholic, he would be more likely to choose Jill, a 20-year-old White Catholic, than Ann, a 35-year-old African-American Muslim. According to this model, similarity fosters compatibility because (a) individuals enjoy having things in common with others, (b) interacting with similar people validates the traits that provide individuals with feelings of self worth, or (c) they anticipate less conflict over differences in the future. Consequently, the perception of similarity is seen to stimulate the progression to marriage.

Both the complementary needs and similarity models have shortcomings that limit their usefulness. The primary shortcoming of the complementary needs model is that there is little research to

support it. The similarity model has received more support, but there are alternative explanations for the development of similarity that limit the ability of the model to explain how individuals initially select each other. Social structure (e.g., social class) tends to group similar people together in neighborhoods, schools, and other physical settings. Consequently, the likelihood of meeting dissimilar people is relatively low. In addition, partners tend to grow more similar to each other over time, a tendency which suggests that partners do not necessarily select each other based upon similarity.

Stage Models

Stage models of courtship propose that mate selection involves a series of steps or stages. These models build on the compatibility models by combining the ideas of complementarity and similarity, as well as other factors. Several stage models of courtship have been proposed including filter theory, Stimulus-Value-Role (SVR) Theory, and premarital dyadic formation framework.

Social scientists Alan Kerckhoff and Keith Davis proposed a filter theory of courtship that combined the notions of similarity and complementarity. According to filter theory, people first seek partners with similar social characteristics, such as age, religion, and education, as well as people who are similar in values and attitudes. After dissimilar others are filtered out, individuals look for those who complement their needs. At this point, commitment is solidified.

Social scientist Bernard Murstein proposed the Stimulus-Value-Role (SVR) Theory of courtship, an extension of the filter theory. This theory argues that courtship develops through three stages. In the stimulus stage, individuals consider partners who are similar on a number of characteristics. The primary stimulus for screening potential partners is physical attractiveness, although other characteristics such as behavior or reputation are also considered. After narrowing the field of potential partners based on stimulus factors, individuals begin screening on the basis of values. In the value stage, individuals evaluate similarity of values including attitudes, beliefs, and needs. This comparison begins with increased communication

and self-disclosure about general topics but may move into more personal topics such as religion, politics, and so on. As individuals become aware of potential similarity in values, they move to the final role stage. During the role stage, partners attempt to determine the compatibility of the specific roles that each will play in the continued relationship. This determination helps partners to understand the expectations that they have for one another regarding their future. For example, such roles may include primary wage earner, friend, decision maker, and so on. Successful completion of all three stages was originally thought to prepare couples for marriage.

Social scientist Robert Lewis proposed the premarital dyadic formation framework, which suggests that relationship formation is based upon a series of six processes, which are all completed before a partner is selected. During the first process, perceiving similarities, individuals identify potential partners who are similar to themselves in terms of background, personality, interests, and values through interaction and observation. The second process, achieving pair rapport, follows from perceived similarity. During this process, partners familiarize themselves with each other and engage in open communication, which leads to the third process, inducing self-disclosure. By achieving rapport with each other, partners begin to disclose personal information, which allows partners to begin the fourth process, role taking. During the role-taking process, partners begin to include each other in their relationship roles. In the fifth process, achieving interpersonal role fit, partners determine how well they fit together based upon their personality similarity and role complementarity. The last process, achieving dyadic crystallization, occurs when the previous five processes have been accomplished. During this process, partners begin to establish patterns of interaction and relationship goals.

Although the stage models are built upon the compatibility models, they still have several limitations. The stage models suggest that relationships consistently develop from a series of sequential stages. It is not always clear, however, why the stages occur in the given order. For example, in SVR Theory, it is not clear why the value comparison stage comes before the role comparison stage. In addition, these models

assume that relationships begin with considerable communication of feelings. Research has shown, however, that many relationships proceed with limited intimacy or disclosure. Further, the stage models do not represent the complexity of the courtship process. These models suggest that all couples move similarly through the stages and that compatibility is the primary force that facilitates relationship development, which ignores other potential influences on the courtship process.

Social Exchange Model

According to the social exchange model, relationships develop through an exchange of desired rewards between partners. In developing relationships, each individual considers the rewards (i.e., positive experiences) and costs (i.e., negative experiences) of being in the relationship. If they are receiving more profit (rewards minus costs) in the present relationship than they generally have in the past from other partners, they will be satisfied, thus setting the stage for a deeper commitment. However, the social exchange model proposes one additional factor that determines whether the relationship will actually move toward marriage. Relationships will move to deeper levels of commitment when the partners perceive that the satisfaction with the current partner exceeds the satisfaction that they could receive from any other potential partner.

The social exchange model also has a number of shortcomings. The social exchange model is based upon the calculation of rewards and costs. However, these calculations may not be easy for people to assess and to keep track of. Further, this model portrays people as self-serving because it suggests that individuals are only interested in obtaining the most rewarding relationships rather than also considering the well-being of the partner. As such, this model does not explain why partners may be responsive to each others' needs.

Evolutionary Model

The evolutionary model proposes that processes have evolved over historical time to influence the process of finding and keeping a mate. According to early theorists, humans have evolved certain preferences and strategies that

maximize the likelihood that they will successfully reproduce and pass on their genes. Due to successful reproduction over long periods of time, these preferences and strategies evolved as general tendencies in humans. In general, men evolved a tendency to prefer and mate with physically attractive (e.g., healthy) women because in ancient times healthy women were more likely to bear children. On the other hand, women evolved a preference for men with sufficient resources to support and sustain children because ancestral women who mated with such men were more reproductively successful. More recent theorizing and research, however, has shown that the use of these preferences and strategies depends on whether individuals are seeking a short-term or long-term relationship.

When people seek a short-term partner, both men and women place a relatively higher value on physical attractiveness. According to the evolutionary model, this emphasis is beneficial to men because the more women they mate with, the more likely they are to reproduce. Women may benefit from an attractive partner in short-term pairings because it might increase the likelihood of finding a genetically superior mate.

More pertinent to courtship, evolutionary theorists suggest that preferences will differ between men and women when people seek long-term mates. In addition to seeking reproductively fit women, men will also seek women who will be sexually faithful, thus ensuring that any offspring will possess their own genetic heritage. Women seeking long-term partners will prefer men who are willing to invest their resources in them and their children, as well as providing them with protection.

In order to attract and keep a suitable long-term partner, evolutionary theorists suggest that people will employ certain tactics to maximize the stability of those relationships. For example, women seeking a long-term relationship may communicate their willingness to be sexually faithful because they know men seeking long-term relationships desire that in a partner. Alternatively, a woman may communicate that other available women are promiscuous and not suitable for a man who wants a long-term relationship. A man seeking a long-term partner, however, may talk to a desired partner about the likelihood that his resources will greatly increase over time, thus suggesting his

ability to provide for a partner and children in the long run. Alternatively, he may talk about rivals being unwilling to commit to a long-term relationship. When such tactics are successful, the likelihood that the relationship will move closer to marriage or to a deeper commitment is enhanced.

The evolutionary model also has several weaknesses. This model suggests that courtship processes reflect behaviors that have evolved over long periods of time. Therefore, it is very difficult for scientists to accurately determine whether or not the relationship patterns that exist currently are due to evolution or to some other influence. Further, although the model assumes that current traits have evolved because they were successful in the evolutionary past, the role of these traits does not always translate effectively into the current environment.

Interpersonal Process Model

As discussed previously, stage models of courtship have not been widely accepted by social and relationship scientists. They suffered from a lack of empirical research and were conceptually weak. In addition, stage models portrayed courtship as a relatively simple progression to commitment because they postulated that only a few factors were influential. More recently, relationship scientists have suggested that courtship is more complex and involves several factors in the course to commitment. This perspective has been termed the interpersonal process model.

Proponents of the interpersonal process model of courtship assume that the movement to commitment or marriage is the result of the unique interaction of couples. They propose, however, that this unique interaction is influenced by the individual characteristics of partners (e.g., sex, personality, temperament, attitudes), the characteristics of their relationship (e.g., compatibility, similarity in attitudes and values), social context (e.g., social class, social network), and the physical context. These multiple factors can act individually or together to influence the pathway to commitment. Relationship researchers believe these multiple influences lead to different paths to marriage. In order to illustrate the interpersonal process model, a discussion of empirical research from this perspective follows.

Rodney Cate, Catherine Surra, and Ted Huston began a series of courtship studies from an

interpersonal process perspective in the late 1970s. Their first studies were conducted with newlywed couples that were interviewed and asked to complete questionnaires about their courtships. The interviews focused on courtship turning points where partners became more or less committed and the reasons for these changes. The questionnaires asked about behaviors, feelings, and beliefs that characterized their relationship at various points in the courtship. Analyses of the couples' responses to the interview and questionnaires revealed a picture of courtship that was more complex than was suggested by earlier compatibility and stage models. Some courtships were quite prolonged, with lots of upturns and downturns during the path to marriage. Other courtships accelerated quickly to high levels of commitment, while others took a moderate course to high levels of commitment.

Several factors distinguished these different pathways to marriage. People in prolonged courtships reported more conflict and ambivalence (i.e., indicators of incompatibility) about staying in the relationship than those in the accelerated and moderate courtships. The turbulent nature of prolonged courtships seems at odds with earlier models that viewed courtship as an orderly progression to marriage that focuses on assessing compatibility between partners. Moderate courtships, however, seemed to resemble the pathways suggested by compatibility models. Those in moderate courtships had less conflict and ambivalence about the relationship than those in other types. Additionally, factors not related to compatibility were associated with having a moderate courtship. For example, those in moderate courtships tended to be older at the time of meeting their partners. This suggests (but does not prove) that those in moderate courtships may feel some outside pressure to marry because of their age.

Factors external to the relationship may also play a role in accelerated courtships. Those in accelerated courtships reported more parental approval of their partner than those in other types of courtship, suggesting that parental approval may play a more important role in the course to marriage. Unfortunately, a 2-year follow-up of these couples was unable to locate enough of them to see how those in different types of courtships fared during marriage. For the couples who were contacted, those who reported high conflict during

the premarital period were more likely to be experiencing higher conflict 2 years after they married. In addition, one might expect that those in accelerated relationships would be more prone to marital failure because short courtships are predictive of fragile marriages, but that has not been confirmed. Overall, this research supports the value of examining the many factors that play a role in understanding the path to commitment and marriage.

Conclusions

The nature of courtship has evolved from a relatively straightforward and formal process in the 1800s to the relatively complex process of today. Different models and processes of courtship will be identified as relationship scientists respond to contemporary changes in society. Future models will have to address how societal changes affect the processes of courtship. There is little doubt that the current increase in nonmarital cohabitation and Internet-based methods of meeting potential partners will become increasingly important in the courtship process. Other changes are sure to come.

Brian Ogolsky and Rodney Cate

See also Compatibility; Complementarity; Evolutionary Psychology and Human Relationships; Initiation of Relationships; Interpersonal Attraction; Mate Selection; Processes of Adaptation in Intimate Relationships (PAIR) Project

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COURTSHIP AND DATING, CROSS-CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN

Couple formation is a fascinating process that ensures the continuation of human societies. Although there are many similarities in how individuals are paired with another, there are also many variations on how partners might come together to form a pair bond. Despite variations, courtship and dating play an important role in the creation of romantic partnerships and marriages. This entry begins by introducing two helpful theoretical frameworks for examining couple formation. It then discusses dimensions of difference in selection practice and factors that influence the experience of courtship. Specific contemporary cultural practices are interwoven throughout to provide a glimpse into the variety of courtship and dating experiences.

Theoretical Frameworks

Social exchange theory offers a rich framework for examining the initiation and development of pair relationships. It suggests that pair bonds occur within a social marketplace so that people are most attracted to and attempt to pursue relationships with those who are able to maximize their rewards (e.g., attractiveness, wealth, status, love) and minimize their costs (e.g., insecurity, inequality, exploitation, lack of social approval). As rational beings motivated by self-interest,

humans will make choices that yield the most personal profit, yet they recognize that their partner needs to also find the relationship profitable in order to remain committed to it.

Using this marketplace perspective, the main differences between cultures lie in who conducts the negotiations for marriage, how explicit the bargaining is, and what criteria or currency of exchange are employed. Regardless of mate selection systems, criteria always exist for evaluating which potential mates are deemed more or less desirable. There can be surprising continuity across cultures in the attributes most desired in a mate. Bibiana Minervini and Francis McAndrew discovered that mail order brides (MOBs) from Colombia, Russia, and the Philippines, regardless of culture, were searching for the qualities of commitment, ambition, and sexual fidelity in prospective husbands. When cultural differences in criteria are observed, they often relate to the degree of autonomy in mate choice. In general, arranged marriages place higher priority on criteria linked to family background, reputation, and lineage, while free choice marriages focus more on personal criteria such as interpersonal attraction, personality, and romantic love.

Filter theory offers another useful framework to better understand how people sort through a pool of eligibles for potential mates. Consciously or unconsciously, people sift possible mates through a series of screens to narrow down the field. First, propinquity or geographical proximity impacts with whom people are most likely to come into contact. Despite the increasing use of the Internet to meet partners, physical distance makes relationships more challenging, so people are more likely to pair with people who live, work, or interact in the same region that they do. The social background filter enforces homogamy, suggesting that those who are similar in education level, religious beliefs, socioeconomic status, age, racial and ethnic heritage, and values and beliefs are more desirable partners. Endogamous expectations may dictate that a Muslim marry another Muslim, for instance. Cultural norms also prescribe who should be excluded from the pool. Kenyans typically eliminate those who practice witchcraft from consideration. Exogamy, the requirement to marry outside a certain group, would also apply. In some cultures, for instance, people are prohibited from marrying

close relatives. Physical attractiveness may provide another filter, reflecting culturally socialized standards of beauty. The final screens are need complementarity or compatible personality and the balance sheet filter that determines equity in exchanges within the relationship. If mutuality and reciprocity exists, commitment is likely.

Dimensions of Cultural Difference in Mate Selection

Courtship and dating practices vary enormously from one world culture to the next. Some are subtle and understated, while others are exotic and flamboyant. One approach to account for such a baffling and seemingly unpredictable array of mate selection practices might be to identify dimensions of cultural difference often linked with particular courtship traditions and rituals.

Arranged Versus Free Choice Marriage

All societies fall somewhere along a continuum from purely arranged to purely autonomous marriage. In many cultures, matchmakers continue to be employed in bringing pairs together. A friend, family member or professional could serve as a go-between by researching family backgrounds, social standing, temperament, and appearance of marriageable partners; organizing their meeting; and even negotiating their marital contract. Historically in Japan, a *nakado* often facilitated the identification of a suitable partner and served as an advisor for wedding preparations and after marriage, though they are used infrequently today. Similarly, arranged marriage has been the norm in India for many centuries. More recently, matrimonial advertisements and Internet dating services have increased the involvement of young people in marriage partner selection, though in many cases parents still initiate the advertisements and supervise the prescreening of prospective mates.

Internet dating services represent a type of contemporary matchmaker while also allowing personal choice. Individuals are able to filter through potential partners by identifying criteria important to them. So despite being introduced to a multitude of potential partners, the individual makes choices about who to engage or meet. Free choice

relationships are frequently based on the notion that marriage should be a matter of personal happiness and based on mutual affection. China's revised Marriage Law of 1980 reframed marriage as a personal decision rather than as a matter of extended family stability.

Comparative Age at First Marriage

The age at first marriage can also vary widely depending on whether a culture practices child marriage and early union or whether late marriage has become the norm. Although some states in the United States still permit marriage as young as 14 with parental consent, early marriage is most commonly practiced in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. For example, 5 percent of all children in Bangladesh between the ages of 10 and 14 are married, and 50 percent of all Amhara girls in Ethiopia are married by age 15. By contrast, the trend in the United States over the past 40 years has been to delay marriage. Indeed, late marriage has become the norm in many Western European countries such as Sweden, where the median age at first marriage is 32 for women and 35 for men.

Perceived Economic Value of Women

Courtship practices are also influenced by the extent to which a society views women as economic assets or liabilities. In East Africa, where women are valued for their significant contributions to micro-enterprise and agrarian economies, a groom's family often pays bride-price to compensate the bride's family for the loss of her economic contribution. This practice, known as *lobola* in South Africa, was traditionally paid in cattle. Even a person of such international stature as President Nelson Mandela followed this time-honored tradition by paying his wife's family 60 cows for her hand in marriage in 1998. Conversely, in societies that traditionally view women as a drain on family resources, the bride's family may need to pay dowry to the groom's for agreeing to assume the economic obligations of feeding and clothing the new bride.

Degree of Economic and Societal Complexity

It has been observed that mate selection systems mirror in part the economic transformations of a

society. Preindustrial societies with agrarian-based economies are often more conducive to arranged marriage due to the tendency for extended kinship groups to live and work together on land that may be passed from one generation to the next. The worldwide shift toward industrialization, urbanization, and modernity has created economic systems that thrive on a labor force with greater mobility, flexibility, and independence of thought. Themes of individualism required for both industrialized economies and free choice mate-selection systems tend to mutually reinforce each other.

Degree of External Monitoring

There is also wide divergence among world cultures in the degree of social control brought to bear on the courtship process. In traditional societies, romantic love was often viewed as a tragedy due to its potential to wreak havoc with societal structures and class or caste systems. Strategies that channel romantic impulses of the young have been described as structural constraints of romantic love. The most controlling of these may be child marriage, where a mate is selected before a child is old enough to form an opinion on the matter.

Other practices along the continuum include strict separation of the sexes, strict limits on the pool of eligibles, chaperonage, and indirect parental control. An example of chaperonage is seen in the kitchen table dates practiced by Cuban immigrant families in suburban New Jersey as a means of monitoring potential suitors of their daughters. In this case, courting couples were not permitted to leave the house on an unaccompanied date but were encouraged to cultivate their friendship around the family kitchen table under the watchful eye of family members.

Degree of Separation From Intent to Marry

There are clear cross-cultural differences in the symbolic meaning and significance attached to courtship rituals. With the advent of steady dating during the 1930s and 1940s in the United States, courtship came to be viewed as recreation in its own right. Unlike earlier centuries where Americans primarily dated those they perceived as viable marriage prospects, steady dating came to be separated from the intent to marry. In many American high

schools, it was more important to be going steady with someone than to be dating a person one might actually consider marrying. The opposite is true in many traditional societies across the world today. In some West African cultures, for example, one only begins to date publicly those individuals considered to be a serious prospect for marriage.

Degree of Commercialization

Yet another area of cross-cultural difference is the extent to which the locus for courtship is the more intimate sphere of family and community, versus the public sphere of commercialized entertainment and leisure. In traditional Amish society, couples pursue their courtship in such venues as Sunday-night singings, family weddings, and community softball or volleyball games.

By way of contrast, the past century has seen a tilt in mainstream American culture toward the commodification and commercialization of courtship. Daniel Cere estimated that during the 2 and a half years of a typical courtship, it is not uncommon for one to pay upward of \$40,000 on restaurant tabs, flowers, movies, concerts, jewelry, trips, gifts, and wedding expenses. The recent widespread use of Internet dating services can add a \$20 to \$50 per month to the cost of securing a serious marriage prospect.

Relative Role of Nonmarital Cohabitation

Because cohabitation has come to be so widely practiced in Western countries, it is important to consider what connection, if any, cohabitation has to traditional notions of courtship and dating. Indeed, 70 percent of all individuals marrying in the United States today have cohabited at some point prior to their marriage, though not necessarily with their spouse. It is generally recognized that for some, cohabitation is an extension of going steady. It is prompted by a desire for friendship and intimacy with a person one may or may not consider to be a viable candidate for marriage. Over half of cohabiting couples eventually do go their separate ways. In other instances, cohabitation clearly functions as a trial marriage, an opportunity to test out or simulate marriage to one's nonmarital partner.

In addition to viewing cohabitation as a courtship ritual or a trial marriage, it can also function as a permanent alternative to legal marriage. This

is most prevalent in countries where legal marriage is beyond the economic reach of many young people. In Jamaica, where only 16 percent of women are legally married during their childbearing years, courtship rituals often evolve into long-term visiting unions for women and the fathers of their children. Cohabitation as a permanent alternative to marriage is also seen in countries like the Netherlands where social mores are more accepting or the United States where access to welfare and government support programs is severely restricted for households headed by two legally married individuals. Clearly, in other contexts cohabitation is frowned upon, as is evident in Eastern Indonesia where a derogatory term, *kumpul kebo*, is used to identify such couples. In Trinidad, those shacking up also receive social disapproval. Similarly, societies that place a premium on chastity before marriage would also object. In countries like Morocco and Algeria, a young woman may be required to undergo a medical examination to secure a virginity certificate verifying her acceptability for marriage.

Thus, courtship practices are impacted by cultural differences relative to the desirability of matchmaker involvement, age at first marriage, the economic value of women, the degree of economic and societal complexity, the level of external monitoring, the salience of courtship on the intent to marry, the amount of commercialization, and the level of normativity of nonmarital cohabitation.

Raeann R. Hamon and Mary Ann Hollinger

See also Cohabitation; Courtship, Models and Processes of; Dating, First Date; Internet Dating; Mate Preferences; Mate Selection

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COVENANT MARRIAGE

Can the government reduce marrying couples' chances of divorce with a law or policy? The designers of covenant marriage think so. This entry explains the history of covenant marriage and its implementation, describes the first couples to marry under the law, and finally answers whether covenant marriage does, in fact, reduce divorce. Covenant marriage is a law first passed in August 1997 in Louisiana. This legal innovation marked the first time in U.S. history that heterosexual marrying couples could choose between two sets of laws to govern the terms of their marriage. Katherine Shaw Spaht, the Jules F. and Frances L. Landry Professor of Law at Louisiana State University, and then-freshman legislator Tony Perkins drafted and introduced the covenant marriage bill. Spaht writes extensively about the legal implications and social benefits of covenant marriage. Perkins served two terms in the Louisiana state legislature and is a strong proponent of covenant marriage. As of this writing, he now serves as president of the Washington, D.C.-based Family Research Council.

As part of rising public concern about the stability of the American family, covenant marriage grew directly out of U.S. state and federal debates about welfare reform, marriage and healthy relationship promotion, and Defense of Marriage Acts. The majority of state legislatures have considered versions of covenant marriage bills, but only three states have currently enacted this option: Louisiana, Arkansas, and Arizona. Many states have implemented features of the covenant marriage law by enacting forms of premarital counseling requirements and expanding state-sponsored opportunities for marital and relationship counseling.

The intended policy-relevant purposes of covenant marriage are largely threefold. First and foremost, covenant marriage's primary legal purpose is to improve marital stability and reduce divorce. Second, covenant marriage's more controversial social purpose is to act as a beacon against the presumed ill effects of a culture that weakens norms about the traditional meaning of marriage and encourages divorce as a permissible easy out. Third, covenant marriage serves a symbolic

purpose by allowing covenant marrying spouses to signal to each other their trust in the permanence of their union and to their children that they too will find reliable, faithful spouses for lifetime permanent marriage. Research clearly documents that couples find great meaning in the public and private symbolic purposes of covenant marriage.

The covenant marriage laws themselves stand as a retrenchment against no-fault divorce laws. Covenant marriage provisions require that couples undergo premarital counseling by a state-approved counselor or religious officiator, sign a notarized affidavit that they have disclosed their personal and sexual histories fully to each other, and submit a declaration of intent acknowledging that covenant marriage is a lifetime permanent relationship. The divorce provisions in the Louisiana covenant marriage law are fault based. A divorce may be granted for the traditional marital faults of infidelity, physical or sexual abuse of a spouse or child, abandonment of at least 1 year, or a lifetime or death-penalty conviction. Covenant marriage does not permit unilateral divorce nor consider general incompatibility as a criterion for termination. Covenant couples who want to divorce must undertake required marital counseling. In Louisiana, the waiting period for divorce is 2 years for a covenant as compared to 6 months for a standard marriage. There is some confusion about whether covenant married couples who prove fault must undertake marital counseling. For instance, some interpret the law to mean that even couples in violent relationships must make good faith efforts at counseling to preserve their marriage, while some judges grant instant divorces, with waiting periods even shorter than for standard marriages.

Most empirical research about covenant marriage comes from a series of multimethod studies funded by the National Science Foundation and a private foundation and led by Steven L. Nock and his co-investigators, Laura Sanchez and James D. Wright. Their research included evaluation studies of the implementation of the law and its counseling facets; focus group interviews with people with a political or personal stake in covenant marriage, such as feminist organization members who opposed covenant marriage; long-married couples who upgraded to covenant marriage; and special targets of the law, such as young unmarried people and welfare-dependent single mothers. Their research

also included an attitude survey of the general population and a three-wave, 7-year survey of approximately 700 covenant and standard married couples who married shortly after the passage of the covenant marriage law, accompanied by qualitative interviews between the second and final wave.

In covenant marriage's first year, evaluation studies demonstrated that the law was implemented poorly. Clerks of the court and court staff routinely did not inform couples applying for licenses about the option and reported that they did not support covenant marriage. Often religious officiators or counselors, especially Catholic priests, did not counsel couples about covenant marriage because they did not approve of a state law that made two forms of marriage to support a singular vision of permanent marriage nor that required them to counsel couples about divorce provisions. Among the general public, very few people had heard about the covenant marriage law.

For this and other reasons, only about 2 percent of newly contracted marriages were covenant marriages within the first 2 years of the law's passage. Accurate information about the number of already married couples who upgraded their standard marriages to covenant marriages is nonexistent. More recent information about the percent of all new marriages that are covenant marriages is also nonexistent. However, occasionally, evangelical mega churches or other covenant marriage-supporting organizations host mass upgrade ceremonies, often on Valentine's Day. For example, Governor Mike Huckabee of Arkansas upgraded his 31-year marriage to a covenant marriage in a mass ceremony at a Little Rock sports arena on February 14, 2005.

Nock, Sanchez, and Wright's study finds that covenant couples differ from standard couples in significant ways. Covenant couples are 4 times more likely to have first met in church than standard couples, and their weddings are more religious, more traditional, and attended by many more guests. Compared with covenant couples, standard couples and spouses are much more likely to have ever cohabited and to have a child together or children from previous relationships at the start of their marriages. Covenant couples hold more traditional gender role attitudes and share greater spousal agreement about these roles. In contrast, standard couples are often mismatched with husbands almost as traditional as covenant

husbands and wives are considerably more liberal. Covenant couples report less corrosive and negative marital communication and conflict resolution strategies than standard couples.

By far, religiosity marks the biggest gap between covenant and standard married couples. Across numerous measures, covenant couples are much more religious, and the spouses are in close agreement about the centrality of religiosity and mutual participation. They are also much more likely to be evangelical. On average, standard couples are less religious and have a much broader range of religious experience across and within couples. Covenant couples are very likely to perceive God as an active directing presence in marriage and the Devil as a force working to destroy American families.

Covenant and standard married couples share some critical similarities. They have similar levels of education, occupation, and earnings. Husbands and wives in both forms of marriage engage in paid employment and housework in similarly gendered ways.

Nock, Sanchez, and Wright found that covenant married couples have significantly lower chances of separation and divorce than standard married couples (8.6 percent vs. 15.4 percent respectively, by the end of their study), at least within the first 7 years of marriage. But these lower chances of divorce were tied wholly to the selection effect of their greater religiosity, particularly covenant wives' greater religiosity. In essence, although more religious couples were more likely to choose covenant marriage, they were less likely to actually need it. Their greater religiosity was the acting buffer against divorce, not their choice of covenant over standard marriage. Their research also shows that intensive premarital counseling reduces divorce, a noteworthy finding for policymakers since 99 percent of covenant versus 42 percent of standard marrying couples underwent premarital counseling. However, a perplexing finding was that, for both covenant and standard married couples, counseling during marriage was associated with substantially higher chances of divorce. They conclude that marriage promotion and healthy relationship initiatives and family researchers must study the mechanisms behind postmarital counseling and greater chances of divorce.

Laura Sanchez

See also Alternative Relationship Lifestyles; Divorce and Preventive Interventions for Children and Parents; Families, Public Policy Issues and; Longitudinal Studies of Marital Satisfaction and Dissolution; Marital Satisfaction and Quality; Marital Stability, Prediction of; Mediation, Marriage Dissolution; Religion, Spirituality, and Relationships

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CRITICISM IN RELATIONSHIPS

Criticism is a verbal statement negatively evaluating another person. In close relationships, topics of evaluation typically include personal characteristics, behavior, performance or skills, physical appearance, relationship-related issues, and decision making. As an interpersonal activity, criticism is closely related to expressing complaints and giving feedback. Complaining, a more general interpersonal behavior, may or may not be about the complaint recipient. Complaints that are directed toward the relational partner specifically as the source of personal dissatisfaction are criticisms. For example, expressing dissatisfaction with the weather is a type of complaint that is not a criticism. Complaining to someone that he or she is always late is a complaint that also is a criticism. Criticism is not necessarily a complaint, however, and can be expressed as a relatively objective observation rather than a personal irritation. Telling a friend that shoes do not go with an outfit is a criticism that is not a complaint.

Feedback, on the other hand, refers to criticism focused on performance or skill, typically given in the context of instructional or professional relationships. This entry examines the communication of criticism, factors influencing decisions to express or suppress criticism, and the consequences of criticism for individuals and relationships.

Communicating Criticism

Giving Criticism

Criticism is a speech act that can be useful but difficult to hear. How criticism is communicated affects whether or not it is perceived to be constructive or destructive. In general, recipients respond more positively to criticism that is specific, clear, and communicated in conjunction with positive evaluations (e.g., “When we make dinner plans, you are frequently late; I love having the chance to see you, but would enjoy it more if you show up at the time we agree on”) than criticism that is negative, general, and vague (e.g., “It irritates me that you are always showing up late”). Nonverbally, constructive criticism is communicated with calm, positive nonverbal affect in contrast to loud and/or hostile nonverbal cues. Additionally, criticism communicated in private tends to get a better response from the recipient than public evaluation. The content of criticism also matters. Recipients are more likely to respond positively to criticism that they perceive to be accurate and fair, that contains suggestions for action, and that reflects concern for the individual.

Although criticism has an instrumental purpose (i.e., encouraging change or personal development), effectively communicating criticism also requires attention to what it says about the individual and the relationship. Criticism can be a face-threatening activity that undermines the desired social identity of the recipient. For example, criticizing a friend’s late behavior may challenge his or her desired identity as a good friend and responsible person. Both positive face (the desire for approval or to be perceived as competent) and negative face (the desire for autonomy or freedom from imposition) may be threatened by criticism. Criticism indicates disapproval (e.g., “You are not being a considerate friend”) and may suggest that the recipient should behave in a particular way

(e.g., “You should stop showing up late”). Certain topics of criticism (e.g., personal characteristics) threaten face more than others (e.g., behaviors) perhaps because the former are more stable and less likely to change. Both linguistic politeness strategies such as apologies, hedges (e.g., possibly, maybe), or claims of common ground through emphasis on commonalities as well as nonverbal politeness strategies (e.g., smaller gestures, positive facial expressions, softer voice) can mitigate the threat to face inherent in criticism.

In addition to identity implications, criticism may be perceived as a commentary on the relationship. A harsh, negative evaluation that leads to hurt feelings, for example, suggests that the critic does not value the relationship. Additionally, expressing criticism intersects with issues of power and control in relationships. Criticizing implies a certain right to evaluate. Some relational partners are more likely to have that right, either because of the nature of the relationship or because of their particular experience or knowledge. Parents, for example, are more likely to criticize than friends. In friendship, social norms grounded in the egalitarian and voluntary nature of friendship create expectations that friends will be supportive but not critical. Friends, then, experience a dialectical tension between being accepting and being honest that complicates providing criticism.

Although criticism can be well intentioned and helpful, critical behavior constitutes a component of hostile, destructive communication practices and patterns. Among these are verbal aggressiveness, social undermining, demand-withdraw conflict patterns, critical-rejecting parenting, and abusive relationships. Verbally aggressive criticism attacks the individual, and harsh criticism plays a part in psychological aggression. Criticism that invalidates the perspective or importance of the recipient is a part of social undermining, contributing to stress and anxiety for individuals. Criticism is also a key behavior in the demand part of the demand-withdraw pattern of conflict. In this conflict pattern, one person criticizes and blames (demand) while the other person avoids, defends, or responds passively (withdraw). Just as criticism in demand behavior may be an attempt to exert control in conflict, critical-rejecting parenting behavior can function to exert psychological control over children. Inaccurately perceived criticism

also occurs in damaging relational contexts. Abusive husbands, for example, tend to inaccurately attribute critical intentions to women when interpreting ambiguous behavior. Additionally, individuals vary in both perceptual (i.e., likelihood of perceiving a comment as a criticism) and emotional (i.e., likelihood of feeling hurt by criticism) sensitivity to criticism.

Responses to Criticism

The sequence of interaction following criticism also affects the outcome of criticism. Jess Alberts, a communication scholar who has studied complaints in marital interaction, suggested that a complaint functions as a conversational move that initiates an account sequence. The complaint is the reproach, challenging the relational partner, who then must provide an account. Types of possible accounts include justification-excuse, denial, agreement, avoidance, and countercomplaint. Recipients of a behavioral criticism are more likely to respond with justification whereas recipients of a dispositional criticism are more likely to deny the evaluation. More aggravating criticism (e.g., harsh, negative, or unfair statements) is more likely to elicit a defensive response (e.g., counterattack—"Who are you to talk? You don't always show up on time yourself!" or denial—"I am not always late"). In contrast, more affectively positive, fair criticism should elicit more agreeable responses (e.g., "I'm sorry; I didn't realize it bothered you so much; I'll try to be more aware of the time"). Communicating criticism in a way that minimizes the threat to desired social identities also reduces the likelihood of a defensive response.

Additionally, Alberts looked beyond the complaint-account to the larger complaint sequence. As couples progress through complaint sequences, they may reframe the complaint so that the complaint recipient no longer has responsibility for the issue, avoids the issue, is unresponsive to the issue, mitigates the significance of the complaint, escalates the complaint, or is responsive to the concerns expressed in the criticism. Relational context may shape the pattern of critical communication. More satisfied couples are likely to criticize behavior rather than personal characteristics and do so in a more positive manner. Dissatisfied couples, on the other hand, are more likely to

engage in unresponsive or escalating complaint sequences and more likely to respond to complaints with denial or countercomplaints.

Factors Affecting the Decision to Express Criticism

A number of different motives may prompt the expression of criticism in relationships, including a desire to influence a relational partner's behavior or attitudes, to provide helpful advice, to vent emotions, or to intentionally hurt the other. However, although a relational partner's characteristics or behaviors may be irritating or the individual may think that a partner should change his or her ways, individuals do not always express those evaluations. The potential outcome of criticism, power dynamics in the relationship, and expectations for appropriate behavior all affect whether or not an individual chooses to suppress or express a criticism. The likelihood of achieving the desired outcome of criticism in combination with the potential consequences influences the decision of whether or not to disclose a complaint. If an individual does not believe that the partner is likely to change his or her behavior and if the criticism is expected to lead to a negative outcome, such as conflict escalation or negativity, he or she is less likely to express the criticism.

Power and control can play an important role in the decision to express criticism. Punitive power (e.g., the potential for verbal or physical aggression) and dependence power (e.g., having poorer quality alternatives to the relationship than one's partner) may have a chilling effect in romantic relationships, leading individuals to suppress complaints for fear of the consequences. Individuals with better relational alternatives of their own, on the other hand, are more willing to criticize their romantic partners. The degree to which criticism violates relational expectations also may affect an individual's willingness to criticize. Friends, for example, are disinclined to criticize friends' romantic relationships unless the evaluation is solicited or the consequences of remaining silent outweigh the consequences of violating relational expectations (e.g., the friend is being hurt by his or her relational partner). There also are individual differences in the willingness to express complaints,

either because of their influence on the likelihood of experiencing dissatisfaction (e.g., people higher in negative affectivity are more apt to experience dissatisfaction and complain whereas people high in agreeableness are more noncritical) or their influence on expressiveness (e.g., extraverts generally are more likely to express feelings).

Consequences of Criticism

Criticism can have significant emotional consequences. Although partners may appreciate the insight provided by a criticism, individuals also may end up feeling regret over expressing criticism. Often, this regret comes from causing hurt. Hurtful criticism has a stronger impact if the hurt is perceived to be intentional. In addition to hurt, criticism can elicit feelings of anger and other negative affect. Recipients tend to experience anger in response to unfair or hostile criticism. Additionally, anger and hurt are more likely consequences of criticism that threatens face. Unresponsive or escalating complaint sequences also tend to create more hostility and frustration for relational partners than other types of complaint sequences.

Destructive criticism also negatively affects individual well-being. For example, social undermining, which includes overly critical behaviors, contributes to the psychological distress of individuals experiencing stress. Similarly, having a critical spouse is related to depression, and critical family environments can negatively affect mental health.

Communicating criticism can influence relational quality as well. Destructive criticism undermines intimacy in relationships. John Gottman's research on marital communication, for example, identifies criticism as a particularly corrosive behavior during marital conflict, a warning sign for marital difficulties. Gottman uses the term criticism in a narrow way, specifically referring to global statements attacking a spouse. In his research, this type of criticism has been shown to be destructive for relationships, particularly if it occurs frequently and leads to other behavior, such as defensive responses and cross-complaining. This type of critical communication also tends to be damaging in other types of relationships (e.g., parent-child) as well, negatively affecting relational satisfaction.

Face-threatening criticism is more damaging to relationships than criticism that is attentive to identity concerns. Certain types of complaint patterns are more destructive for relationships than others. For example, complaints followed by a countercomplaint or by withdrawal are particularly damaging pattern of interaction in romantic relationships. In contrast, research on accommodation in relationships demonstrates that a constructive response to a destructive criticism may mitigate the negative outcomes for a relationship.

April R. Trees

See also Accommodation; Accounts; Deteriorating Relationships; Facework; Hurt Feelings; Power Distribution in Relationships

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CULTURE AND RELATIONSHIPS

Our understanding of the interface between culture and relationships is in its infancy. This preliminary level of knowledge results from the

traditional research focus on the separate individual that has underemphasized relationships and their crucial importance in human life; cross-cultural social psychology has inherited this narrow emphasis that places the individual at the center of the behavioral drama. In consequence, there is a sparse cross-cultural database on relationships to integrate, and this available information may be inappropriately framed to promote the understanding of relationships. This entry explores how relationships have been approached by cross-cultural psychologists, selects examples of key research, and suggests future approaches to illuminating this interface.

As individuals striving to survive and flourish in a complex ecological system, people need others to support their inadequate and incomplete efforts at meeting their human requirements for living. The resources provided by others are crucial in enabling people to meet their physiological and security needs as well as satisfying their demands for social contact, dominance, and meaning or purpose in life. To ensure that these goals are met, human beings require the cooperation of others. Properly socialized members of a community contribute toward maintaining their reciprocal relationships with needed others and promoting the social system by which that community of relationships is sustained. From a relational perspective, culture may be understood as a community's norms, beliefs, and values informing the matrix of people's interdependencies with others, as each member moves through the life cycle. Cultures will vary in the emphases they give to these psychological processes that guide people's interpersonal behavior.

Why Culture?

Social science needs the concept of culture because evidence from geographically separated communities has shown that how these interdependencies are managed varies from place to place. For example, David Matsumoto has orchestrated a team of researchers from 32 cultures around the world to explore how emotions are displayed to others. Emotional expression plays a crucial role in regulating ongoing social interaction, so variations in the dynamics of this regulation will have important consequences for how relationships are

managed. These researchers found that in all cultures emotional display is sanctioned more toward outgroup members compared to ingroup members and when the person displaying emotion was in a public setting as opposed to being alone with an interacting partner. Regardless of the social setting, however, persons socialized into individualistic cultural systems, where freedom and equality are more highly valued reported greater freedom in expressing their emotions, particularly positive emotions; persons socialized into collectivist cultural systems, where self-restraint and social order are more highly valued, reported less. In this domain of relationship, then, a respondent's cultural group membership influences his or her level of emotional expressivity.

As another example, Michael Bond and Joseph Forgas explored whether the perception of another as more conscientious led the perceiver to engage in more trusting behaviors toward that target. They confirmed this expectation but found that conscientiousness was more influential on Chinese than upon Australian trust. In this case, a respondent's culture affected the strength of association between another's personality characteristic and an actor's behavior toward that person, shaping a dynamic process. As before, the emphasis on self-restraint characterizing a collectivist culture enhances the importance of the personality characteristics that are more valued in its members and hence directs its member's behavior toward those others. It is these empirical demonstrations of culture's association with relationship-relevant outcomes or processes that drive the scientific search for explanations about why cultural membership affects people's associations with other persons.

Relating Culture to Relationships

In developing their theories, psychologists have been guided by previous work on cultural differences in values, beliefs, and self-construals, all constructs that characterize the individual members of a relationship. Values refer to what end products or goals are deemed important by persons from different cultural groups. Shalom Schwartz has identified a pancultural structure for general values along which persons from different cultural groups may be positioned. The value

domain of universalism taps a person's concern for peace and brotherhood, for example, and varies across the world in terms of its relative strength of endorsement, being relatively high in Portugal and Greece but low in Slovenia and China. Persons valuing universalism are less likely to be prejudiced and hostile toward outgroup members, so in cultural groups where universalism is endorsed, there is less interpersonal negativity toward outgroup individuals, making relationships less fraught with difficulty.

Beliefs are assertions about the truth of a connection between two entities, such as the statement that religions promote warfare. As with values, general social beliefs have been studied in over 40 cultural groups by Kwok Leung and Michael Bond and shown to vary in their level of endorsement across five fundamental dimensions. These beliefs about the world impact the way a person processes conflict, with persons higher in social cynicism reporting less use of collaboration and compromise during interpersonal conflicts with others. One would thus predict that people in a culture that socializes its members for higher levels of social cynicism, such as Estonia, would be characterized by less harmonious interpersonal relationships.

Another widely researched way of distinguishing persons of different cultures is through their self-construals. Based on the social logic characterizing collectivist and individualistic cultural systems, Hazel Markus and Shinobu Kitayama described the constructs of interdependent and independent self-construal to tap a person's orientation toward promoting group integrity and personal ascendancy, respectively. A higher level of interdependent self-construal, for example, has been shown to predict one's capacity to be embarrassed on behalf of another, the suppression of negative affect during interactions, and the use of an indirect style of communication with interaction partners. In contrast, a higher level of independent self-construal has been shown to predict being less embarrassed by one's own actions, an increase in expressing positive emotions with others, and a more direct style of communicating. These are important features of relationship management that promote the attainment of relationship harmony and productivity with significant others, respectively. Given that the strength of these two self-construals has been shown to vary

across members of different cultural groups, the typical way relationships are conducted also varies across these cultural groups in ways predictable from their emphases during socialization.

Culture and Relationshipology

The forgoing research flows seamlessly out of the general Western intellectual focus on the individual; it examines how the individual characteristics of dyad members affect individual psychological outcomes, such as satisfaction with marriage, for example. As a counterpoint to this academic reflection of individualism, David Ho has called for the development of a discipline called *relationshipology*. In this discipline, the focus of interest is not on individual personalities—attributions and interpersonal styles—but on the relationship itself—its characteristics and outcomes. This academic focus on the higher-order units constituted by individuals but transcending its individual members is believed to flow from the holistic features of Eastern, especially Taoist, thought. Such an orientation has characterized some mainstream work on relationships, but Ho's challenge has galvanized cross-cultural researchers to design studies that illuminate this differential cultural emphasis.

An example of this shift in focus involves work examining the pattern of interaction between a dyad's members and the impact of that patterned interaction on that relationship outcome. In this vein, Chester Kam and Michael Bond examined how the target of another's harmful act dealt with the face loss that followed from being attacked. They discovered that both American and Chinese targets responded to being harmed with feelings of shame. The greater that shame, the greater was the tendency of the target to withdraw from the relationship. That degree of that withdrawal predicted eventual dissolution of the relationship. Losing face by being harmed led to target anger and to eventual relationship deterioration, but more strongly so for Chinese than for Americans. Evidently, then, culture can exercise an impact on the processes by which relationships flourish or fail.

Culture exercises its influence on such individual responses in a relationship and on how certain key relationships are formed. Since the pioneering

work of John Bowlby on attachment, cross-cultural developmental psychologists have been exploring features of the parent-child bond. As Ron Rohner has demonstrated across 100 cultural groups, there are large variations in the level of warmth characterizing this basic relationship during the child's developing years. Such parental acceptance influences the maturing child's subsequent capacity to form emotionally stable, generous, and trusting relationships with other adults, as opposed to forming dependent, emotionally charged, and hostile associations. In a 62-culture study, David Schmidt and his collaborators showed that the reported preference for a secure form of adult romantic attachment characterized 79 percent of their extensive sample of respondents. However, its normativity was not universal but varied across their cultural groups, with persons from East Asian cultures in particular valuing a preoccupied style of attachment. This finding suggests that the long-standing Western model for adult romantic relationships is presumptuous and that certain cultural dynamics may press toward alternative but equally workable forms of heterosexual relating. It is important to discover what societal factors shape preferences for different relationship styles and whether these relationship styles have the same or different consequences in different cultural systems.

Culture has also been shown to affect how various relationships are construed in the first place. Relationships are units of two persons engaging in complementary interpersonal activities called roles. There are many such role dyads in a given social system, from mother-daughter to prosecuting lawyer-defense witness, but culture socializes its members to enact these dyadic complementarities differently. Researchers have assessed various objective features of the interactions typically undertaken by many role dyads, such as how frequently it meets, who controls the exchanges, and whether the dyad is visible to others. The researchers found that the same four dimensions characterized any given dyad in both Australian and Chinese cultures—its degree of complexity (range of activities), of equality (degree of hierarchy), of adversarialness (formalization of conflict), and of containment (privacy of transactions). In both cultures, a father-son dyad was high in complexity, low in equality and

adversarialness, and moderate in containment. So dyads, like individuals, have personality profiles defined by their relative position on these four dimensions.

However, cultural differences also appeared. The Chinese showed a higher degree of difference across the role dyads on the equality dimension, reflecting the greater degree of hierarchy institutionalized in Chinese culture and practiced within its dyads. Conversely, the Australians showed higher variation on the adversarial dimension, reflecting the greater competitiveness institutionalized in Australian culture and practiced within its dyads. Given these differences, it was not surprising that particular role dyads (e.g., bank manager-customer) showed different interaction profiles in the two cultural groups. Culture thus shapes how people relate to one another in dyadic relationships to do the work of daily life.

For any relationship to work, its members must share expectations of what and how they each must do their relationship. Socialization into a cultural system ensures an adequate level of shared norms so that members of that cultural system can maximize their cooperation and minimize their opposition to one another's claims from the relationship. Despite the importance of relationship rules, they have been subject to little cross-cultural examination. Michael Argyle and his collaborators looked at general relationship rules in four cultures. Unfortunately, they did not examine the degree to which these rules were shared and enforced by members of their culture. Future cross-cultural work needs to explore these basic issues about the norms informing relationships and needs to explore them in many more cultural groups. A comprehensive taxonomy of relationship norms would enable psychologists to profile these different cultures, examining the societal conditions leading to this relationship profile and to examine the consequences of relationship norms and their sharedness for relational outcomes in different cultural contexts.

Michael Harris Bond

See also Attachment Theory; Collectivism, Effects on Relationships; Relationship Types and Taxonomies; Role Theory and Relationships; Values and Relationships

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D

DAILY DIARY METHODS

Daily diaries are a research method used to study individual or relational processes in daily life outside the laboratory. The term *diary* refers to self-report questionnaires, administered repeatedly over days or weeks, either daily or with some higher (e.g., 3–5 times within-day) frequency. Related terms include ambulatory monitoring, experience sampling method, and ecological momentary assessment.

Unique Features of Diary Methods

In the area of close relationship research, diary methods are used to study various phenomena, such as rates and effects of supportive and hindering acts, associations between responsiveness and intimacy, sexual behaviors and motivations, emotional experiences and their transmission to others, and empathic accuracy. To illustrate the latter, couples might be asked to complete daily reports of their own mood along with inferences about their partners' moods; these reports are then cross-matched to determine general levels of inferential accuracy as well as individual and contextual differences in these.

The frequent reports obtained with diary studies enable monitoring particular feelings, cognitions, actions, or situations in the real-life contexts absent from traditional research designs. These fleeting states or events are monitored while or soon after

they occur. This highlights the first generally accepted benefit of diary methods: They circumvent the need for retrospection or for reliance on respondents' beliefs about themselves or the world and instead capture transient states as they are lived and felt. The importance of this benefit has been made clear by work showing that when people attempt to report their feelings, the length of the period of time about which they are responding affects the way in which their response is generated. Reporting one's momentary mood can usually be done quite easily and with acceptable validity. However, when reporting their mood over, say, the past few days, individuals do not simply access their memories of these states but instead may rely on their chronic beliefs about their mood or temperament. Moreover, when respondents do try to aggregate subjective feelings over some time, they tend to overemphasize certain moments (e.g., the emotion felt while providing the rating) and as a result, supply less reliable or valid estimates than those obtained by actually monitoring feelings repeatedly. For example, in an uncomfortable medical procedure, patients' subsequent evaluation of pain in the procedure is most strongly related to peak levels of pain felt during the procedure and to the pain at the very end of it and not to a real aggregate of the pain or its duration.

When transitory states (such as positive or negative mood, thoughts of acceptance or rejection), behaviors (e.g., providing or seeking support), or events (e.g., interactions with an opposite-sex person) are monitored repeatedly within a diary study, researchers reap a second benefit: collecting

information on the intra- and interpersonal context of these states. Because diaries are completed in the course of everyday life, they open a window to examining many important contextual effects on the variables of interest. For example, a health researcher may want to know whether situational features (e.g., presence of peers) distinguish moments in which a particular behavior (e.g., smoking) occurs. Similarly, a relationship researcher may want to examine whether empathic accuracy increases when spouses are asked to intuit their partners' moods when apart (e.g., at work) or together (e.g., at home).

A related benefit of diaries is their ability to inform us about processes unfolding over time. Because the same feelings, cognitions, or events are assessed repeatedly, researchers can see whether particular patterns (e.g., weekly or circadian cycles) emerge; for example, positive moods do follow a circadian rhythm, while negative moods do not. And by monitoring processes as they unfold, researchers can recognize antecedents, concomitants, and consequences of particular states. This is often done using lagged analyses in which outcomes (measured at time t) are predicted by variables measured in the previous diary (i.e., at time $t-1$). For example, a positive mood one day could be a function of capitalization—celebrating positive news with a responsive partner—on the previous day. In the typical case, such lagged analyses also adjust for the outcome's level on the previous day (e.g., positive mood yesterday); this adjustment helps rule out the possibility of reverse causation (e.g., that positive mood yesterday led to sharing good news today as well as to positive mood today).

Another useful feature of diary data is their ability to clarify the within-person structure of particular constructs (e.g., the within-person association between positive and negative moods) as well as individual or group differences in this structure. Within-person structure does not necessarily follow between-person structure: The former looks at how certain qualities are associated within an individual's experience from one time to another, whereas the latter looks at how certain qualities of individuals' general experience relates to other qualities. For example, positive and negative affect are mostly unrelated in cross-sectional survey analyses, but at the within-person level, may have negative, null, or even positive associations. This

within-person association between positive and negative moods has been shown to depend on several factors, including social cognitive aspects of the particular person as well as his or her cultural mind-set. In the absence of repeated data within persons, these important individual differences in structure would be impossible to detect.

Diary Study Designs

There are two broad classes of diary studies—event-based and time-based. In event-based diary studies, participants complete diaries whenever certain events (e.g., an interaction lasting more than 10 minutes, an urge to engage in an unhealthy behavior) occur. This design is particularly useful for studying events that are rare, specialized, or would not be expected to occur with fixed or predictable frequency. For example, one study examining the link between personal disclosures, responsiveness, and intimacy used this design because it allowed asking a set of detailed questions immediately following every social interaction for as few or as many such interactions as participants had over 1 week. The study in question employed an event-based diary that has been widely used in close relationship research: the Rochester Interaction Record.

Unlike event-based designs, time-based studies ask the respondent to complete diary entries at fixed or random time intervals (e.g., once every evening or 5 times a day at semirandomized times). Diary studies using time-based designs are more common in part because they provide data that are more consistent across participants (who all respond with the same frequency). Uniform or balanced data of this sort are useful when making generalizations regarding aggregate levels of an outcome variable (e.g., average daily felt intimacy) or when applying the lagged analyses described above in a way that allows for a fixed interval of time underlying lagged effects. They are also useful in estimating the frequency of certain events (e.g., support, hindrance) in a sample.

Time-based studies often make use of signals to prompt responses at particular fixed or random times, especially in studies that involve several responses per day. In early studies, signals often involved preprogrammed wristwatches, pagers, or phone calls made to the participants, who then

completed paper-and-pencil diaries. With recent technology, participants signaled in this way might use Interactive Voice Response or simply key in their responses on dial-pads. In the past decade, many diary studies have incorporated electronic personal digital assistants—hand-held computers outfitted with software for signaling participants, presenting questions, collecting responses to them, recording the response time, and storing these responses until the researcher downloads them (or transmitting them immediately, in some software versions). With some study populations, diaries can also be presented through the Internet (assuming that participants have easy access to networked computers at those times that are sampled—an assumption that is easier to make with the advent of Internet-enabled mobile phones).

The questions being investigated determine numerous design decisions. They guide the choice of event-based or time-based diaries (and for the latter, ones using fixed or random signals). They involve optimizing the frequency with which diaries are presented (e.g., once daily, 5 times daily, every hour) and the total length of the diary period (a month, a week, 1 intensive day). They determine which relevant and contextual questions should be included (while remaining mindful of participant burden and compliance). And they require choosing whether to use self-reports exclusively or to incorporate psychophysiological or other collateral assessment. For example, health researchers sometimes outfit their subjects with both electronic diaries and ambulatory blood-pressure cuffs, allowing synchronized self-reports and physiological assessments; similarly, communications researchers sometimes collect self-report diary responses alongside unobtrusive voice recordings that capture natural speech samples.

Data Analysis in Diary Studies

The data collected in diary studies are, by definition, multilevel in nature: They include repeated assessments (often called level-1 units) nested within individuals (level-2 units), who themselves might be nested within some superordinate category (e.g., couples, groups, experimental conditions—or level-3 units). The last 2 decades have brought the development of specialized data-analytic techniques

that are suited for such nested data. These techniques come under several names (multilevel modeling, general mixed models, random regression, or hierarchical linear modeling are the most common terms) but are essentially similar. Their strength lies in appropriately handling some of the key features of multilevel diary data, including the statistical interdependence between repeated measures taken from the same individual (typically indexed by the intraclass correlation), the common problem of unbalanced data (i.e., data in which different individuals have varying amounts of diary responses), and the freedom to incorporate statistically both within-person and between-person predictors.

Limitations of the Diary Method

The field's excitement about diary methods and the growing ease with which they can be implemented have led to an exponential growth in their use as well as in the availability of methodologies for administering them and for analyzing the data they provide. However, some authors note the difficulties in implementing these studies. Diaries can be burdensome to participants, who are asked to respond repeatedly to questionnaires at times that may be inconvenient. This burden can result in problematic compliance—partial, or worse, selective responses to the diaries. Additionally, the effects of these designs are not yet well understood. A particularly relevant, commonly expressed concern about diary studies is that, by focusing respondents' attention on certain phenomena (their mood, events within their relationships, their healthy or unhealthy behaviors), the studies can inadvertently change these very phenomena of interest—a version of the observer effect or of reactivity. To date, few studies have found this anticipated reactivity, and several have provided reassurance that diary reports can be trusted as well or better than other forms of self-reports, such as those collected in cross-sectional or in longer term panel studies.

Expanding the Utility of Diary Methods

Two extensions, both involving the combination of diary methods with additional methodological approaches, promise to amplify the benefits close

relationship researchers can draw from diary methods. The first involves using diaries in conjunction with other forms of data collection within the same study to illuminate research questions from multiple perspectives. For example, researchers interested in sexual behaviors and beliefs in newlyweds may approach this question using both cross-sectional and longitudinal survey methods (e.g., assessing sexual experience and beliefs close to marriage and again as they unfold over some period of months or years), daily diaries (e.g., monitoring sexual motivation, initiation, and behavior), and lab-based observations (e.g., examining the couples' communication about sexual and nonsexual topics). Each of these methods contributes a different outlook on the same multifaceted topic, and together they allow determining whether phenomena found in the lab also occur in the couples' naturalistic environment.

A second expansion integrates self-report measures with collateral forms of data from the individual or their physical-interpersonal environment. One form of diary methods mentioned earlier—ambulatory monitoring—does just that, by simultaneously collecting self-reports (of feelings, cognitions, or behaviors) with psychophysiological data, physical movement recordings, unobtrusive audio recording, digital snapshots, or even location tracking (using global positioning [GPS] methods). For example, researchers interested in talkativeness in natural conversations as it relates to self-reported goals or moods could outfit their participants with devices (already available) that collect voice samples unobtrusively and present diary questionnaires in either an event-based or a time-based manner.

A third direction for further use of diary methods is in delivering behavioral or cognitive interventions. Diaries can include brief reminders or instructions for participants to monitor behaviors or use strategies or skills in their daily lives. For example, interventions aimed at life-style change (relaxation, exercise, smoking cessation) can use diaries to monitor a subject's behaviors and provide preprogrammed feedback. They can also monitor adherence to such instructions (i.e., whether a particular assigned behavior, such as a relaxation or breathing exercise, was carried out) and assess responses or consequences to their use.

Eshkol Rafaeli

See also Dyadic Data Analysis; Ethical Issues in Relationship Research; Observational Methods; Quantitative Methods in Relationship Research; Questionnaires, Design and Use of, in Relationship Research; Rochester Interaction Record; Survey Methods in Relationship Research

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DARK SIDE OF RELATIONSHIPS

The *dark side of relationships* is a catchphrase intended to capture a broad set of inquiries into the nature and functioning of personal relationships. At its most general, the phrase refers to the scholarly interest in the ways in which humans experience dysfunction or functional ambivalence in the process of relating. Dysfunction is viewed as organisms failing to achieve optimal or preferred states of existence, and functional ambivalence refers to any process that moves individuals or relationships both toward and away from such states of existence. The dark side shares concerns and interests with historical scholarly pursuits in the philosophical study of human nature, abnormal and clinical psychology, the sociology of deviance and aggression, and rhetorical exploitation and incompetence. Given such expansive associations, it is not easily defined. The following sections trace the historical roots of the dark side metaphor and summarize the evolution of dark side terminology. The entry reviews the topical

content of dark side literature and offers an assessment of the utility of the dark side metaphor for relationship scholarship.

History

Historical examinations of the dark side concept reveals diverse multidisciplinary roots. The development of the concept of seven deadly sins (lust, gluttony, greed, sloth, wrath, envy, and pride) and their comparative virtues (e.g., chastity, temperance, charity, diligence, patience, kindness, and humility) illustrate a historical interest. The prospect that the seven deadly or cardinal sins might be part of human nature inspired artistic, philosophical, and religious inquiry into this nature. As inquiry evolved into the study of relationships, the prospect that evil and sin may be integral to understanding relationships became apparent as well. Thus, as academic disciplines evolved, so did the interest in the dark side. The field of communication was born out of the debate between Plato and Aristotle, in which Plato feared the relegation of rhetoric, often viewed as nothing more than an art, to the status of a science because of the ability of persuasion and manipulation to distort and distract people away from scientific truth. Plato's student, Aristotle, argued instead that the only way to avoid such victimization by the arts of rhetoric was through its systematic study—understanding manipulation and exploitation can help prevent it. In more contemporary times, the field of psychology continues to devote an entire domain of inquiry into abnormal psychology. Sociology continues to demonstrate an interest in conflict, deviance, and alienation as significant themes of the discipline. Communication criticizes the misuse of communication and attempts to remedy various forms of relational incompetence. Most disciplines have some facet that is significantly devoted to the study of dysfunction, including the study of families, organizations, politics, history, and health. Despite these deep disciplinary roots, the modern study of the dark side has largely been fragmented and lacks thematic coherence.

The Evolution of Terminology

In popular consciousness the phrase the dark side is often associated with its extensive use in the

Star Wars movies beginning in 1977, and at least one online dictionary actually attributes its etymology to this source. Although clearly popularized by the movie, the phrase predates its usage in this epic. In the social sciences, numerous terms and phrases have been applied to the study of dysfunctional relationships, including the dark side of families, courtship, interpersonal communication, close relationships, and organizational behavior. Other cognate phrases include relating difficulty, inappropriate relationships, aversive interpersonal behavior, behaving badly, counterproductive work behavior, problematic relationships in the workplace, troublesome relationships, psychological problems, emotional and behavioral problems, the social psychology of good and evil, and the science of good and evil. This network of associations reveals a key aspect to the evolution of this area of study: the need for a metaphor or label for integrating a general interest in the investigation and understanding of the dysfunctional aspects of human interaction and relationships.

In large part, there were two interrelated motives for introducing such phrases. First, there was a need for topical coherence. It was recognized that there was a significant amount of scholarly research that provided insight into the dysfunctions of relationships that had no obvious rubric under which to be referenced. Academic disciplines have never ignored topics relevant to the dark side. Any perusal of the scholarly landscape in the social sciences reveals interest in the study of psychosis, depression, suicide, violence, aggression, murder, war, crime, conflict, shame, guilt, repression, deviance, deception, coercion, threat, incest, taboo, secrecy, infidelity, misunderstanding, exploitation, prejudice, alienation, jealousy, and any number of other forms of dispreferred experiences. These topics, however, had never really had a scholarly home, a single roof under which such topics could be collectively examined for their implications about human relationships. The introduction of the dark side into the scholarly discourse drew attention to the possibility that these diverse contexts are not entirely discrete or independent of one another. In studying one, insight into the others might benefit.

The second motivation for the dark side grew out of a suspicion of a positive ideological bias that needed balancing. There was a sense that the

darker side of relationships tended to be overlooked because of a tendency toward relationship theories that were overly optimistic or biased. For example, marriage counseling literatures tend to start with the assumption that marriage itself is a desirable institution. Most therapies presume that rationality and consistency are preferable to irrationality and inconsistency, perspectives that demote the roles of affect in decision-making and the plasticity of self. Theories of relationships tend to presumptively privilege intimacy over nonintimate relations and presumptively treat relationship dissolution as a problematic experience. These ideologies of soundness and togetherness represent often subtle and implicit value systems that privilege optimism, stability, commitment, and interpersonal closeness.

As the field of personal relationships initially borrowed heavily from preexisting theories of human nature, it tended to emphasize the study of voluntary relationships, motivated by attraction, love, satisfaction, and the pursuit of mutuality, understanding, and cooperation. The underlying ideology of much of the social sciences, undergraduate textbooks, and the popular press of personal relationships continue in large part to privilege the desirability of empathy, accuracy, clarity, expression, openness, secure attachment, trust, cooperation, relational satisfaction, and collaboration. These concepts are often implicitly taken for granted as desirable qualities of relationship functioning, and positive correlations among such concepts are taken as confirmation of such presumptions. Whereas many if not most of these processes and states do indeed demonstrate positive functions, what often get ignored are the conditions in which they are dysfunctional. Although the research is not extensive, isolated studies suggest that highly empathic people are easily exploited in negotiation contexts, highly trusting persons may be exploited in game scenarios, high self-esteem persons may also be more defensive and aggressive when insulted, polite people may have a hypersensitivity to rule violation that triggers violence, and highly attractive persons may suffer discrimination from those who presume that talent and appearances are unlikely partners. The development of the dark side was an attempt to cast a critical eye on such presumptions.

The Dark Side to Date

Although the dark side of relationships can be defined from theoretical and epistemological points of view, most commonly it has been explicated through particular research topics. Topical approaches presume or demonstrate the unpleasant or dysfunctional nature of certain phenomena and then examine a selected set of topics that exemplify these phenomena. Examination of existing topics devoted to the dark side include, but are not limited to, the following: general aversiveness (e.g., aversive interactions, counterproductive behavior, negative communication, evil), aggression-violence (e.g., psychological abuse, sexual abuse, child abuse, parent abuse, sexual coercion, threat, rape, stalking, violence, aggression, genocide), aversive behaviors (e.g., gossip, rumor, mobbing, bullying, emotional abuse, psychological abuse, guilt induction, embarrassment induction, hurtful messages or feelings), rejection and disjunctive relationships (e.g., hurtful messages or feelings, complaints, criticism, incivility, social ostracism, rejection, unrequited love, neglect, outgroup bias, racial bias, hostility, swearing and blasphemy, teasing, breaches, transgressions, betrayals, infidelity, fatal attractions, unrequited love, friendship deterioration, relationship breakup and divorce, discrimination, injustice, harassment, revenge, enemyship, obsessive relational intrusion), negative affect (e.g., shame, guilt, jealousy, envy, anger, stress), problematic persons (e.g., difficult others, troublesome others, personality disorder, depression, social anxiety, shyness, schizophrenia, alcoholism, sexual dysfunction, egotism, narcissism, dysphoria, selfishness, cynicism, deviance), problematic relations (e.g., in-laws, hookups, long-distance relationships, unwanted relationships, secret relationships, interracial relationships), taboo relationships (e.g., therapist-patient sexual relationships, pedophilia, necrophilia), and problematic communication (e.g., dysfunctional or exploitative impression management, manipulation and exploitation, lies and deception, uncertainty, secrets, manipulation, misunderstanding, computer-mediated communication, conflict, codependence). These are obviously not mutually exclusive topics, and the overlaps suggest the possibilities of a more systematic mapping of the underlying structure of the

dark side as it is charted in the personal relationships discipline.

Prospects

Judging from the amount of published research relevant to the dark side of relationships, the concept appears to have had heuristic value. Given the rather cumbersome and ever-expanding list of topics imported into its metaphorical umbrella, however, there is reason to ask what the disciplinary value of the concept has been and will continue to be. The value of the concept can be examined on three levels: empirical, theoretical, and metatheoretical.

There is no simple way to quantify the impact of the dark side perspective on research in the field of personal relationships. Although there is evidence that a dark side perspective has sustained a thematic trend of research, there is only limited evidence that it has directly inspired new investigations or theories. At the metatheoretical level, however, interest in the dark side appears to have had some influence. At this level, the dark side is not a topic or a theory but a perspective, or way of viewing the world. From the dark side perspective, which assumes that all social processes are multifunctional, no systematic investigation should ignore the possibility that bad outcomes may occur even when good outcomes are expected and that good outcomes may occur even when bad outcomes are expected. Specifically, the dark side perspective calls attention to the fact that a discipline needs to be cautious about its ideological presumptions and to allow for the possibility that relationship processes are always potentially functionally ambivalent.

One tool for identifying the boundaries of the dark side consists of the intersection of two dimensions: normative value and functional value. Normative value refers to cultural, societal, institutional (e.g., religion, political), or individual subjective evaluations of behavior as productive or destructive. Behavior can be normatively viewed as good, moral, ethical, or productive on one end of this continuum, and bad, immoral, unethical, and destructive on the other end of this continuum. Functional value refers to the extent to which activities enhance or detract from the ability of an

organism or relationship to live, survive, and thrive. When crossed, four quadrants are formed.

The bright side quadrant consists of activities or experiences that are normatively viewed as positive and function to enhance the individual or relationship. A pure exemplar may not exist, but candidates might include secure parental attachments to children and affectionate behavior exchange among romantically attracted consenting adults. The what-once-was-bright-is-now-dark quadrant includes functionally destructive activities or experiences that are normatively viewed as good or productive. Exemplars might be self-esteem that is destructive or physical attractiveness that elicits damaging stereotypes. So enamored are scholars with the evidence of value of self-esteem and physical attraction that only recently and rarely have scholarly efforts attempted to redress the oversight by investigating the conditions under which these conditions can be destructive. The what-once-was-dark-is-now-bright quadrant consists of activities and experiences that are normatively viewed as wrong or destructive but that actually function to enhance the individual or relationship. Exemplars exist such as sexual abuse victims who perceive benefits to their relationships with their own children or survivors of battering who perceive that they have become stronger and more self-reliant when they leave the relationship. Less extreme examples would include investigation of how intentionally making partners embarrassed or jealous serve a variety of ends, including influence, instruction, and intimacy. For example, people who intentionally seek to make their partners jealous tend to believe that the relationship improves in part because the partner changes for the better to enhance their attractiveness to the jealousy inducer. Relationships may function better to the extent that some distrust and deception are sustained, so as to keep the partners more careful and less biased in their attribution of motives and meanings to one another. The evil incarnate quadrant refers to activities or experiences that are both normatively viewed as wrong or destructive and indeed function to detract from the individual's or relationships capacity to survive and thrive. Exemplars would probably include acts such as mass murder and genocide.

The value of such a heuristic is that it calls attention to the importance of including constructs

in research programs that might otherwise be presumptively overlooked. If it is presumed that relational violence is wrong and functionally destructive, then the potential beneficial outcomes will not be measured, and will not be identified. By identifying those who are able to experience positive outcomes from trauma, the factors that differentiate these people from the more negatively affected individuals can be better understood, and better treatments and interventions can be developed. Yet to suggest studying the benefits of child sexual abuse in order to identify such differences, even when clearly admitting the net damage that such trauma causes, is sufficient to elicit great resistance in disciplines. In this sense, ideology is preserved by exclusion, and the resulting biasing effects on research are relatively invisible in a program of empirical investigation.

Although they represent a minority of scholarly studies, there are investigations of the disadvantages of impression management, cooperation, altruism, attractiveness, love, disclosure, interdependence, cognitive complexity, empathy, and other concepts traditionally viewed as positive. There are also studies of the advantages or perceived benefits of experiencing various forms of victimization, aggression, anger, jealousy, breakup, isolation, and madness. Empirically exploring the functionally ambivalent features of relationships may be viewed as threatening to political and disciplinary agendas, but if the ultimate goal of science is understanding, then the dark side perspective reminds that ambivalent functionality of social processes needs to be understood both theoretically and empirically.

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See also Abuse and Violence in Relationships; Aristotle and Plato on Relationships; Conflict Prevalence and Sources; Mental Health and Relationships; Psychopathology, Influence on Family Members; Social Allergies; Transgressions

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DATING, FIRST DATE

Contemporary courtship typically relies on dating as a way to initiate romantic relationships in the United States and in many other countries. Dating refers to informal interactions between two individuals with the implied intent of assessing each other's romantic potential but has no specific commitment or goal. A graduated series of dates is considered the first step to a serious romance. The purpose of this entry is to describe sexual scripts for a first date, address how gender and sexual orientation affect the first date script, and briefly discuss some newer forms of first dates such as Internet and speed dating.

A first date is an easily identifiable and widely experienced event among young adult heterosexuals. Most of the research on first dates uses Script Theory as a framework. Scripts refer to the routine actions involved in familiar activities. For instance, "look at the menu" and "order food" would be

some routine actions or script elements that would occur when eating in a restaurant. Sociologists William Simon and John Gagnon proposed the concept of sexual scripts as a blueprint for guiding sexual behavior specifically. Sexual scripts operate on three distinct levels: Cultural scripts refer to collectively developed scripts, interpersonal scripts refer to the use of a specific cultural scenario by an individual, and intrapsychic scripts pertain to private wishes and desires. Recent interest has focused on whether cultural scripts regarding gender roles in dating continue to guide interpersonal scripts and what new scripts or forms of dating are developing.

Cultural scripts for the first date are explicit, formal, and have remained stable over the past 40 years. A defining feature of the first date is its gender etiquette. This may be because the tendency to pose or conform to stereotyped gender roles is a characteristic of beginning heterosexual romantic relationships. Men are to initiate, plan, and pay for the date; engage in courtly behavior such as opening doors; and initiate sexual contact. Women are to fulfill a subordinate role by being alluring, engaging the man in conversation, and limiting sexual activity.

In research conducted on mostly White college students, young adults' descriptions of a hypothetical first date were found largely to conform to the cultural script of male initiation–female reaction. For instance, when listing the actions a woman [or man] would typically do on a first date with someone new, young adults described self-directed actions such as “decide what to do” and “initiate physical contact” as being unique to the man's script. Actions unique to the woman's script involved reactions such as “wait for date” and “accept [or reject] the man's moves” such as an “arm around shoulder” or a “kiss.” These findings suggest that the cultural script for a first date is very strong and familiar to young heterosexual adults.

Actual first dates closely conform to abstract cultural scripts. When women college students described a recent actual first date, 14 actions referred to what she did on the date (e.g., “groomed and dressed” and “talked, joked, and laughed”), and 6 actions were initiated by the man: “picked up date,” “opened doors,” “took date home,” “asked for another date,” “told date he would call her,” and “kissed goodnight.” Men described

15 actions and all were self-initiated. Thus, actual first dates were highly similar to the cultural script in terms of defining the man's role as active and the woman's as reactive.

Sexual behavior on a first date is influenced by certain contexts. For instance, actual first dates that were initiated by men had more sexual activity than first dates that were initiated by women. Also, more sexual behavior occurred on actual first dates when alcohol was consumed. More sexual activity was used to describe a hypothetical date occurring “at a keg party” than one occurring “at a coffee shop.” This difference suggests that both the cultural script and the actual behavior of young adults vary depending on the context of the date.

An interesting question regarding the cultural dating script concerns how it affects lesbians and gay men. Similar to heterosexual gender roles, gay men who described both a hypothetical and actual first date mentioned more sexual actions (“make out” and “have sex”) than lesbians, whereas lesbians more often than gay men mentioned “positive affect” for the date and “get to know/evaluate date.” Lesbians and gay men also were not likely to introduce a date to family or to show affection in public. However, active or reactive gender roles were not assigned to one person. On a same-sex date, either person was free to pick up the other person, pay for the date, or initiate sexual contact. Thus, personal abilities or desires, more so than gender roles, appear to guide both dating scripts and actual behavior for lesbians and gay men.

Some newer forms of first dates include speed dating and Internet dating. Speed dating is a phenomenon that refers to a brief series of dates typically lasting from 3 to 8 minutes that an individual may have with others attending an event. If both wish to meet each other when time is up, they are told how to contact each other for a future date. Conformity to a gender-typed dating script is likely to be important to success in speed dating. Internet dating occurs through chat rooms or other social networking groups and has the advantage of allowing people to get to know each other without the time and effort involved in an initial face-to-face meeting. It also may reduce the relevance of gender conformity and physical attraction in initial attraction.

In sum, a first date is strongly influenced by a highly gender-typed cultural script. Heterosexuals

tend to adhere to the cultural script in order to create a good impression. The script is less influential for same-sex and online dating, where more private desires and interests may be expressed.

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See also Courtship, Models and Processes of; Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Relationships; Gender Roles in Relationships; Initiation of Relationships; Internet Dating; Speed Dating

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DATING AND COURTSHIP IN MIDLIFE AND LATER LIFE

Dating and courtship in midlife and later life are relatively new phenomena. A confluence of factors explains why. For one, until recently, few people lived to what is now considered midlife. In 1900, life expectancy was 47, and by age 50, most people were dead! Life expectancy in the United States today is 77 years. Better health, preventive care, and life-extending technology enable more and more people to live to their 80s and 90s. Midlife begins around age 40 or 45 and lasts through age 60 or 65. More people today than ever do not feel old at age 50 or 60. This entry explores dating and courtship in midlife and later life, how they came about, how people feel about them, how they differ from dating at younger ages, and dating practices.

Besides the accumulation of years, changes in mores, attitudes, and values have paved the way for dating and courtship among single men and

women in midlife and later life. For most of the world as recently as the first part of the 20th century, sex was taboo at midlife, and conversations about sex transpired behind closed doors. Today, unmarried or unpartnered people in midlife or later do not have to forgo dating for the rest of their lives like spinsters and confirmed bachelors of generations ago. The image of an older single man or woman as too old for sex, love, or marriage has been slowly changing and did so more dramatically when baby boomers came on the scene so that marriage, romance, and sex are now more central to their lives.

Baby boomers, named after the post–World War II increase in the birthrate, were born between 1946 and 1964 from parents who came of age during World War II. Baby boomers came of age in the 1960s and '70s and they changed social attitudes. Compared to past cohorts, more of them, as well as members of subsequent cohorts, may choose never to marry, but not for lack of romance. As divorce has become more widely accepted, divorced persons get back into the dating game. According to an AARP study of unmarried people in 2003, divorcees comprise 48 percent or almost half of singles between the ages of 40 and 69. The second-largest group is the proportion of never-married persons at 31 percent, while widowed persons comprise 13 percent, and those who are separated make up a smaller minority at 7 percent.

With more openness toward sex, people have come to recognize that having a sexual relationship is associated with better health. Results from two studies sponsored by AARP showed that those with a sexual relationship regarded their health and well-being as better than those who did not. Its latest sexuality study, conducted in 2004, showed that for more than half of a nationwide representation of married and unmarried people ages 45 and older, sexual activity is considered a critical part of a good relationship, and a satisfying sexual relationship is an important factor affecting their quality of life. A vast majority in the study, although agreeing that sex receives too much emphasis in today's culture, also have a positive attitude toward it. They do not agree that sex is for younger people only. They enjoy it, and 49 percent of those with sexual partners report having regular sex.

The 2004 AARP study also showed a substantial increase from 1999 in the percentage of adults seeking information about sex from various sources. There was a significant growth from 1999 to 2004 in the proportion of midlife and older adults who had sought treatment for a sexual functioning problem. Likewise, there was an increase in the use of medicines, hormones, or other treatments to improve sexual function in men.

Widows and widowers no longer need to embrace celibacy for the rest of their lives. There is greater acceptance by society of different forms of unions, and more opportunity for unmarried adults to live together without social sanctions. More persons with gay and lesbian sexual orientation are coming out into the open in midlife and later life as well. In fact, the chosen family for a gay or lesbian person at the end of life may comprise more friends than blood relatives.

Finally, midlife and older people today have more avenues to dating, courtship, and new relationships than in the past. The majority of women have careers and find mates in the office. Whereas just a few decades ago people met through family, friends, or church, today there are matchmaking and dating services for all ages, social networking Web sites, support groups a few keyboard clicks away on the Internet, and other electronic methods to find dating partners and mates. Midlifers can even search for their high school sweethearts on the Internet and revive old romances.

Indeed, the prominence of dating and courtship in midlife and later life has transformed midlife relationships in such an extraordinary way because of its novelty in the history of the human experience. In addition, the dating scene can very well be complex and varied because of the accumulation of many decades of experience and sexual relationships. Romantic relationships have the potential to be richer, fuller, multifaceted, deeper, more painful, more turbulent, and also more pleasurable. In addition, these relationships can comfort and relieve loneliness as people face their mortality.

Courtship and Dating

In midlife and later life, the lenses through which people see, feel, and experience romantic relationships are altered. Although youth have seemingly

unconstrained dreams, in midlife the dreams may remain but may also have been displaced by regrets, lost hopes, and lost loves. Although in youth, friends and parents may mostly influence romantic relationships, whereas in midlife and later life the presence of children, and sometimes ex-spouses and former in-laws, add to the dynamics of romance and falling in love again. People in their 20s and 30s look forward to children and having a family of their own, while in midlife people start thinking of their old age and mortality.

AARP, aiming to raise awareness of midlife and later life relationship issues, conducted a landmark study in 2003 on single people's lifestyles, dating, and romance. The results showed a facet of singles in midlife and later life that had hardly been seen in the past (see Figure 1). The majority, or 63 percent of singles ages 40 to 69, dated, either exclusively or nonexclusively. Seven percent of men and 3 percent of women reported having same-sex dating partners. Some singles did not date but were interested in dating and looking for dates; others would date if the opportunity came but did not actively seek dates. Among the study participants who were still interested in dating, those who did not date were apt to be women in their 60s and people who were passively waiting in case the right person just happened to come along. The smallest percentage comprises the group of singles that had lost interest in dating.

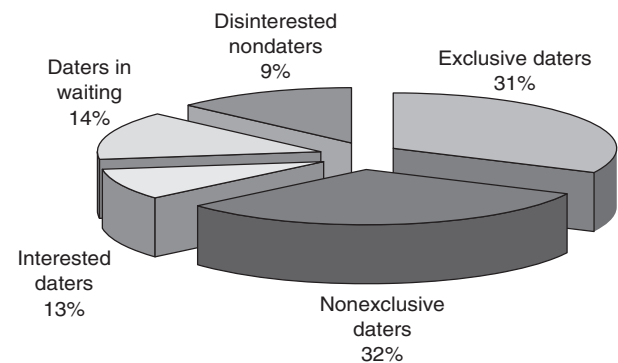


Figure 1 Dating Among Singles Ages 40 to 69

Among singles in midlife, dating does not necessarily lead to marriage. In fact, about a third of singles said they were not sure whether they should marry when or if they found themselves in a committed, exclusive relationship. Cohabitation was an option for many.

If people do not necessarily date to find a spouse or partner, why then do people date? As the AARP study showed, freedom feels good, but loneliness and lack of companionship make life difficult. About half of singles dated in order to have someone with whom to talk or do things. Dating to have fun was a lesser need.

Singles in midlife and later life said that an advantage to dating that they did not have while they were younger was the comfort that lies in the wisdom of age, maturity, and experience. Furthermore, they felt more carefree and had more freedom and independence. They also noted a lack of social pressure. The following quotes from single adults published in *Lifestyles, Dating and Romance: A Study of Midlife Singles* who were participating in focus groups illustrate these reactions:

“I feel more confident ‘in me.’ I’ve had more years to learn more lessons, and feel I’m a much better person now.”

“I am certainly older and wiser about the dating scene and what I definitely want in a partner.”

“When you’re young, you live to date or be in a relationship because society does such a good job of making you think you’re not complete unless you have a partner. When you mature emotionally, you realize that you are perfect unto thyself.”

In contrast, single persons also mentioned barriers to dating. These vary quite widely. Some cited difficulties meeting people due to their age, family, and time pressures; lack of desirable people to date; fear for their safety and of sexually transmitted diseases or AIDS; health problems or disabilities; and internal barriers such as problems with self-esteem, fear of rejection, or lack of trust.

Playing the field was not common among singles in general. Among those who dated, slightly less than half dated more than one person in a year, and slightly more than half dated one person only. The best sources of dates were meeting new people through friends, relatives, and coworkers, but singles organizations, matchmaking services, and online services are emerging avenues—as frequently mentioned as the church—for finding dates.

Singles in their 40s date more frequently than singles in their 60s. In general, however, spending a romantic evening with one’s partner or going on

a date occurred often for 1 in 10 singles and never for more than 3 in 10 singles, with women saying never more than men. Likewise, making love or never doing so corresponded with the frequency of spending a romantic evening or going on a date. To put this in perspective, about 6 in 10 singles reported often watching TV alone.

Gender Divide

The gender divide is markedly apparent in dating and courtship during midlife and later life. Women were more likely to date to have someone with whom to do things; while among men, sexual activity was a more important reason for dating. Although a small minority, 5 times as many men (11 percent) as women (2 percent) in the AARP study said that their major reason for dating was to fulfill their sexual needs. Furthermore, 1 in 10 men wanted to have sex on the first date, which was 10 times the rate for women (10 percent versus 1 percent). Indeed, single men were not too happy with the frequency of their sexual activity, while women were more likely to say that it was just right.

Of much interest is the fact that men tended to prefer and date women who were younger than they were. In contrast, at least a third of women, perhaps for a lack of older men or because they really meant it, said they wanted to date younger men.

Men and women were also clearly different in their characteristics, attitudes, and dating and courtship behaviors. Single men may be seen through four different personas. There are shy guys who are likely to be either widowed or never married, who are interested in dating but may not be trying to date or have given up trying because of shyness or problems finding a date. Their lack of self-confidence seems to keep them from meeting new people, making it more difficult to find women to date. These men may also be in poor health and not quite as optimistic about the future as others their age. Dreamers are likely to be looking hard for dates but not having much luck, partly because of their desire to date physically attractive women while at the same time meeting few potential partners. They do try to find dates more aggressively than the shy guys. Swashbucklers are likely to be active, healthy, confident men who like the single

life. They date more and have more sex than the shy guys and dreamers. They like to play the field, may have multiple relationships, and resist women who push for commitment. The fourth group of single men can be called the Romeos. They tend to be happy, optimistic, and self-confident like the swashbucklers but are more apt to be in a committed relationship. They engage in a lot of sexual activity and tend to have no dating problems.

Single women, on the other hand, fall into slightly different categories in their dating attitudes and behaviors. Passionate lovers are healthy and likely to be in good financial shape. They also tend to be romantically involved with someone, engaged in a lot of sexual activity, and likely to have few or no dating problems. Women in search of dates and sexual partnership comprise another group. These women are more likely to be divorced, active, healthy, and more affluent than the average single woman. Yet as their persona implies, their biggest frustrations are not knowing where to meet people or meeting too few people to date. The aspiring Cinderellas face many challenges, including poor health and finances. They tend to have a dimmer outlook on life and the future than other single women. Some may have suffered depression and have inactive lifestyles. Although some may have given up interest in dating, others want dates or want someone who will take care of them. The last type of female persona is the satisfied single, typically widowed and retired. Satisfied singles miss having someone around with whom to do things and want company. Nevertheless, they are content and are not necessarily and actively looking for dates. However, they are daters in waiting, open to dating if the right person comes along.

Conclusion

As the median age of the population increases and as people lead longer lives, the trend is toward more people dating and courting in midlife and the later years. Women dating younger men may be an increasing trend as well if women continue to live longer than men. Women and men can look younger, and perhaps more appealing as dating partners, longer now with better anti-aging cosmetics on the market and cosmetic surgery and other procedures readily available.

Although the AARP studies have uncovered important insights into midlife and later life dating and courtship, more research can provide a better understanding of other issues associated with such pairings, adding to knowledge not only about the people in the midst of it but also about the reactions of their children and other family members. Complications in family life can occur when a divorced or widowed parent or grandparent enters a dating relationship. Furthermore, new ways of meeting and dating people, with the advent of the Internet and online matchmaker Web sites as well as other developments of the 21st century, are becoming increasingly common, yet the implications, risks, and rewards of meeting dates that way are not yet fully known. Finally, an increase in HIV-infected people in midlife and later life is occurring because many daters do not consider themselves susceptible and do not use protective measures. Research on effective means of educating middle-aged and older adults about prevention of sexually transmitted diseases is a crucial research focus. In short, more and deeper inquiry is needed to delve into the pleasures of dating and courtship in midlife and later life and into the problematic issues these bring.

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See also Couples in Later Life; Couples in Middle Age; Family Relationships in Late Adulthood; Family Relationships in Middle Adulthood; Sex and Love; Sexuality

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DATING RELATIONSHIPS IN ADOLESCENCE AND YOUNG ADULTHOOD

Although friendship and peer relations hold great importance for adolescents and young adults, dating experiences represent fundamentally new relationship terrain during this phase of life. This entry explores the character of early romantic relationships, focusing on what is known about factors influencing variations in the timing and characteristics of dating involvement, and some of the consequences of dating for understanding adolescents' and young adults' well-being and behavioral choices.

Definition

In earlier eras, courtship was highly structured and typically orchestrated and supervised by an adolescent or young adult's parents. In addition, the primary purpose of heterosexual socializing was to forge a bond that culminated in a marriage proposal. Contemporary dating relationships, in contrast, lack the heavily scripted and managed qualities of these earlier liaisons and especially in adolescence, frequently are not considered by young people as a gateway to an eventual marriage. Instead, dating relationships fill needs for companionship and fun, exploration of sexual feelings and the desire for intimacy, and even status enhancement. Yet research has also documented that adolescents and young adults accord much importance to their dating relationships, as over time romantic partners become an increasingly key source of positive and negative emotions, reference, and influence. Recognizing that dating does not necessarily connote participating in specific activities (dinner and a movie) or levels of involvement (going steady), however, a working definition some researchers use is simply when one likes someone and he or she likes that person back. This definition reflects that a degree of reciprocation is necessary; that is, absent this shared element, the young person can be considered to have a crush or unrequited love. This definition also distinguishes dating relationships from casual sexual contacts, where positive regard for the other is not prerequisite.

The Characteristics of Dating Relationships

A helpful way to describe the characteristics of early romantic relationships is to compare them to the same-gender friendships that are also an important feature of this phase of the life course. Whereas friendships are most often forged on the basis of similarity, romantic relationships more commonly bridge differences. In addition, young people have a backlog of experience in how to conduct a friendship relationship but almost by definition lack experience in the specifics of developing romantic ties. Accordingly, researchers have noted that while friendships are typically considered an arena of social support and comfort during this time, the dating world is more often a source of uncertainty and anxiety. For example, friendships are often characterized by high levels of intimate self-disclosure. In contrast, young people often experience awkwardness and a lack of confidence as they begin to develop romantic ties.

At the same time, romantic relationships often engender heightened emotionality that contrasts further with the more settled world of friendship. Dating relationships have the potential to include various forms of sexual intimacy and, more generally, to become a special attachment. These features of dating relations are far from inevitable, however, and average durations of early romantic ties support the young person's view that dating relationships are relatively more precarious. Even within the context of ongoing relationships, different interests are common and a source of further uncertainty and potential distress.

Another distinction is that, while young people can successfully navigate multiple friendships, issues of exclusivity and commitment loom larger in the world of romantic attachments. It is widely recognized that dating is a period for discovery and exploration; yet norms often discourage the practice of dating more than one person at a time. Research shows that a majority of young people believe that it is wrong to date more than one person, but statistics also reveal that flirting with someone else while dating a particular romantic partner and even seeing someone else are relatively common occurrences. The lack of specificity of dating relationships (i.e., one is not betrothed or married) and the many opportunities presented by contemporary youth culture undoubtedly contribute to

these patterns. Yet research has also shown that jealousy is quite common, and real or imagined infidelities are a major source of interpersonal conflict in dating relationships.

Sources of Variation in the Timing and Character of Dating Experiences

Adolescents and young adults vary considerably in the timing of their initial entry into the dating world and in the character of these experiences. Early physical maturation is associated with an earlier onset of dating for both male and female adolescents, and youths who are considered popular are also more likely to begin dating earlier relative to their less socially advantaged counterparts. Research has also shown that youths whose early relationships include cross-sex friendships are more likely to begin to date at an earlier age, and some family factors have also been linked to dating patterns. For example, a lack of parental supervision is associated with earlier dating, and the adolescent's more general risk profile (e.g., alcohol use) is also associated with earlier heterosexual involvement.

Consistent with the logic of attachment theories, the parent-child relationship is an important source of individual differences in the nature of romantic relationships. Researchers, however, have also explored other sources of variation, including factors such as age, gender, and race/ethnicity as influences on the qualities of dating experiences. Some researchers have depicted early dating relationships as relatively shallow and superficial, noting that some young people can be considered dating only because they have declared that they are a couple. In such instances, the two parties may never have been alone together or participated in any activities that would be considered a date in the more traditional sense. Researchers have also suggested that middle school or junior high age youths, due to their general lack of experience in this domain, may be reluctant to be themselves when they are with someone in whom they have a romantic interest, a withholding process that may inhibit the development of more mature forms of intimacy. Indeed, research has documented that older youths engage in higher levels of intimate self-disclosure with their romantic partners, are

more likely to rely on them for tangible and social support, and are somewhat less invested in the status implications of their dating choices. Developmental shifts also occur in basic patterns of socializing. Early relationships often involve interacting within the context of larger friendship groups, while later on romantic relationships become increasingly exclusive and dyadic. But while studies clearly show age trends in the direction of more complex and intimate relationships, some recent research highlights that even the earliest dating relationships are considered meaningful to the young people who participate in them. Thus, dating and romance are considered by most teens to be a major preoccupation and source of both positive and negative emotions.

The literature on early romantic relationships has long posited gender differences in the centrality of romantic ties and in the ways in which they are experienced. Adding to the general notion that girls and women are fundamentally more relationally oriented relative to their male counterparts, Eleanor Maccoby focused attention on gender differences in the nature of the friendship experiences that typically precede the process of crossing over into heterosexual territory. Maccoby argued that girls often develop close dyadic friendships and learn cooperative ways of relating to one another that contrast with boys' styles of play and friendship. This author suggests that the emphasis on competition and the one-up style of discourse common in many male friendship groups influences the nature of romantic ties, as males tend to transport their dominant interaction style into these new relationships. This potentially influences the dynamics within dating relationships, as it contributes to inequalities of power and may be associated with increases in girls' depression. A related theme is that boys are frequently socialized by other males to focus more on sexual conquest than on relationships and the development of intimacy.

Although these broad patterns have received empirical support, particularly in ethnographic studies, some analyses of survey data do not accord entirely with this portrait of gender differences. For example, in a recent study of adolescent respondents, boys reported less confidence and more awkwardness or reticence in communication with their romantic partner and scored lower on perceived power in the relationship; no significant

differences were observed in responses to questions indexing feelings of love for the partner. Studies focused on samples of young adults have noted similar results. Several studies of university students have shown that most romantic relationships, whether based on self-reports or researcher observations, would be characterized as egalitarian, followed in frequency by a power balance that favored the female partner. In addition, these studies of college populations do not typically find large disparities by gender in reports of passionate love for romantic partners. Some researchers have noted that specific subgroups of males do fit the profile of disinterested players, but it is important to highlight that this does not characterize the relationship experiences of a majority of adolescent boys and young men.

Fewer studies have explored the role of other social characteristics such as socioeconomic status and race/ethnicity on the nature of adolescent dating relationships, but some theorists have posited differences and a small number of studies have been conducted. Some researchers have suggested that, since lower status youths are less likely to succeed in the educational and later on in the occupational arenas, they may invest more heavily in their interpersonal relationships. According to this logic, the romantic relationships of disadvantaged youths should, on average, be more intense and long lasting than those of more advantaged youths who typically have more diversified interests and a greater focus on long-term goals. An alternative perspective is that peer norms in disadvantaged communities tend to foster a player lifestyle, where individuals gain the status they may be denied in the larger society by accruing a large number of sexual partners. In addition, the lack of meaningful employment available for those living in disadvantaged areas may deter adolescents and young adults from considering dating relationships as a realistic gateway to a stable, economically viable partnership (i.e., marriage relationship). Elijah Anderson and other researchers have observed these attitudes in the inner city areas they have studied, although some survey data show that this player world view is far from ubiquitous, even in disadvantaged areas. Other analyses reveal that the average durations of dating relationships of African-American and White adolescents are generally similar, and reports of feelings of love for the

partner do not differ significantly across these subgroups. These studies document, however, that African-American youths report spending somewhat lower amounts of time with partners and lower levels of intimate self-disclosure to them. These findings accord with other studies that have focused on how adolescents spend their time. For example, researchers have documented that African-American youth relative to their White counterparts on average report less time interacting with friends and more time with family members. Differences by race/ethnicity have also been noted in parental supervision and other parenting practices; thus, it is useful to consider other social relationships in which youths are embedded as a way to understand more about patterns of dating associated with race/ethnicity or other cultural differences. More research is also needed on the qualities of romantic ties of youths from Hispanic, Asian, and other race/ethnic groups, as African-American teens have been more often the subject of empirical investigations.

Consequences of Dating Involvement

Early research on the consequences of dating often centered on negative aspects of these experiences. For example, several studies showed that early dating, particularly dating an older male, was associated with girls' greater involvement in delinquency and more trouble in school. Another researcher found that early maturing girls who dated had lower self-esteem than their less developed, socially advanced counterparts. Also fostering a generally negative portrait, studies often show that early dating is correlated with other risky behaviors such as alcohol and drug use. Finally, entry into the dating world is associated with greater odds of becoming sexually active, findings that also fit into a problem perspective on dating involvement.

More recent research on the consequences of dating for adolescent and young adult well-being and behavior presents a more complex picture. One of the limitations of early studies is that researchers often presented a simple contrast of daters with nondaters or focused on early age of dating involvement. Contemporary research has increasingly given attention to qualities of the relationships

formed, characteristics of the romantic partner, and other qualifiers of effects of dating experiences. For example, starting to date has been linked with increases in adolescent depression, particularly for girls; yet research has shown that these changes are often linked with increased conflict with parents, dynamics that actually explain much of the dating-depression link. Researchers have also begun to explore specific qualities and dynamics of relationships that may be associated with positive or negative consequences for the individual. Breaking up, cheating and lack of trust, and relationship violence are dynamics that have been linked with emotional distress, but researchers have also shown that romantic involvement is associated with positive emotions and feelings of social competence. One study, for example, documented that romantic partners were reported as a source of positive emotions more often than was the case for parents or same-gender friends.

Research on the connections between dating and delinquency involvement has also progressed beyond the dating–nondating distinction. Relying on information gleaned from adolescents as well as from their romantic partners, researchers showed that the partner’s level of delinquency involvement was significantly related to teens’ own reported involvement, even after traditional predictors such as the delinquency of friends and parenting practices were taken into account. Studies of effects of dating on academic achievement have documented similar findings, in that the romantic partner’s grades were found to be a significant predictor of an adolescent’s own grades. In the latter study, effects were observed for male and female participants, but the association was stronger for male adolescents. This line of research indicates that the particular attitudes and behaviors of the romantic partner need to be taken into account, as researchers move toward a more comprehensive understanding of the consequences of dating experiences.

Another important line of inquiry that has provided a new perspective on dating consequences is focused on sexual behaviors. Although media treatments have frequently decried the end of formal dating and suggested that teens and young adults prefer casual hook-ups to committed relationships, social science research documents that most adolescent and young adult sexual activity takes place within a dating context. Such basics of

romantic relationships as duration of the relationship are reliable predictors of the odds of becoming sexually intimate with a given partner, and research shows that specific qualities such as feelings of love and levels of intimate self-disclosure are also associated with greater odds of having sexual intercourse. This research is potentially important because it shows how relationship experiences generally considered positive from a developmental standpoint may be associated with outcomes that have typically been understood as risky or problematic. This suggests the utility of including relationship-based programming for teens as a key element of prevention and intervention efforts. It is also important to note that these studies of relationship context have shown that positive relationship qualities were significant predictors of male as well as female sexual behavior. This provides some support for the notion that aspects of the gender divide (i.e., boys want sex, girls want romance) may be somewhat overstated.

New Directions in Research on Dating

Most of the studies described above have focused on a current or most recent dating relationship or in earlier research, on a single aspect of dating such as the age when teens begin to date. Yet researchers recognize that a number of different relationships are typically formed across the period of adolescence and young adulthood. Thus, there is increased interest in capturing trends or overall styles of dating that better reflect the whole of the young person’s romantic and sexual experiences. This is particularly important as researchers seek to link features of early dating to later adult outcomes, including the likelihood, stability, and quality of marriage and cohabiting relationships. Currently, research on adolescent and young adult relationships coexist as rather separate literatures, but longitudinal studies provide the opportunity to examine life course continuity as well as change in the character of intimate attachments. This research can also examine developmental shifts in the relative salience of parents, peers, and romantic partners as respondents mature into adulthood. Research on the dating patterns of mature adults is also a logical next step, as romantic involvement for many becomes less routinely viewed as a pathway into marriage relationships.

More focused studies of underresearched groups are also needed, including additional research on the romantic experiences of Hispanic and Asian youth. Some research on gay, lesbian, and bisexual teens' experiences has been conducted, but more emphasis has been placed on early sexual rather than on romantic relationship experiences. Researchers have pointed out that due to feelings of stigma and fear of social exclusion, teens may have greater difficulty developing and maintaining romantic ties. Traditional high school settings may also limit the adolescent's exposure to potential partners. A number of studies have focused on depression levels, suicide ideation, and substance use among gay teens, but as in the study of heterosexual involvement, more research is needed on variations in the character and effects of their romantic and sexual experiences.

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See also Adolescence, Romantic Relationships in; Dating, First Date; Family Relationships in Adolescence; Friendships, Cross-Sex; Friendships in Adolescence; Rejection Sensitivity

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DECEPTION AND LYING

In the United States, deception and lying are widely condemned but widely practiced in all types of human relationships. The nature of a relationship affects and is affected by the frequency of deception, the motivation for deception, the subject matter of the deception, the interactive manifestations of the deception process, the awareness of and desire to detect deception, the accuracy of that detection, the methods used to detect deception, and the consequences of the deception.

The terms deception and lying are often used interchangeably, but deception is normally considered a broader term, encompassing many tricky and misleading behaviors, including lying. Attributions about the existence of a lie, whether it is good or bad, and to what extent it should be sanctioned are most often based on perceptions of (a) the communicator's intentions and/or motives, (b) the normative expectations for communication in the situation, and (c) the consequences resulting from the communicator's behavior. This entry discusses how lies are studied, why people lie, lies that may initiate and sustain relationships, lie detection, and the relational consequences that accrue from lying.

Studying Lies

In order to systematically study liar behavior, lie detector behavior, and the effects of lies, researchers generate lies in various ways. Videotaping people lying or telling the truth about their identity or their attitudes is the most common method of studying low-stakes lies. High-stakes lies, where success or failure of the lie is associated with major consequences, are often derived from cheating or stealing formats. For example, research participants are given an opportunity to take \$50 from a wallet in an isolated room. If they take the money and fool an interviewer by lying about it, they can keep it. If the interviewer catches them in a lie, they are told they will have to sit in a small, dark, and cold room for 2 hours with periodic bursts of high decibel sounds, although no one receives the punishment. The videotapes of these liars have been helpful in generating knowledge, but there are other aspects of relationship lies that are not accounted for with these methods.

For example, individual liar behavior does not help researchers understand how relationship partners jointly construct lies—through an implicit or explicit collaboration. In addition, laboratory-induced lies are limited to a single encounter, whereas family, work, and intimate relationships provide repeated opportunities to interact—providing both the liar and lie detector with additional opportunities to accomplish their goal. Many lies in close relationships do not even involve false accounts; they use secrets and silences in order to create a false reality for their partner. Covert lies (self-deception) and lies designed to benefit one's partner are also types of relationship lies in need of further study.

Motivation for Lying

Lies occur for a variety of reasons, but the most commonly cited motive is to avoid punishment or to protect oneself from harm. Other reasons include trying to obtain something rewarding, to protect or help another person, to win admiration from others, to get out of an awkward or embarrassing social situation, to maintain privacy, to exercise power over others, to fulfill social expectations, or to have fun.

Lying and the Initiation of Relationships

Outside of any particular relationship context, men and women rate trustworthiness and honesty as more desirable partner characteristics for both short- and long-term romantic relationships than an exciting personality, good health, adaptability, dependability, sense of humor, kindness, and understanding. Despite surveys that extol the desirability of honesty, certain situational exigencies can easily lead to dishonest behavior. Being honest, for example, may be deemed less important than some other relationship goal such as building the self-esteem of one's partner, maintaining loyalty to a friend, or massaging truths that might hurt a loved one.

During the get-acquainted stage of relationship development, low-stakes lies are reportedly common. Each person is trying to present himself or herself in the best possible way. When research participants in one study were instructed to appear competent and likable when talking to a new person, they lied twice as much as those who were simply told to engage in a get-acquainted conversation. Both men and women say they would be willing to lie about their intelligence, personal appearance, personality traits, income, past relationship outcomes, and career skills to a prospective date who had a highly attractive face. For undesirable partners even names and addresses may not be accurately conveyed. Both men and women are willing to tell lies about their sexual history or a relationship competitor. Men often exaggerate their sexual experience with male friends, and women are likely to report fewer past sexual partners to a person who has long-term relationship potential. When one gender greatly outnumbers the other in a dating environment, the more plentiful gender is expected to tell more lies.

Lying in Close Relationships

Part of the reason close relationships are close is that each partner expects the other will protect rather than exploit their individual vulnerabilities and their relationship. Their emotional closeness generally acts as an inhibitor to wholly self-oriented lies. Thus, when perceptions of dishonesty in a close relationship increase, the perceiver's

relationship satisfaction and commitment is likely to decrease. Although they are not common, self-serving lies do exist in close relationships, and they often violate its core expectations so that their effects can be devastating.

The more common lies in close relationships are those told to support one's partner, to conceal negative feelings about one's partner, and those directed at outsiders for the benefit of the relationship. Lies that support, protect, and sustain their partners may mean such things as telling them what they want to hear, building and maintaining their self-esteem, or helping them accomplish their goals. Making claims about a partner's virtues is another form of deception if the claimant does not believe his or her partner actually has those virtues.

Detecting Lies

Accurately detecting the lies of strangers by observing their verbal and nonverbal behavior is usually reported to be just above chance (50 percent)—an average across studies of about 54 percent. Even this rate of lie detection, which is the result of averaging across truthful and deceptive messages, is inflated by the fact that people are far more accurate in identifying truthful messages than lies, thereby making the accurate detection of lies alone lower than chance. The closeness of a relationship can lead to greater accuracy or greater inaccuracy in detecting lies.

People expect their lies to be detected more often by people who know them well, and they often are. They expect it because they expect people in close relationships to be so familiar with their typical behavior that any deviations from that will be noticed and there is some evidence to support this belief. When suspicion of deceptive behavior is coupled with behavioral familiarity in close relationships, accuracy in detecting deception can also increase. But suspicion can be problematic if the suspected liar is not lying and resents the distrust that his or her partner's suspicion illustrates. Suspicion can also create more suspicion to the point where neither person trusts the other. Suspicious behavior also has a tendency to put the suspect on guard—possibly leading him or her to spend more time and energy covering up clues and creating new lies.

Since serious lies are not expected in close relationships (there is a strong truth bias), liars may not initially be scrutinized carefully. Familiarity with behavioral routines can also be an advantage to the liar. Liars in close relationships know a lot of the same information that the lie detectors know and will use that familiarity for their own ends during the lie and lie detection process. Accuracy research to date is largely based on detached observers judging monologues of other speakers, but accuracy may be impeded in actual, ongoing close relationships because the detector is actively interacting with the liar while trying to assess his or her truthfulness. Perhaps the single biggest contributor to decreased accuracy in lie detection in close relationships occurs when a detector puts a higher value on the need to maintain relationship closeness than the need to uncover a lie. People in close relationships are certainly not averse to practicing motivated inaccuracy when faced with partner behavior that poses a threat to their relationship. In fact, relationship partners who tend to seek relationship threatening information are also less trusting, more suspicious, and more likely to terminate their relationships.

Detecting lies by observing the behavior of one's partner has been the predominant research paradigm to date, but other research indicates the two most common methods for uncovering lies in everyday relationships are (1) getting information from a third party and (2) finding physical evidence that contradicts the liar's story.

Relational Consequences

Both deception and truth telling can result in positive or negative consequences. Disclosure of truths or the keeping of secrets can contribute to marital satisfaction and closeness or detract from it. It all depends on how, why, when, and where it is done. What one views as the consequences of lying and deception in close relationships depends on what type of lie is in question (altruistic vs. self-interest), what is being lied about (an affair vs. a false compliment), and when the judgment is made (upon discovery vs. much later), as well as other factors. The assessed consequences of close relationship lies will also vary depending on who is making the assessment. Liars often view their

own behavior as far less harmful, offensive, and consequential than the target of the lie. Liars often describe extenuating circumstances that they view as justification for their lies, but targets often do not share those views.

Even though most of the consequences of deception in close relationships are examined in the context of discovered or revealed lies, there are lies that go undetected. To the extent that the lie or lies told have powerful effects on the liar (e.g., guilt, anger, fear, embarrassment), these effects may manifest themselves in almost any dialogue with the liar's partner. Without a satisfactory explanation of these emotions, they can become just as divisive a force to the relationship as the lie itself.

Lies told to cover a major relationship transgression and lies that betray the bonds of closeness are capable of creating a wide variety of negative consequences for the relationship and its participants—for example, hurt feelings, lowered self-esteem, confusion, suspicion, or a desire for revenge on the part of the lie's target; a loss of trust, respect, and/or credibility for the liar; and a lowered level of satisfaction and/or commitment to the relationship.

Current research does not tell researchers a great deal about how partners to a relationship renegotiate closeness following a lie that has been detected and seriously threatens their relationship. Factors that may work to the advantage of couples who cope effectively with a potentially harmful relationship lie (or lies) include (a) a history of the liar doing many things with positive intentions and in the best interests of the relationship; (b) a plea from the liar for forgiveness and repeatedly demonstrating his or her commitment to rebuilding relational closeness; (c) a situation in which the discovery of the lie opened up issues for the couple that needed to be discussed for the survival and welfare of the relationship; (d) a situation in which the lie, by bringing the relationship to the edge of disaster, reminded both partners how much they wanted to save the relationship; and/or (e) a situation in which the process of mutually solving the problem or problems created by the lie served to reestablish and strengthen relationship bonds.

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See also Communication, Nonverbal; Lies in Close and Casual Relationships; Privacy; Self-Presentation

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DEPENDENCE

From the moment of birth, individuals depend on others. Dependence in human relationships refers to how much one relies on another person to obtain the highest possible level of rewarding and desirable things and to avoid undesirable and costly things—that is, to obtain the best possible outcomes. Dependence on a particular other increases to the extent that an individual's needs cannot be satisfied by a different person. Just as one country might be dependent on a particular country to fulfill its need for oil—the arrangement with that particular country is better than with any other country—so too might one person depend on a relationship partner to fulfill important relationship needs that are better satisfied in that relationship than in others. As such, an individual's

dependence on another person is an indicator of how much the other person directly influences the quality of the individual's experiences.

This entry examines dependence in the context of ongoing relationships, with a particular focus on romantic relationships. Dependence on relationship partners is compared against relationship satisfaction and relationship commitment, a distinction is made between voluntary and nonvoluntary dependence, and the general meaning of dependence used in this entry is distinguished from outcome dependence.

Relationship Dependence Versus Other Relationship Characteristics

People strive for gratifying and lasting human relationships. Whether relationships are satisfying and enduring rests on how individuals see their relationship and particularly on the standards of comparison they adopt.

When it comes to gauging whether a relationship is satisfying, it is common to compare the current relationship with past ones, relationships of close others, or any relationships that are salient in shaping one's ideas of what one might expect in a relationship. In short, one indirectly or directly considers what one deserves, which is referred to as one's comparison level. A relationship that meets or exceeds expectations is satisfying; one that falls short of expectations is dissatisfying. Moreover, the same relationship may go through different phases, with changes and shifts over time in satisfaction. For example, as two individuals begin dating, they may feel happy with the way things are going. One individual may reflect on the fact that his or her partner is more kind, witty, and trustworthy than others he or she has dated; the other may appreciate having a partner who is more thoughtful and physically attractive than what might have been expected. Alternatively, each may acknowledge feeling satisfied without giving much thought as to why. As their commitment deepens and they grow increasingly accustomed to each other, their feelings may ebb and flow. At times, minor personal idiosyncrasies may become annoyances, and the lack of novelty may trigger some boredom; at other times, knowing that each puts the other first and trusts the other to do the same brings about peace of mind and feelings of fulfillment.

In contrast to judging whether a relationship is satisfying, when it comes to gauging how much one needs a relationship (i.e., how dependent one is), individuals more often consider how the current relationship compares against the situation they would likely be in if they were not in the current relationship—either being in an alternate relationship or being alone. The alternative situation used in comparison has been referred to as the comparison level for alternatives. A person is likely to leave the current relationship (or change the current state of the relationship) if it is anticipated that an alternative arrangement would yield higher well-being in the long run—that is, higher outcomes over time than obtained in the current relationship.

As such, dependence is strongly related to being committed to a relationship: Both refer to a strong inclination to continue a relationship. They differ in how the terms are commonly used: Whereas dependence is more commonly used to indicate an objectively defined state in which a person needs to remain in a relationship, commitment is more commonly used to indicate a person's subjective feelings that favor remaining in a relationship, feelings that may reflect lacking alternative situations, being satisfied, and other considerations (e.g., friends, children, past memories, future plans, shared property and tangible objects, all of which are worse off or altogether gone in alternative situations).

Dependence defined as needing a relationship differs from the sense of dependence that implies personal feelings of inadequacy, an inability to be independent from and assertive with others, and consequently, a need to rely on others because of personal limitations (i.e., symptoms of a person diagnosed with dependent personality disorder). One difference between these two senses of dependence is in the pervasiveness of the need to rely on others. Relationship dependence typically refers to relying on a particular relationship to fulfill certain needs vis-à-vis any relationship—that is, it involves relying on a particular partner because something works particularly well in the given relationship. By contrast, individuals with dependent personalities exhibit an exaggerated reliance on others in all of their romantic (or other close) relationships. More importantly, individuals with dependent personalities rely on others to cope with perceived or real personal inadequacies, thus making their dependence reflect an undesirable trait. Relationship

dependence, by contrast, reflects a person's willingness to risk being vulnerable by relying on another, vulnerability which often is met by dependence and commitment on the part of the partner and has the desirable effect of creating a highly and mutually committed relationship.

Voluntary Versus Nonvoluntary Dependence

Although gratifying and lasting human relationships are desirable, the combination of gratifying and lasting is not always easily achieved. Some relationships indeed do last by virtue of being satisfying, for the most part. Voluntary dependence occurs when partners are happy in their dependent state; there may be several factors keeping them in the relationship, but ultimately they want to be with each other. In contrast, nonvoluntary dependence occurs when partners feel or are forced to remain in a highly dissatisfying relationship; although costs in the current relationship may be high in light of what one typically would expect to experience (i.e., one's comparison level), costs associated with leaving the relationship are even higher. For example, individuals who are not financially independent and must rely on a highly abusive partner for their livelihood likely experience a combination of high dependence and low satisfaction. If or when alternatives to the current relationship become viable, abuse victims take steps to leave their abusive partner so long as they feel sufficiently emotionally detached from the relationship.

Nonvoluntary dependence may characterize many different types of relationships, not just those in which a person is financially dependent. An individual may have few alternatives in meeting different types of needs and thus may have to tolerate lower outcomes to satisfy those needs. For example, given gender differences in life expectancies, the pool of potential male partners shrinks more than the pool of female partners. This difference creates a greater risk for nonvoluntary dependence among those seeking elderly men; feeling an acute need for companionship may cause one to endure annoying habits or other undesirable partner characteristics (i.e., partner characteristics that make outcomes fall below one's comparison level) in light of a lack of alternatives. Another example concerns efforts to

fulfill sexual needs in a social setting that has high rates of sexually transmitted diseases; to the extent that a person puts a higher premium on having a safe sexual partner than on fulfilling other needs that create satisfying relationships (e.g., a need to feel loved and well regarded), this person may come to feel stuck in a dissatisfying relationship.

Outcome Dependence

The term dependence, specifically outcome dependence, has also been used to characterize the association between any two people—even strangers—who find themselves in an interaction in which they affect each other's outcomes. Each is said to be dependent to the extent that he or she relies on the interaction partner for desired outcomes in a specific situation. In situations involving no dependence, a person does not rely on the interaction partner in any way for desired outcomes (independence); in situations reflecting dependence, a person's desired outcome is influenced either solely by the partner's actions (referred to as fate control), or by the ability of the person and partner to combine their actions in desirable ways (referred to as behavior control).

There are a myriad of situations in which one's immediate outcomes are fully at the mercy of another person (i.e., high fate control as the basis of dependence), such as watching a fellow basketball team player score points while one is sitting on the bench or having a business partner attract new business in a sector other than one's own. There are also situations in which one's immediate outcomes are partly at the mercy of another but require coordinated action with the other (i.e., high behavior control as the basis of dependence), such as relying on a basketball team player to pass the ball for an alley-oop score or having a business partner deliver part of a joint presentation to potential clients. Situations of outcome dependence also differ in other characteristics, such as whether there is a lot at stake in the situation (high dependence) or very little at stake (low dependence) and whether both partners are equally or unequally affected—the partner affected more has more to lose and thus has less power.

Is outcome dependence (having outcomes that are affected by a partner's actions) different from

the type of dependence described above (relying on a partner to fulfill important needs)? Both senses of the word *dependence* refer to having one's own well-being yoked to another person's actions. The two senses of dependence differ, however, in time frame. The term outcome dependence is commonly used to indicate being affected by another's behavior in a particular interaction; as such, it is used to characterize a given interaction situation. More general dependence refers more broadly to being affected by another's behaviors over repeated interactions; as such, it is used to characterize an ongoing relationship. The two senses of dependence also differ in that outcome dependence can be used to characterize an interaction situation between two people who have never met and who will go their separate ways after their interaction (e.g., on a flight, being affected by the person seated in the adjacent seat), whereas general dependence would not be used to characterize an association between strangers.

Despite these differences in the use of the word dependence, the core theoretical idea of dependence is the state in which one person's well-being is partly or fully at the mercy of another person. Importantly, people often act differently toward an interaction partner when they know they will interact with that person in the future. Specifically, people try to act in ways that further the type of relationship they want to have in the future with that person. In this way, specific interactions become linked to more general impressions that drive future interactions; the rewards or costs incurred as a result of a partner's behavior in a specific interaction inform more general impressions of how much one will rely on the partner for one's future well-being.

Ximena B. Arriaga

See also Abused Women Remaining in Relationships; Commitment, Predictors and Outcomes; Commitment, Theories and Typologies; Interdependence Theory; Satisfaction in Relationships

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DEPENDENCY PARADOX

It is generally believed that yielding to expressions of dependence creates more dependence and less self-sufficiency. In fact, in many Western cultures, dependence on others is viewed as a sign of weakness and something that should be discouraged. However, recent research supports an alternative view of dependence on others, which is termed the *dependency paradox*. According to this view, true independence and self-sufficiency emerges because of an individual's ability to depend on close relationship partners in times of need: Relationships are critical in the lives of human beings, everyone must depend on others in certain circumstances to function optimally, and the degree to which this need is accepted by relationship partners reduces the frequency of this need. The following entry reviews theory and evidence for the dependency paradox.

Theory

The dependency paradox states that reliance and dependence on significant others is important for optimal functioning because it gives people the confidence they need to pursue personal goals, engage in independent exploration, and take on challenging activities. These behaviors, in turn, contribute to learning, discovery, increases in competency and self-esteem, and personal growth. The dependency paradox was extrapolated from Attachment Theory, which emphasizes the critical importance of relationships across the life span and asserts that attachment behavior (reliance on significant others)

should not be discouraged but instead should be accepted as an intrinsic part of human nature and acknowledged for its role in promoting optimal human functioning. A major proposition of this theory is that throughout the life span the perceived availability of a responsive attachment figure (also called a caregiver or relationship partner) remains the source of feeling secure—and only when a person is feeling secure will he or she be able to explore most effectively, confidently, and autonomously. Perceived availability is important because responsive attachment figures are internalized as available, and this internalization allows one to move forward without repeatedly checking on the attachment figure's availability.

The dependency paradox emerges from Attachment Theory and indicates that an attachment figure's (or relationship partner's) acceptance of dependence creates less rather than more dependence. Contrary to popular opinion, individuals who are not accepting of dependence are most likely to foster anxious dependence in their relationship partners. The logic behind this idea is that it is much easier for people to engage in behaviors that will enhance their personal growth (e.g., accepting challenges, exploring, trying new things, and taking risks) when they know someone is available for comfort and assistance if things go wrong. This is because an individual who feels confident in the availability and accessibility of his or her secure base does not have to cling to that base as much as an individual who lacks such confidence. Just as a driver without an insurance policy may be reluctant to drive long distances or take unnecessary risks because of the heavy price if something were to go wrong, so too are individuals reluctant to take independent excursions away from a relationship partner who does not provide good coverage in the case of an emergency. In this sense, the ready availability and accessibility of a relationship partner is necessary for optimal functioning.

Note About Overdependence and Underdependence

The dependency paradox views dependency as adaptive when it occurs because there is a need for it (e.g., because an individual is distressed and/or in need of support). Dependency that occurs in the

absence of need may be viewed as overdependence. A complete lack of dependence on others (even in times of need) may be viewed as underdependence and has been called compulsive self-reliance. Theoretically, both overdependence and underdependence result from having attachment figures (or relationship partners) who are not accepting of dependence and who do not consistently provide sensitive-responsive support when needed. Overdependence represents a means of clinging to a person whose availability and acceptance is uncertain, whereas underdependence (compulsive self-reliance) represents a means of coping with a relationship history in which attachment figures have been consistently unresponsive and unaccepting of dependency needs. These strategies may be based in one's relationship history (and carried forward into new relationships where they are no longer adaptive), or they may arise from experiences in current relationships.

Evidence

Evidence for the dependency paradox has been found for children and adults. With regard to children, by end of the first year, mothers who attended promptly to their crying babies had babies who cried much less than the babies of mothers who let them cry. Evidence also indicates that children raised by responsive attachment figures (e.g., tuned in to the child's signals, interpret them correctly, and respond promptly and appropriately) are able to explore in a confident way because they know whom to seek out in times of need. In contrast, children raised by attachment figures who are less sensitive and responsive (e.g., fail to notice the child's signals, misinterpret signals when they are noticed, and respond tardily, inappropriately, or not at all) show signs of restricted exploration because they are less confident about receiving care when needed. Similarly, for adolescents, researchers have found that independence is most easily established not at the expense of attachment relationships with parents but against a backdrop of secure relationships with them.

As for adults, the dependency paradox has been tested in samples of married and dating couples using surveys that ask couple members to provide reports of each other's behaviors, videotaped

observations of couple members' behaviors during discussion and exploration activities, and longitudinal methods that follow couples over time. These studies examine one couple member's independent goal striving as a function of the other couple member's dependency acceptance. Collectively, this research provides strong empirical support for the paradoxical hypothesis that accepting dependence promotes independence. Specifically, reports of one partner's dependency acceptance (defined as responsiveness to the other's needs and sensitivity to the other's distress cues) was associated with reports of the other's perceived independence and self-efficacy, engagement in independent exploration, and ability to achieve independent goals. Also, during couples' discussions of personal goals for the future, one partner's dependency acceptance (communication of future availability and sensitive-responsive support provision) was associated with the other's autonomous functioning (e.g., confident exploration of independent goals). Additionally, individuals whose partners were accepting of dependence (as observed and reported at one point in time) experienced increases in independent functioning over 6 months, and they were more likely to have accomplished an important independent goal that had been identified 6 months earlier.

Applications

Because research on the dependency paradox indicates that individuals are able to engage in more activities, accomplish more goals, use their minds better, and function more autonomously when their dependency needs are supported, this knowledge can be applied in a broad range of domains to optimize the functioning and to promote the well-being of individuals and families. This knowledge may not only enhance relationships by making people more mindful of the impact of their behavior on others, but it may also be of great use to therapists, counselors, clinicians, and schools and businesses as they strive to increase the functioning of clients, students, and employees.

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See also Attachment Theory; Caregiving Across the Life Span; Dependence; Goal Pursuit, Relationship Influences; Social Support, Nature of

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DEPRESSION AND RELATIONSHIPS

Depression is a pervasive psychosocial problem that is a constellation of cognitive (e.g., difficulty concentrating), vegetative (e.g., loss of appetite), and affective (e.g., sad mood) symptoms. About 10 to 15 percent of the population will experience an episode of clinical depression at some point in their lives, and far more will suffer from subclinical levels of depression. There are many different causes and consequences of depression. Among these, social relationships appear to play an important role in the etiology, maintenance, and consequences of depression. This entry discusses interpersonal relationship problems that appear to be particularly problematic for people with depression and then explains some of the different reasons for these problems.

Relationship Problems and Depression

Scientists have identified numerous relationships that appear to be problematic for depressed people. For example, many people who are clinically depressed also experience marital distress. The marriages of people with depression tend to be laden with conflict, negatively toned communications, low levels of responsiveness, and difficulties with intimacy. Some married couples experience coercive processes in which one spouse's display of depressive behaviors, such as crying or making self-derogatory statements, is rewarded by the

other spouse who shows higher than normal levels of kindness, reduces demands, or temporarily stops hostile behaviors. In such couples, the relationship can actually maintain depressive behaviors, despite their otherwise negative effect on both spouses, because kindness and sympathy from the partner serve as a form of positive reinforcement and cessation of hostility, and demands from the partner can function as negative reinforcement. Both of these processes can prompt further depressive displays and cause frustration from a partner who inadvertently rewards the very depressive behavior that he or she would like to put an end to. There is some evidence to suggest that the quality of one's interpersonal relationships is more strongly associated with depression among women compared to men. However, the vast majority of the interpersonal processes outlined in this entry do not vary extensively as a function of sex—all are corrosive to the psychological well-being of women or men.

There are several reasons why the marriages of people with depression are marred by distress and dissatisfaction. First, the assortative mating effect happens when depressed people seek out other people with depression with whom to form a relationship. The amalgamation of two people's troubles and difficulties rarely forms the basis for a happy and contented relationship. Second, the shared stress effect occurs when the events that make one spouse depressed (e.g., loss of a job) also negatively affect the other spouse. Third, young people who are depressed sometimes exhibit truncated mate selection. The experience of depression appears to cause people to make hasty decisions to marry and to do so at a younger age. It is believed that this happens because young people with depression might see marriage as a way out of the difficult circumstances in which they otherwise find themselves. By marrying early, the mate selection process by which people carefully choose a potential partner is drastically shortened. This greatly increases the probability of later finding oneself in a distressed marriage.

Another relational context that appears to be disrupted by depression is that of a parent. Although much of the research on parenting and depression has focused on mothers, there is sufficient evidence to conclude that the experience of depression disrupts parenting by both mothers and fathers.

Parents with depression often have problems effectively relating to their children. For example, they tend to be less responsive to their children while interacting with them, exhibit fewer positive social behaviors, and complain to their children about their own problems as well as their child's behavior more than nondepressed parents do. These disrupted parenting behaviors appear to have negative consequences for children. The children of depressed parents show signs of rejection and agitation, even during infancy. They make less eye contact with their parent, express more negative emotion, and are less content than children who are with nondepressed parents. Parents afflicted with depression are 4 times more likely to have children who are depressed than are parents who are not depressed. This increased risk for depression among the offspring of depressed parents is the result of both genetic and environmental factors. The environmental factors include those disrupted parenting and social behaviors mentioned previously that apparently have depressogenic (i.e., depression inducing) effects on children.

Parental depression is clearly associated with remarkable problems in the parent-child relationship. However, it is also the case that people who are depressed often have a history of troubled relationships with their parents. Problematic experiences in the family of origin can reliably increase the risk for experiencing depression as a child while living in the family of origin, later in life as an adult, or both. These pathogenic experiences are generally the expression of maladaptive parenting. Adults who are currently depressed tend to describe their family of origin as rejecting, uncaring, and mired in conflicts. One family relationship dynamic that appears highly corrosive in terms of increasing risk for subsequent depression in offspring has been characterized as affectionless control. This occurs when parents are overly involved in and controlling of their children while at the same time express low care and concern for the child. The combination of parental overprotectiveness and low care seems paradoxical and creates emotional problems for the child. In such instances, the overprotectiveness of the parent appears to be motivated by concerns other than the child's actual welfare, such as the unfounded fears of the parent or projection of the parent's needs and concerns onto the child.

Child maltreatment can significantly predispose children to depression. Maltreatment in the form of neglect, physical abuse, or sexual abuse makes children about 4 times more likely to experience depression compared to those having no exposure to these noxious family experiences. Sometimes this depression is evident immediately while the child is still living in the family of origin. In other cases, the depression might appear later in life as the child progresses, or attempts to progress, to more advanced developmental stages of life (e.g., developing romantic relationships).

Other depressogenic family of origin patterns include unrealistically high parental expectations, extremely high or low family cohesion, low levels of social support from family members, and parental rejection. All of these family processes have been linked with increased levels of depression among the offspring from such families. It is important to note that the parent who might create an aversive environment for the child through these problematic behaviors is often the same parent who is passing on his or her genes to the child. Consequently, at least some of the psychological problems experienced by children exposed to maladaptive parenting could be the result of inheritance of genes that predispose the child to depression.

Relationship problems for depressed people are not confined to just the family context. Depressed people also have difficulties over the much larger domain of their personal relationships, including, for example, dating partners, friends, and roommates. One of the more common problems for people with depression is simply the lack of such relationships. People who have experienced depression over long periods of their lives will often lack many of the personal relationships that nondepressed people sometimes have in abundance. This is particularly unfortunate as the lack of a confidant is an important risk factor for depression. It is not necessarily the case that people need to have a high quantity of personal relationships in order to protect against the experience of depression. Rather, one or two high-quality relationships can, for many people, have a prophylactic effect by making the person less susceptible to episodes of depression.

People with depression tend to be dissatisfied with their friends and dating partners and seem to

engage in more conflict with them when compared to the relationships of people who do not have depression. Depressed people also report that their partners are more hostile and that they are frequently hurt or upset by them. It is important to note that these problems are most likely a complex combination of genuine problems in these relationships (e.g., conflict, unsupportive behaviors) along with depressed people's tendency to describe elements of their lives in negative terms. Cognitive theories of depression explain that the disorder is strongly associated with negative thoughts about the self, the world in general, and the future. Undoubtedly, this negative cognitive bias is responsible to at least some degree for reports of what appear to be the troubled personal relationships of people with depression.

Reasons for Relationship Problems in Depression

Depression and relationship problems clearly go hand in hand. Since the 1970s, social and behavioral scientists have worked to understand the many reasons for why depressed people have such trouble with their relationships. In one prominent theory, James Coyne argues that people with depression are unpleasant interaction partners. In fact, people with depression can induce a negative mood in other people, making them feel depressed as well. This phenomenon is known as *emotional contagion*. Because people do not enjoy spending time with others who bring them down, other people will often exhibit interpersonal rejection toward those with depression. Most people enjoy socializing but only with others who make them feel happy, excited, and interested. After interacting with a person who is depressed, many people prefer to avoid the depressed person in the future. This is likely one reason why people with depression often find themselves lacking intimate personal relationships. It is noteworthy that the interpersonal rejection of people with depression appears to be a fairly universal effect that cuts across many different types of personal relationships (e.g., friend, parent, spouse) and is even evident in interactions between strangers. There is something immediately apparent in the social behavior of depressed people that repels other people.

In an effort to explain exactly how and why people with depression tend to make others feel sad or depressed, scientists have focused on excessive reassurance seeking as an important interpersonal process in the maintenance of depression. This happens when the person with depression feels bad about himself or herself and frequently seeks reassurance from a relational partner. Partners will often provide this reassurance at first, although it may appear nongenuine to the person with depression. Eventually, this reassurance seeking becomes taxing and irritating to the relational partner, making him or her feel angry, sad, impatient, or upset with the depressed person.

Related to excessive reassurance seeking is the problem of interpersonal dependency among people with depression. This tendency reflects a very strong need for interpersonal attachments, coupled with doubts about their reliability and authenticity. Interpersonal dependency appears to be an important interpersonal risk factor for the development of depression.

Ironically, people with depression will sometimes intentionally seek and elicit negative reactions from other people. This process, known as *self-verification*, stems from the depressed person's desire to preserve their self-views and enhance predictability and control of their futures. By obtaining reactions from others who are consistent with their negative self-views, depressed people can acquire this sense of verification and predictability, albeit with other dysfunctional consequences that such interpersonal reactions entail. Experimental investigations show that seeking negative feedback from others is fairly robust among people with depression.

Another major line of research that can explain relationship problems associated with depression has focused on social skills deficits. People with good social skills can behave in ways that are appropriate to the relationship or social context and simultaneously are effective in achieving their interpersonal goals. Consequently, their social skills make it possible for people to obtain positive reinforcements from their social environment while avoiding punishing responses. Peter Lewinsohn was one of the early proponents of a behavioral model of depression that included the postulate that people with depression often have social skills deficits.

Depressed people generally describe their own social skills more negatively than their nondepressed

peers do. Again, part of this social skills deficit could be the result of a negative self-evaluation bias among people with depression. However, other research methods that involve partner (e.g., parent, roommate, friend, teacher) ratings or that observe the person with depression in an actual social interaction confirm the social skills deficit associated with depression. In addition, researchers have carefully studied numerous communication behaviors that are used in skilled conversation and find that depressed people often exhibit notable problems with these behaviors. These include, for example, less eye contact, slower speech rate, a more monotonous tone of voice, longer pauses, longer response latencies, less speech loudness, shorter speaking duration, having a sad facial expression, and fewer gestures. All of these behaviors add richness, excitement, and interest to human communication. However, depressed people will often fail to use these behaviors to their advantage, instead creating an impression of sadness, lack of interest, aloofness, or passivity. Social skills training is a therapeutic technique that has been developed to address such problems, often with good results.

The speech content of people with depression also reflects social skills problems. For instance, depression has been associated with increased discussion of negative well-being, dysphoric feelings, negative statements about the self, negative statements about peers, as well as criticism and disagreements. Such discussions do not ordinarily contribute to rewarding interactions. Accordingly, these and other social skills deficits might account for the interpersonal rejection and relational turbulence that is so commonly experienced by people with depression.

Chris Segrin

See also Communication Skills; Emotional Contagion; Emotion in Relationships; Mental Health and Relationships; Relationship Distress and Depression; Social Skills, Adults

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DETERIORATING RELATIONSHIPS

The optimism of newlyweds belies what is known about marital deterioration and divorce. Approximately 90 percent of Americans will marry at least once, and it is estimated that at any one time 20 percent of all marriages in the United States are significantly distressed. Given 56 million married-couple households in 2000, that is approximately 11.2 million marriages at risk of dissolution at any one time. Approximately 50 percent of first marriages in the United States end in divorce, and another 10 to 15 percent end in permanent separation. For those remarrying, the rate of dissolution is approximately 10 percent higher. Dissolution rates are harder to pinpoint for relationships without legal documentation (e.g., couples whose marriages deteriorate without divorce decree, same-sex partners who cannot legally marry, and partners who cohabitate). This entry provides an overview of relationship deterioration research, including known predictors, typical trajectories, and changes across transitions such as parenthood. The entry also provides a broad review of the literature on recovery from deterioration, including a review of clinical interventions and spontaneous recovery.

Typical Trajectories of Relationship Deterioration

Early studies attempting to assess the normative trajectory of marital satisfaction relied upon

cross-sectional data from spouses married for different lengths of time. Studies in the late '60s and early '70s suggested that marital satisfaction followed a U-shaped path, with newlyweds having the highest levels of satisfaction, followed by steady declines through middle age, and recovering to near-newlywed levels following the empty nest period. Cross-sectional data can be misleading, however, because the data being compared are snapshots in time gathered from separate cohorts rather than the trajectory of a single cohort (data collected from 65-year-old couples today do not necessarily predict what will happen for 35-year-old couples 3 decades from now). In contrast, more recent longitudinal studies have shown a steady and linear decline in satisfaction over time. Other studies have found substantial variability in individual trajectories, with many couples rapidly deteriorating over the first 4 to 7 years of marriage and others sustaining high levels of relationship satisfaction over time. Approximately 10 percent of couples report increasing satisfaction over the first 4 years of marriage.

The Dissolution Process

Steve Duck has described relationship deterioration as involving several dynamic processes. For example, *intrapsychic* processes involve one or both partners reflecting privately on dissatisfaction with the relationship. Although women typically tend to brood about declines in communication, men tend to focus on the absence of valued behaviors (e.g., the preparation of favorite meals) or responsibility for domestic duties. *Dyadic* processes involve the weakening of the relational culture through failure to uphold established patterns (e.g., no longer kissing each other goodbye or hello, forgoing after-dinner conversations, and other relationship-defining rituals). *Social support* processes involve the dissatisfied partner sharing complaints with others to enlist support and empathy. If partners decide to part, then *grave-dressing* processes occur during which the partners construct a narrative that makes sense of the deterioration. Finally, *resurrection* processes involve each person moving toward a future without the former partner.

Trajectories Across Transitions

Relationships are more likely to experience deterioration during times of transition. However, partners who successfully support each other through stressful transitions often report increased closeness. Stressful transitions include parenthood, the empty nest, and retirement, as well as acute and chronic circumstances such as disability, disease, and job loss. Researchers have found variability in couples' responses to stressful transitions. Most couples experience temporary declines in relationship satisfaction; for some, however, satisfaction improves.

Across the transition to parenthood, studies show variable trajectories. Some studies show 40 to 70 percent of couples report increased conflict and a decline in satisfaction. During the same transition, 33 percent of wives in another study reported stable or increased relationship satisfaction. Yet another study identified four typical trajectories for parents on scales of love, conflict, ambivalence, and maintenance: accelerating decline (5–16 percent of the sample experienced a period of relative stability followed by precipitous decline), linear decline (23–48 percent experienced steady decline), no change (22–47 percent), and modest positive increase (20–35 percent). Although trajectories vary, the central tendencies indicate linear deterioration. Couples that are more satisfied entering the transition to parenthood and that have better communication and relationship maintenance skills weather the transition better. Also, some evidence suggests that maintaining regular daily contact is characteristic of resilient couples.

Measuring Relationship Deterioration

Relationship deterioration is characterized by increasingly dysfunctional interaction patterns and increased susceptibility to a range of physical and mental health problems. Factors that have been found to contribute to relationship deterioration include severe dissatisfaction, emotional distance, frequent negative interaction, negative communication styles, perceived availability of alternative partners, and the absence of an extended social network. Other traits associated with greater susceptibility to relationship deterioration include

neuroticism, defensiveness, and parental divorce. Predictors can be categorized as involving cognitions, communication, conflict, context, and commitment.

Cognitions

Several studies have examined the effects of idealistic beliefs on relationship health. Within a sample of newlyweds, couples with positive marital behaviors (e.g., observed skill at communicating about marital problems) and positive attributions (e.g., viewing the partner in a more positive light) benefited from having high expectations about marriage. However, for those couples demonstrating more negative behaviors and attributions, higher relationship expectations predicted steeper declines in satisfaction—perhaps due to greater disillusionment in the absence of effective coping skills. It appears that holding high expectations contributes to relationship deterioration when those expectations are unrealistic.

Compared to happy couples, couples at risk for deterioration are more likely to endorse unrealistic beliefs about relationships. For example, distressed spouses are more likely to believe that disagreement in any form is destructive, that their partners are unlikely to change, and that rigid gender roles are desirable. Researchers have found a link between the number of unmet relationship standards and negative affect (e.g., anger), blame, and hostile communication styles. Another cognitive style linked to deterioration is a tendency to explain partner's negative behavior in conflict-promoting ways. For example, attributions such as “she rejected my sexual advance because she doesn't love me” or “he doesn't share his worries with me because he doesn't trust me” lead to increased conflict in subsequent encounters. This cognitive style is related to less effective problem solving with more displays of negative affect and steeper declines in marital satisfaction. In the case of intimate partner violence, aggressive individuals use verbal and physical aggression to express anger when their partners fail to meet their expectations.

Communication

Researchers have found a clear distinction between distressed and nondistressed couples in

the negativity of their communication. Distressed couples tend to engage in escalating negative communication patterns that often lead to significant emotional withdrawal and preclude effective problem solving. For example, the demand-withdraw pattern is common among distressed couples (interactions in which one partner's demands for change are met with increasing withdrawal by the partner). Withdrawal tends to elicit escalating demands for change, resulting in even more withdrawal. Andrew Christensen has studied this phenomenon extensively and found it to be a significant predictor of relationship deterioration. A similar pattern, harsh start-up, occurs when partners begin a discussion with criticism or sarcasm. Research by Gottman has demonstrated that the quality of a couple's start-up predicts the quality of the entire interaction, which in turn has been repeatedly associated with marital deterioration. Another significant predictor of deterioration is negative affect reciprocity, a pattern in which partners engage in long, escalating tit for tat sequences of negative behavior (e.g., criticize-defend). Distressed couples appear to have great difficulty exiting these negative sequences. Researchers have identified negative affect reciprocity as one of the most consistent correlates of marital dissatisfaction.

Within a closed system (all predictors and outcomes already being known), statistical models can be constructed from which dissolution and divorce can be predicted with a great deal of accuracy (ranging from 80–94 percent) based on oral history interviews and observational coding of problem-solving interactions. Gottman has identified four communication patterns that predict marital deterioration: criticism, contempt, defensiveness, and stonewalling. These predictors form a cascade of increasing deterioration—the more present, the greater risk of divorce.

1. *Criticism*. Unlike a complaint that addresses a specific behavior, criticism targets a spouse's personality or character. Doing so limits the partner's ability to respond and instead invites defensiveness and escalating negativity. Criticism pollutes the communication stream by making it virtually impossible to hear the underlying complaint.

2. *Contempt*. Contempt is feedback given with the intent to insult and/or psychologically abuse the partner (e.g., sarcasm, cynicism, name-calling,

eye rolling, sneering, mockery, and hostile humor). Its toxicity lies in the conveyance of disgust, heightening conflict rather than resolving it. Contempt, especially for wives, is the best single predictor of divorce. Husbands' contemptuous facial expressions have been found to predict the number of infectious illnesses wives will suffer even 4 years following an interaction.

3. *Defensiveness*. Defensiveness occurs when one partner defends against complaints and criticisms. Defensiveness escalates conflict because it fails to address the underlying complaint.

4. *Stonewalling*. Stonewalling emerges when conflict escalates to the point where at least one partner has physically or emotionally disengaged. The silent treatment, monosyllabic answers, and physically removing oneself from the room are types of stonewalling that lead to further relationship deterioration. Although gender differences are not universal, stonewalling tactics are more common in men.

Conflict

Couples inevitably encounter conflict—the ways that couples manage that conflict predict relationship satisfaction. Although some conflict is necessary to address problems and facilitate change, conflict can easily overwhelm a relationship, leading to deterioration. Although dissatisfying in the short run, nonhostile conflict has been associated with long-term gains in relationship health. At the same time, conflict occurring at a rate greater than approximately 20 percent of interactions predicts relationship decline.

Gottman has identified three types of conflict styles (volatile, validator, and avoider) common in stable marriages (those likely to remain married) and two types (hostile and hostile-detached) common in unstable marriage (those likely to divorce). Volatile couples demonstrate high levels of both negative and positive affect, and their interactions are characterized by a great deal of mutual persuasion. Validator couples tend to discuss issues more thoroughly and work toward compromise. Avoider couples tend to avoid conflict, most often resolving issues by agreeing to disagree. In all three, there is a reasonable balance between conflictual and positive interactions (roughly a ratio

of five positive to every one negative interaction). Hostile couples engage in hostile and defensive conflict. In hostile-detached couples, spouses remain detached and emotionally uninvolved with each other, engaging only in brief bouts of attack and defensiveness.

Comparison of same-sex and heterosexual couples indicated that frequent conflict contributed to deterioration in both types. Conflict over intimacy and power were the sources of conflict most likely to result in lower levels of relationship satisfaction.

A partner's ability to accept his or her partner's influence also predicts relationship quality. During problem-solving interactions, some husbands escalate the level of conflict (considered rejecting influence), and others maintain the conflict at a steady level (accepting influence). Husbands who did not escalate the conflict (while also not withdrawing from it) showed better relationship outcomes. In contrast, subsequent research has shown that in domestically violent relationships men do not accept influence from their wives.

Researchers have found that as many as 74 percent of couples seeking marital therapy have been physically aggressive within the last year, yet fewer than 5 percent report physical aggression as a specific problem. Even mild, infrequent aggression has been associated with negative individual and relationship outcomes. Intimate partner violence (perpetrated by both men and women) is associated with several factors that contribute to relationship deterioration, including physical injury, fear, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder. Intermittent and unpredictable abuse precipitates relationship deterioration by eroding trust, intimacy, and emotional support. Intimate partner violence is a strong predictor of relationship decline even after controlling for stressful events and negative communication.

Context

Researchers have also begun to explore the effect of context on relationship deterioration. For example, research on diary entries reveals that on days that couples have high levels of general stress and competing demands, they are more likely to have more stressful marital interactions. Similarly, data on work spillover suggest that arguments at work are related to arguments at home.

Data indicate that economic stress is also associated with marital deterioration and increased marital conflict. Studies also find the use of alcohol and other drugs is significantly related to intimate partner violence and marital deterioration. In addition, the stress of incarceration can be overwhelming. Intimacy is disrupted due to limited contact and the problems associated with accusations and assumptions of infidelity. Economic uncertainty increases with the loss of income during incarceration and subsequent problems gaining employment once released. Some researchers have suggested that studying the struggle between couples and their environments is at least as important as studying the interpersonal struggles that couples face in order to understand the full range of factors involved in relationship deterioration.

Commitment

Commitment affects several aspects of couple functioning that predict dissolution. Theory identifies two main components of commitment, personal dedication (the degree to which partners are intrinsically committed to each other) and constraint (the conditions that make it more difficult for a partner to leave—such as finances, children, and a lack of alternative partners). Couples at risk for deterioration are those who demonstrate a commitment pattern that is low on personal dedication but not necessarily low on constraints. This pattern is apparent even in newlyweds, with low initial commitment levels serving as substantial predictors of eventual relationship dissolution.

Treatment

The treatments for marital deterioration that have most consistently demonstrated efficacy include Traditional Behavioral Couple Therapy, Cognitive Behavioral Couple Therapy, Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy, and Integrative Behavioral Couple Therapy. Studies have shown that couple therapy can be an effective treatment for relationship discord, consistently outperforming no-treatment control conditions. In short, these treatments result in better outcomes than seeking no treatment at all. However, couple therapy does not produce clinically significant change for all couples.

Slightly fewer than half of treated couples experience a reverse in deterioration that moves both partners from the distressed range into the nondistressed range. For those couples who improve over the course of therapy, as many as one third continue deteriorating posttherapy and have relapsed by 2-year follow-up. Treatment effects tend to be well maintained at 1-year follow-up, suggesting that prevention programs based on yearly checkups may prove useful in maintaining therapeutic gains over time by keeping deterioration at bay.

Donald Baucom and his colleagues have reviewed empirically supported couple and family interventions. Across more than 20 outcome studies, they found no evidence of an appreciable level of spontaneous recovery among couples placed on a waiting list for marital therapy. However, one research team discovered what does appear to be spontaneous recovery by using data collected from over 5,000 adults interviewed in the late 1980s. When asked to rate their marriages 5 years later, two thirds of those unhappy marriages that avoided divorce had become happy. Focus groups held with 55 of the formerly unhappy spouses found that many had experienced extended periods of marital unhappiness, including alcoholism, infidelity, and depression. Although approximately one third of those couples had sought marital counseling, approximately two thirds experienced some level of spontaneous recovery. These findings warrant further research to determine whether the pattern of marital deterioration in community samples is distinct from those of clinical samples or whether spontaneous recovery may exist only as a function of imprecise methodology.

Need for Prevention Strategies

As relationships deteriorate, the damage can become increasingly irreversible. Over time, negative patterns of interaction typically become entrenched and thus resistant to change. Couples who experience severe and prolonged distress demonstrate low motivation to pursue change in the relationship, hence have poor to modest rates of long-term success with intensive couple therapy. Similarly, when affection is low, such as minimal tenderness or infrequent sexual intimacy, couples typically respond more poorly to therapy.

After detecting serious marital difficulties, couples often delay seeking help for an average of 6 years during which time the relationship progressively deteriorates. Long-established distress predicts poor response to couple therapy. Hypothesizing that better results may be achieved through earlier interventions, some researchers have established brief relationship modules for at-risk couples. Various relationship education programs have been shown to help moderately distressed couples improve their communication and relationship satisfaction—even at a 2-year follow-up.

James Córdova has developed a prevention program modeled after the regular physical health checkup, called the Marriage Checkup. The Marriage Checkup is comprised of a pair of sessions beginning with a thorough assessment session (utilizing empirically derived predictors of relationship deterioration) followed 2 weeks later with a motivational feedback session. During the feedback session, the therapist provides a succinct history of the couple's oral history, explains scores on marriage questionnaires, summarizes the partners' abilities to problem solve and affectively communicate, and uses motivational interviewing to make recommendations tailored to the couple's specific areas of concern. Results from both an open trial and a small randomized control trial have demonstrated increased relationship health in both husbands and wives immediately and at a 2-year follow-up. A larger study is currently underway.

Marriage and relationship education (MRE) includes programs offered by private professionals, clinical researchers, and lay practitioners. One meta-analysis of MRE programs found that the programs' effects on marital satisfaction-quality were modest but significant. One such program, Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program (PREP), has shown evidence of decreasing negative interaction, lowering rates of breakup and divorce, and increasing levels of relationship skills maintained up to 5 years following the training. In one sample, couples who completed PREP had a divorce rate of 3 percent compared to 16 percent for control couples, a promising finding. Relationship scientists are still discovering prevention and intervention strategies to help individuals select appropriate mates, to keep the relationship healthy from the beginning, to repair relationships when

problems arise, and to dissolve amicably when deterioration occurs despite best attempts.

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See also Couple Therapy; Integrative Behavioral Couple Therapy; Prevention and Enrichment Programs for Couples; Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Programs (PREP); Repairing Relationships; Rewards and Costs in Relationships; Satisfaction in Relationships; Self-Concept and Relationships; Turning Points in Relationships

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DEVELOPING RELATIONSHIPS

When asked to list the most important things in their lives, most people list their relationships. Good health, money, and career success eventually make the list, but friends, family, and romantic partners are typically at the top. This is no surprise. Close relationships are a source of social and emotional support, self-validation, identity expansion, encouragement, and affection. Therefore, understanding the process by which relationships develop is important and has been of interest to relationship scholars for several decades. Of course, scholars who study the process

of relationship development face a formidable task. They seek to explain how a jointly constructed, mutually enacted, and highly coordinated behavioral and emotional connection between two people emerges from the ordinary circumstances of social interaction. This entry summarizes several approaches to explaining relationship development found in the scholarly literature, particularly the phase or stage models and turning-points analysis.

Phase or Stage Models of Relationship Development

Phase or stage models of relationship development recognize that romantic couples and friendships move through and between phases at different rates of speed. Some romantic couples, for example, describe their relationship as beginning with love at first sight and accelerating quickly to a committed relationship or marriage. Others describe their relationship development as more gradual, developing a friendship first, entering a prolonged courtship, and moving slowly to marriage. And some couples that had romantic potential do not progress beyond relatively superficial interactions; they remain at the level of casual acquaintances if professional or social networks keep them in contact or they terminate the relationship entirely if no external factors necessitate continued interaction. Thus, the goal of scholars who offer models of relationship development is not to specify how soon into the relationship any particular transition is likely to occur. Rather, their goal is to identify patterns of emotions, attitudes, and behaviors that distinguish one phase of development from the previous and the subsequent phase. The three models summarized below are widely accepted illustrations of the phases or stages of development.

One of the first models concerned with the phases of development in friendships and romantic relationships was published by George Levinger in the early 1970s. His model of pair relatedness describes levels of increasing connection, interdependence, affection, and commitment as the dimensions of relationship development. The four levels of relatedness include: (1) zero contact and zero relatedness, (2) unilateral awareness where the

individuals are aware of each other but have not had an interaction, (3) surface contact during which there is some interaction but individuals are still independent rather than interdependent, and (4) mutuality beginning with minor intersection, moving to major intersection, and ending with total unity. During the period of mutuality, partners develop a widening range of shared rules and norms, deeper knowledge of each other, greater responsibility for each other's outcomes, and experience deepening affection and commitment. Levinger illustrates the increasing connection during mutuality as two circles moving from slight to complete overlap.

Interestingly, Levinger notes that in arranged marriages, much of what occurs during the early phases in mutuality is accomplished by the parents who assess similarity, resources, compatibility, and so on. In arranged marriages, therefore, commitment is established at the time of the marriage; knowledge of partner, affection, and love emerge later.

The important theme in Levinger's description of relationship development is his analysis of what the increasingly diverse connections mean to partners. He explains that the connections eventually become causal links in which one person's actions or emotions literally cause a change in the other person's actions or emotions. For example, a bad day at work may cause John to act more distracted or contentious than usual when he talks with Mary; his behavior may cause Mary to feel an emotional response, perhaps sympathy or irritation (depending on previous interactions). Mary is then motivated to ask what's wrong, and a conversation emerges from and is shaped by the causal links between John and Mary. When causal links help partners attain their goals, satisfaction tends to be high. When they constrain goal attainment, satisfaction tends to be low. In the latter case, partners may respond by limiting the number and extent of the causal links.

A second stage model of relationship development was offered by Irwin Altman and Dalmas Taylor, also in the early 1970s. This model was also concerned with interdependence but placed its emphasis on communication, particularly breadth and depth of self-disclosure. The model was aptly termed Social Penetration Theory to highlight the process of moving beyond the public self to a

deeper understanding of the private self. Altman and Taylor used the now classic metaphor of the onion to represent layers of increasingly personal information about the self: surface, peripheral, intermediate, and central. Like peeling layers off the onion to reach its inner core, people in developing relationships typically reveal superficial information about their background, interests, habits, and so forth before they reveal intimate information that makes them vulnerable to criticism, rejection, or exploitation.

The Social Penetration Model describes four stages distinguished by the breadth and depth of disclosure: (1) Orientation refers to initial interaction when a relatively narrow range of topics is discussed and depth is at the surface level; (2) exploratory affective exchange includes a wider range of topics with some depth, although mostly at the peripheral level; (3) affective exchange includes increasingly personal and risky disclosure involving a wide range of topics at the intermediate levels and a few at the central layer (although some information is still guarded); and (4) stable exchange is characterized by open communication at all levels—surface, peripheral, intermediate, and central.

Movement through these stages is influenced by four overlapping processes. First, the uncertainty that characterizes initial interactions is an uncomfortable mental state because it is difficult to predict what the other person might say or do. In role relationships guided by interaction scripts, predicting the other person's actions is easy to do (e.g., a grocery clerk rings up the items, announces the total cost, processes the payment, and says, "Have a good day"). In developing relationships, self-disclosure allows people to reduce their uncertainty by learning more about each other—at first, basic demographic information (e.g., hometown and occupation) and then increasingly personal information (e.g., values and attitudes). Second, the norm of reciprocity encourages people to reciprocate both the valence of self-disclosure (positive or negative) and the level of intimacy. By matching valence and level of intimacy in self-disclosure, people feel that their interactions are equitable or balanced, and this contributes to relational satisfaction. Third, self-disclosure tends to increase liking, and liking tends to increase self-disclosure, a cycle that facilitates attraction and continued relationship growth, unless initial disclosures reveal

significant incompatibility. Fourth, the manner in which a recipient responds to the other's self-disclosure (called responsiveness) underlies the first three processes described above. Research indicates that when a person responds with perspective taking and valuing (i.e., trying to understand the disclosure and validate the discloser's feelings without being judgmental or changing the topic), the discloser feels accepted, rates the conversation as warm and comfortable, likes the recipient better, and expresses a greater desire to develop the relationship.

Of course, Altman and Taylor are careful to remind readers that people are more complicated than onions. Developing relationships do not simply move in a linear path of increasing breadth and depth of disclosure. In actual practice, relationships cycle through periods of relatively superficial interactions and periods of more intimate interactions. In addition, the social penetration process may reveal differences as well as similarities, topics that cause conflict, and past behaviors that make partners less secure about the future of the relationship. Potential friends or romantic partners may be able to work through the differences, may learn to avoid problematic topics, or may decide to reduce the level of involvement by not reciprocating the other person's breadth and depth of self-disclosure.

Finally, Altman and Taylor acknowledge the challenge for couples to manage the tensions they feel as they reveal more about themselves and become increasingly interdependent. These tensions are called dialectics because they are seemingly opposite needs that can be desired at the same time. For example, a person might want to be fully open with a close other while wanting to protect his or her privacy or to be fully connected to a close other while wanting to retain autonomy. Successfully managing dialectical tensions such as openness-closedness, autonomy-connection, and novelty-predictability is an important aspect of relationship development. Too much openness and connection can eventually lead partners to feel like they have lost their individual identities; too much predictability can lead to boredom, and too much novelty can lead to chaos and relational insecurity.

Recent investigations have identified the strategies that members of close relationships use to manage dialectical tensions and their association with relationship quality. Selection involves choosing one side of the dialectic over the other (e.g.,

deciding to be fully open about everything and have no secrets or being very private with personal information). Separation involves moving from one side of the dialectic to the other depending on circumstances or topic (e.g., being completely open about relationship issues but closed about politics and religion). Neutralization involves choosing a middle ground between the extremes (e.g., being somewhat interdependent in social activities but also retaining some autonomy or being moderately open and expressive). Finally, reframing is a sophisticated strategy that involves viewing the poles as complementary rather than as contradictory (e.g., interpreting a partner's occasional desire for time apart as a way to make time together more special). Reframing is generally found to be the most effective management strategy for maintaining relationship satisfaction, and selection is found to be the least effective strategy.

Mark Knapp proposed a third model of relationship development in the early 1980s called the Staircase Model. This model presents five stages or steps, with higher steps representing increased levels of intimacy and commitment. The coming-together stages include (1) initiating, which involves superficial communication and exchange of basic information (greetings, polite conversation, introductory information) in an attempt to make a positive first impression and reduce initial uncertainty; (2) experimenting, in which individuals begin to discover each other's likes and dislikes in order to determine if they want to pursue a relationship (small talk with moderate self-disclosure); (3) intensifying, in which both breadth and depth of communication increase and commitment and affection are expressed (nicknames, using *we* rather than *you* and *I*; saying "I like" or "I love you"); (4) integrating, which involves a merging of individual identities into a relational unit as romantic partners or best friends and being recognized as such by the social network; and (5) bonding, in which individuals publicly commit to each other, usually through some type of cultural ritual (such as marriage). Knapp notes that not all relationships progress through the steps in the model. Some stabilize at a low step or move back down the stairs and terminate.

An important contribution of the Staircase Model is its emphasis on how dimensions of communication change as relationships develop or

alternatively, reverse as relationships decay. Specifically, the amount and depth of self-disclosure are not the only changes in communication. According to Knapp, other changes include movement along the dimensions of communication that he labeled *stylized to unique* (i.e., formal-conventional to relationship-specific), *difficult to efficient*, *rigid to flexible*, *awkward to smooth*, and *hesitant to spontaneous*. In addition, communication moves from overt judgment suspended to overt judgment given. For example, few people on a first date would criticize the other person's hair style or driving but would be comfortable doing so at later stages of development. Studies of romantic couples and college student friends indicate that their conversations are indeed characterized by efficient, unique, personal, and spontaneous communication compared to conversations of strangers. Inside jokes, nicknames, teasing insults, and unfinished but fully understood comments are all manifestations of the idiosyncratic and personalized communication that develops in close relationships.

In sum, although these phase or stage models use different terms, they share the view that relationship development involves change on several dimensions. First, emotional investment develops as the range and intensity of both positive and negative emotions experienced and expressed increase. Second, independence yields to interdependence as each partner's thoughts, decisions, emotions, and actions increasingly influence the other person's thoughts, decisions, emotions, and actions. Third, each partner's public self is adapted to a relational self as generalized social competence during interaction becomes a relationally specific competence that reflects the particular needs and expectations of both people in the relationship. Fourth, social norms evolve into relational norms as couples develop their own standard for appropriate and expected behavior, which defines them as a romantic couple or best friends. Finally, public communication moves to interpersonal communication and eventually to relational communication as couples reveal more personal information and construct unique communication practices.

Turning-Points Approach to Relationship Development

The turning-points perspective shifts the focus from models characterizing progression through phases

or stages of development to relationally significant events that prompt one or both members of a relationship to (re)evaluate the strength of their commitment to the relationship and each other. Some events make one or both partners realize how much they care about each other, and commitment increases. Other events make one or both partners question whether the relationship is worth continuing, and commitment decreases, at least temporarily. Couples who stay together work through the negative event, and eventually their commitment returns to its previous level or rises to a level higher than it was prior to the turning point.

Leslie Baxter and her colleagues have identified a number of turning points by asking couples to look back over their time together and to describe an event that caused a change in their relationship. In some studies, romantic couples are also asked to mark on a graph how much commitment they felt at the time of that event, a method that measures increases or decreases in commitment. The turning points most often reported include get-to-know time (e.g., first meeting, first date), quality time (e.g., time away from others, a deeply meaningful conversation), physical separation (e.g., business trip or separate vacations), reunion, external competition (e.g., a romantic rival or external demands from work, school, family), passion (e.g., first kiss, first sex, "I love you"), conflict (e.g., first big fight), making up, disengagement (e.g., considering or actually breaking up for a time), relationship talk (e.g., explicit conversations about relationship norms, quality, definition, or direction), positive psychic change (e.g., realizing strong positive emotions toward partner or relationship), negative psychic change (e.g., realizing strong negative emotions toward partner or relationship), exclusivity (e.g., agreement to not date others), serious commitment (e.g., living together, marital plans), sacrifices (e.g., crisis help, special favors), and network interaction (e.g., including partner in functions with family, friends, and coworkers).

Research offers several insights into how turning points are related to other relationship dimensions and processes. For example, when romantic couples identified the passion turning point as a significant transition in their relationship, they also reported a greater need to balance three dialectics: openness-closedness, autonomy-connection, and novelty-predictability. In other research on the

passion turning point, individuals who reported saying "I love you" prior to their first sexual involvement reported greater commitment, satisfaction, and relationship stability compared with those who did not.

Turning-points analysis has not been limited to romantic relationships. Friends also report transitional events within their relationships, such as the first big fight and quality time. Platonic friends sometimes realize that they would like to redefine the relationship as romantic based on the positive psychic-change turning point. Finally, blended families that are navigating the sometimes difficult process of integrating previously separate family units into one new family often report that turning points such as get-to-know time, quality time, and network interaction facilitate the integration process. Turning-points analysis of blended families indicates that when changes in feeling like a family are graphed in the same way that commitment is graphed for romantic relationships, five trajectories emerged: accelerated (rapid development based on numerous positive turning points), prolonged (slow but steady development with more positive than negative turning points), turbulent (a roller coaster pattern of positive and negative turning points), stagnating (consistent low feelings like a family with few turning points), and declining (more negative than positive turning points).

Conclusion

Although phase models and turning-points analysis are presented separately in this entry, these approaches to relationship development overlap. Turning points occur within stages and sometimes function to alert partners that they have progressed to a more advanced stage. Research in both approaches has contributed substantially to the field's understanding of relationship development in friendships, romantic relationships, and blended families. Together they provide a framework for integrating research on factors that affect the development process. For example, personality characteristics, such as shyness, introversion or extraversion, self-monitoring, love styles, attachment styles, and fear of intimacy, may shape the direction or pace of relationship development. Likewise, cultural norms for appropriate sex-role

behavior may lend characteristic differences in the same-sex friendships of men and women. For example, more intimate self-disclosure is evident in women's friendships compared to men's except in friendships that men consider to be their closest friend. Finally, these approaches are useful guides for recent investigations of online relationship development in which face-to-face interactions may occur after, rather than before, substantial self-disclosure.

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See also Arranged Marriages; Courtship, Models and Processes of; Dialectical Processes; Responsiveness; Secret Tests of Relationship Status; Self-Disclosure; Sex Differences in Relationships; Social Penetration Theory

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DEVELOPMENTAL DESIGNS

Developmental research designs are intended to capture information about how individuals change over time and the processes through which those changes occur. Like many researchers with interests in close relationships, developmental researchers hope to predict the quality and stability of close relationships and both adaptive and maladaptive functioning within them. Developmental approaches to stability and change, however, involve examining relationship phenomena in connection with individual functioning in different life periods. This entry describes designs commonly used to address questions pertaining to close relationships in particular life periods, the transformations that may occur in particular dyads across time, and the functional significance of these relationships for individuals and later relationships.

Developmental research on relationships encompasses diverse questions. Some researchers are interested in the timing or onset of relationship events. For example, a researcher might be interested in determining the age at which adolescents first experience a significant romantic relationship and/or the determinants of this transition (e.g., puberty, community norms, peer pressure, gender). Researchers also often wish to identify the important factors in whether individuals can maintain those relationships. Others might be interested in examining and accounting for age-related differences in relationship functioning (e.g., the nature of friendship in early adulthood as compared to adolescence). Developmental, longitudinal studies likewise can inform many research questions regarding adult relationships. The nature, course, and processes of adaptation to major relationship changes, such as divorce or the death of a partner, are both common and significant experiences of individual development to which developmental designs are uniquely well suited.

An underlying goal when using these designs is capturing the emergence of and successive transformations in competencies relevant to age-appropriate social functioning. Accordingly, one could ask whether the processes related to effective romantic relationship functioning are different in adolescence and in adulthood or whether similar processes are implicated in maladaptive

relationships, as compared to adaptive ones. In true developmental designs, the same participants are assessed at multiple time points (longitudinal designs). Some questions relevant to the study of development may be informed by other research approaches as well. The next sections of this entry describe the most common designs used in developmental research on close relationships.

Cross-Sectional Designs

Cross-sectional designs involve a single time of measurement and are commonly used by researchers to compare groups. Although not inherently developmental, cross-sectional studies can be useful for assessing when important developmental milestones in close relationship phenomena are commonly achieved in a particular sample. For example, one could determine how commonly adolescents of differing ages (e.g., ages 13, 16, and 19 years) engage in sexual activity and whether the frequency of differing sexual behaviors differs for adolescents of varying ages. Age-group comparisons are insufficient for determining whether experiences in one developmental period carry forward to subsequent periods. Moreover, comparisons of multiple age groups at a single time point confound development with cohort (the effect of having been born at different times and thus, having experienced particular cultural and historical conditions; individuals born before and after the invention of birth control pills constitute different cohorts, as well as different age groups). Consequently, cross-sectional designs are not appropriate for examining individual development. Nevertheless, cross-sectional studies are efficient tools for collecting information from participants of varying ages, and the resulting information can be used in determining the optimal period of time over which to track the development of individuals and their relationships. Understanding the impact of developmental history on functioning at different times in development, however, requires longitudinal designs.

Longitudinal Designs

Longitudinal researchers track the continuity of and changes in particular phenomena by studying

the same participants repeatedly over time. For example, researchers have charted changes in relationship satisfaction from the start of the marriage across subsequent intervals. By using the same measure across times of measurement, these researchers examined homotypic continuity, that is, the similarity among measures of relationship satisfaction at multiple times. The researchers can compare across differing times with relative ease and can directly observe the stability of a given construct.

In a developmental longitudinal study, the researchers also examine how events in an individual's developmental history predict continuity and change in marital satisfaction over time. Times of measurement are typically chosen on the basis of theoretically derived expectations or previously reported empirical findings that show particular ages to be especially likely points of change in one or more of the focal constructs guiding the research. Developmental longitudinal studies contrast with nondevelopmental designs in several ways. One is that developmental longitudinal designs permit researchers to study development prospectively, thereby providing a more accurate account of the nature and course of relationship functioning from one time in life to the next than is possible with retrospective reports of developmental history. Retrospective accounts are subject to bias and distortion. If an individual reports having poor relationships with romantic partners and also reports having poor relationships with prior romantic partners, researchers cannot determine whether the account is accurate or whether perceptions of prior relationships are contaminated by experiences in the current relationship. With developmental longitudinal studies, however, one can compare prospective and retrospective accounts of behavior to determine the accuracy and functional significance of retrospective memory.

Another contrast is that developmental longitudinal studies examine how individuals navigate age-appropriate developmental tasks and whether their competencies at one time point predict functionally relevant competencies at later time points. Studying marital satisfaction from a developmental perspective, for example, might entail questions such as whether functioning in prior important relationships (e.g., with parents in early childhood, peers in middle childhood, friends in adolescence) predicts adult marital satisfaction and functioning.

Third, it is often the case in developmental longitudinal studies that the defining characteristics and issues of a particular construct may vary across developmental periods. Thus, to assess continuity and change, researchers must rely on different but functionally equivalent measures at differing time points. Functionally similar behaviors assessed in differing ways across development are said to manifest heterotypic continuity. An example of research requiring heterotypic measures of relationship phenomena is assessments of attachment security. Security is assessed in terms of the extent to which individuals effectively use their relationships with attachment figures to regulate emotions and resolve feelings of distress. How security is manifested and the conditions that elicit behaviors indicative of security should change depending on the age of the individual or on the type of relationship partner (e.g., parent-child, close friend, or romantic partner). To assess the attachment security of a preverbal 12-to-18-month-old infant, researchers commonly use the Strange Situation procedure to look for patterns of behavior in response to stress. In this procedure, invented by Mary Ainsworth, infants experience multiple unexpected changes in which the caregiver, an unfamiliar adult, both, or neither are present with the child. Secure relationships at this age are typified by the child's maintaining proximity to the caregiver, who is the most likely source of reassurance and support and who is an instrumental resource. Assessment criteria include whether children are able to make effective use of the caregiver to reduce the child's distress in the face of pressure to complete a challenging task, to remain calm in the presence of unfamiliar persons, and to function as a secure base for the child even when not in direct physical contact. Observers also classify caregiver-child pairs on the degree to which child and caregiver effectively play their respective roles in these interactions. Observers note whether children, when distressed, seek proximity to their caregivers, are quickly calmed by their caregivers, and can return to exploratory behavior.

If one's goal is to assess an adult's attachment security to a significant other person, however, the Strange Situation is not a useful method. Adults should no longer become highly distressed when proximity with the attachment figure is lost. Further, when adults are distressed, the behavioral

manifestations of security should be different. Consequently, researchers seek assessment methods that are sensitive to adults' perceptions that partners willingly provide sensitive support, acceptance, and so forth. Predictably, measures of adult attachment security are typically verbal—interviews or inventories that assess the adults' cognitive representations of their memories and feelings regarding attachment-relevant experiences.

Several notable developmental longitudinal studies have tracked individuals and their relationships from infancy to adulthood. Some are large ongoing cohort studies tracking participants from early childhood to adulthood, such as the Dunedin Longitudinal Study in New Zealand and the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development Study of Early Child Care and Youth Development in the United States. One notable cohort study of relationships, the Minnesota Longitudinal Study of Risk and Adaptation, began as a prospective study of high-risk children and their parents and significant relationships. The study exemplifies developmental longitudinal research in its use of multiple methods of assessment and multiple informants and its attention to the nature and trajectories of functioning across multiple measurement points from birth to age 28. Particular attention has been given to the importance of relationships in development and to continuity and discontinuity of behavior in dyadic relationships across the life span.

Despite distinctive advantages, developmental longitudinal studies present several methodological and logistical challenges. First, they are costly and time consuming, requiring considerable diligence and effort to track and retain participants. The studies mentioned above have achieved remarkable participant retention by frequently contacting individuals between measurement points. The Minnesota Longitudinal Study, for example, has retained 65 percent of its original participants after 28 years; moreover, the current sample ($N = 174$) and the attrition ($n = 93$) group do not differ significantly with respect to the initial recruitment criteria. Second, the incidence of relationships or relationships of particular types may vary from one measurement point to the next, increasing the likelihood that data on an individual's

relationships may be present at some times and not at others. Strategies for handling missing data have been discussed extensively by methodologists concerned with longitudinal designs. Third, developmental longitudinal studies generate correlational findings, leaving open questions of causality or direction of effects. However, predictions across time provide stronger evidence for possible causality than cross-sectional studies do.

Sequential Designs

To address the drawbacks inherent with both cross-sectional and developmental longitudinal designs, hybrid designs have been devised. These designs permit the simultaneous study of age groups and the individuals within them. Researchers using sequential designs follow subjects from multiple age groups and assess them repeatedly over time. For example, in a sequential study of romantic relationships, one might track one set of couples who were recruited at age 18, while simultaneously tracking a group of couples recruited at age 20. These couples might complete assessments every 2 years over a 6-year period. Data from sequential designs permit three possible comparisons: the 18-year-old couples with 20-year-old couples at the first assessment, 20-year-old couples with 22-year-old couples at the second assessment, and 22-year-old couples with 24-year-old couples at the third assessment. Further comparisons are possible by following each couple across multiple assessments. Finally, sequential designs also permit cohort comparisons by examining whether the 20-year-old couples assessed in the first assessment differ from the 20-year-old couples assessed in the second assessment and by examining whether the 22-year-old couples assessed in the second assessment differ from the 22-year-old couples assessed in the last assessment. Using sequential designs enables researchers to rule out the possibility that results can be attributed to cohort effects.

Developmental designs thus potentially make it possible to examine the phenomena of relationships in the context of prior significant relationships and the prospect of future ones. Although such studies commonly attempt to predict the nature and significance of adolescent or adult

relationships based on information about childhood relationships, other more differentiated questions also hold promise for better understanding of variations in relationships. An example is research to identify the processes that link experiences in very early caregiving relationships to subjective emotional experiences in adult romantic ones. Drawing from a developmental longitudinal data set, Jeffry Simpson and colleagues demonstrated that the relation between the two was mediated by the impact of early relationships on peer relationships in childhood and close friendships in adolescence. Revealing how relationships of different types are meaningfully linked across time requires the distinctive features of truly developmental designs.

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See also Experimental Designs for Relationship Research; Longitudinal Studies of Marital Satisfaction and Dissolution; Observational Methods; Peer Report Methods; Quantitative Methods in Relationship Research

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DEVIANCE, RELATIONSHIP EFFECTS

Part of human existence is to feel a sense of belonging and closeness with others. As such, interpersonal relationships play a central role in living one's life. Yet laypersons and social scientists alike recognize that some relationships, individuals, and behavior are considered deviant, according to societal norms. This entry describes social scientific perspectives on how deviance is defined in relationships; namely, how some relationships are viewed as deviant in our society, how particular behaviors within relationships are regarded as deviant, and how deviance can be defined by the actions or abilities of individuals.

Deviant Relationships

Perhaps surprisingly, there is little consensus among the public and scientific communities about how to define deviance, thereby affecting how certain relationships may be considered deviant, what constitutes deviant behavior, and who would be considered a deviant individual. One way researchers define deviance is by marking any behavior that violates an established social rule or convention as deviant. Thus, certain types of relationships might be considered deviant because they are based upon behavior that violates social norms. For example, because mainstream society believes that intimate relationships should be between two adults, romantic relationships between adults and minors, such as between teachers and students or those advocated by the North American Man/Boy Love Association, would be considered a violation of social norms and thereby deviant.

Another fundamental assumption of romantic relationships is that the relationship is consensual, meaning that both parties consent to being involved. Therefore, any relationships involving minors, bondage, long-term abduction, and/or psychological entrapment would be considered deviant. For instance, relationships built by individuals who kidnap and imprison another person, often for the former's sexual gratification, would be considered deviant because they involve a nonconsenting party. Additionally, relationships characterized by

instances of date or marital rape or long-term psychological maltreatment would also qualify as deviant because they violate the consensual norm. Relationships between prisoners and guards or abductees and captors (such as prisoners of war) might also be considered deviant because of the limited degree of autonomy and the power distance influencing the degree of consensuality between the parties. Violations of such standardized relational assumptions can have serious long-term implications for the individuals involved—especially those persons who are in the less powerful position. Being in such a position could leave the less powerful feeling victimized and traumatized, leading to psychological scarring that could affect the person's ability to function and form healthy bonds in the future.

Most would agree that many of the above-noted examples are clear violations of social norms. However, there are also examples that, in the purest sense of the word, violate social norms but would not be considered deviant by all. For instance, homosexual relationships might be considered deviant by some individuals because they violate the privileged heterosexual norm of American society. Moreover, some might view arranged marriages as deviant in U.S. culture because they do not involve two fully consenting adults. These examples highlight the importance of the fact that because norms are socially constructed, fluid, and dynamic, so too is society's definition of what constitutes normal and thereby, nonnormal or deviant. As such, what is considered socially deviant is not fixed but rather constantly changing. Understanding the fluidity and dynamism inherent in the social construction of deviance is important because it highlights how standards for what is considered normal are developed by those in dominant power positions and how others, because of their subordinate social positions, are marginalized and deemed deviant because they do not live up to the standards and norms established by the powerful.

Deviant Behavior in Relationships

Another way to characterize relationships as deviant is by the presence of deviant behavior

within an outwardly looking normal relationship. For example, swinging (nonmonogamous sexual activity of relational partners) or relational violence would be deemed deviant because it violates underlying normative assumptions of coupling: monogamy and healthy regard for partner. Drug and alcohol abuse, particular sexual acts (such as sadomasochism), participation in nudist organizations, and pornography consumption are other examples of relational acts that might be considered deviant by today's society. Particular behavior enacted in organizations could also fall under this deviance rubric because the actions violate social norms of proper and ethical workplace etiquette. Acts such as superior-subordinate romantic involvement and the wall of silence among police officers maintained to protect illegal or unethical acts of their brethren are just two examples that might be constituted as deviant because they involve perceptions of nepotism and dishonesty, at least from an outsider's perspective, clear violations of organizational norms.

Deviant Individuals in Relationships

A final way of viewing deviance is by focusing on the individual. From this perspective, any person devalued by society, regardless of behavioral rule violations, would be considered deviant. Examples could include persons living with HIV or with mental and physical disabilities. Deemed unworthy by society, individuals living with such health diagnoses or disabilities can be forced to exist on the margins of our society, seemingly forgotten and discarded. Individuals may also be considered deviant (rightly or wrongly) if their actions are deemed deviant. Gang members, a pimp and his prostitute, a john and a prostitute, a con artist and the conned, a cult leader and his or her followers, the homeless, or panhandlers are just a sampling of individuals who, because their behavior is unacceptable by society's norms, would be considered deviant. As a result, the plights of these individuals are typically ignored; they are often denied proper medical care and social assistance, and they are left to live a life of criminality. Yet interestingly, although society at large might shun them, many such individuals are able to

fulfill their belonging needs through their group membership. Thus, their connection to similar others becomes a vitally important part of their survival.

Research on deviance and relationships is complex, filled with a variety of theories that help researchers define and study nonnormative behavior, relationships, and individuals. This entry has only skimmed the surface by briefly reviewing the different ways in which deviance can be defined and enacted in relationships. Understanding deviance in relationships sheds light on how and why some individuals are victimized, exploited, and discriminated against and how some individuals may find a sense of belonging to deviant groups. Because deviance is a fluid, social construction, certain relationships, behaviors, and individuals that are considered deviant today may not be in 5, 10, or 20 years. For instance, cohabitation, considered deviant 50 years ago, is considered normal by today's standards. Recognizing the fluidity of deviance can help create a more inclusive, less prejudicial world. It is equally important to acknowledge the underlying power dynamics related to the labeling of deviance and deviant behavior. Specifically, as a result of the influence that dominant power structures (e.g., government, family, religion) have in U.S. society, some behavior is defined as deviant, while other comparable behavior may not be because it is enacted by those who possess more social and political power. All of these issues make the study of deviance in human relationships a fluid and socially relevant enterprise.

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See also Alternative Relationship Lifestyles; Arranged Marriages; Dark Side of Relationships

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DIALECTICAL PROCESSES

The term *dialectical processes* refers to the contradictions that arise among a variety of opposing forces when people relate. Some researchers view these opposing forces as competing motivations within individuals. One example of opposing motivational forces is the desire to be open and honest with others versus the desire to be more guarded and less forthcoming in sharing information. Other dialectical scholars, especially those from the communication discipline, locate the opposing forces in the communication between relating parties. Leslie Baxter and Barbara Montgomery articulated Relational Dialectics Theory (RDT) in 1996 to understand these communicative tensions between opposing systems of meaning. From a communication perspective, the issue at stake is how contradictory meanings are negotiated between relationship parties.

Several contradictions emerge consistently in the dialectically oriented research. One of the most common is labeled a variety of ways, including separation-integration, autonomy-connection, or independent-interdependent. When parties negotiate their close relationships, they construct a meaning of closeness that struggles with the tension of individual autonomy (the expectation that parties will respect one another's individuality and freedom of action) and interdependent connection (the expectation that the parties will privilege the interdependence of their connection above their individuality). The reason this contradiction is so prevalent in contemporary American relating is that the culture has contradictory ideologies that coexist. The cultural ideology of individualism supports a meaning of closeness that emphasizes the needs and desires of the individual parties. According to this cultural view, close relationships are expected to preserve each party's identity as an autonomous self, granting each person freedom of action and positioning the relationship at the service of individual wants and needs. By contrast, the opposing cultural ideology of community supports a meaning of closeness in which individuality is trumped by a commitment to the other party and to the relationship above the individual needs of the parties. According to this competing view, individual needs are secondary to the needs of the

relationship and one's partner. This contradiction in what it means to be in a close relationship takes a variety of specific forms depending on the particular kind of relationship and where the relationship is in its developmental course. The contradiction of separation-integration could surface, for example, as a struggle over how much time to spend together versus how much time partners are granted to fulfill obligations outside of the relationship. It could also surface as a struggle over identity: to what extent parties are allowed to establish a self-identity independent of being half of a couple. The contradiction could surface, as well, in how much time the pair spends alone in couple time versus how much time they spend as a couple with others in their social network.

A second contradiction that also surfaces in much research goes by many labels expression-nonexpression, openness-closedness, and candor-discretion. At its core, this contradiction involves what it means to be communicatively open in the relationship. The frequency with which this contradiction surfaces among Americans is probably the result, once again, of competing cultural ideologies. On the one hand, Americans are immersed in an ideology of privacy, with the expectation that individuals have a right to privacy in their relationships and are entitled to avoid topics, keep secrets, and display discretion in what they tell their partner. On the other hand, Americans swim in a cultural ideology of expression in which individuals are accorded the right to say whatever they want, combined with a cultural ideology of intimacy in which total disclosure is an expectation of closeness. Parties negotiate what closeness means in their relationship by managing the struggle between candor and discretion. They also negotiate this struggle as a couple when they face the issue of how much to share about their relationship with outside third parties: What is private between the two of them and what can and should be shared with others?

A third contradiction that frequently appears in the research also goes by a variety of labels, including past-present, predictability-novelty, certainty-uncertainty, or reproduction-production. On one hand, after their first encounter, relationship parties are never without a relational history. The next time they meet, they inherit this definition from the past, which affords predictability

and certainty. On the other hand, however, parties can never reproduce their past completely; they are slightly different people, and the circumstances have altered at least somewhat. Even if the parties could reproduce the past meaning of their relationship, this would prevent novelty, creativity, and change. Thus, the meaning of the relationship is always to some extent up for grabs whenever parties communicate with one another. Sometimes, parties negotiate dramatic changes in the meaning of their relationship, often brought about by grappling with other dialectical contradictions that are circulating in the relationship. These dramatic changes often function as turning points that can alter relational meanings in profound ways. For example, among newly formed stepfamilies, especially among stepchildren, a dialectical struggle is often experienced between the meaning of the old family of origin and the new stepfamily, with efforts to define the new stepfamily often regarded as a threat to the memory of the old family of origin. A second example might be divorced parents, whose negative marital relationship is a meaning system that could work against a constructive coparenting relationship needed in order to raise their children.

A fourth contradiction that often surfaces in relationships is variously called self-other or similarity-difference. Researchers have long documented the meaning that partners give to the perception of similarity between them; it signifies a validation of oneself, communicative ease between partners, and freedom from conflict. However, if partners are too similar to one another, they do not help each other to grow; selves grow to the extent that they are different and can expose one another to different perspectives, experiences, and so forth. Difference is a source of stimulation, excitement, and growth. But it also can mean an increase in unpleasant conflict.

A fifth contradiction that frequents relationship parties is referred to as the ideal-real. This contradiction is evaluative, as parties attach good and bad meanings to their relational practices in comparison with what they perceive to be the ideal. Sometimes, the real—the meanings of what the parties perceive as their reality—match the ideal. Often, however, there are discrepancies and hence struggles of evaluation. In anticipating evaluations by outsiders in which a pair's relational practices

are judged against an ideal, partners often engage in account-giving efforts. For example, imagine a young married woman who says to her family, "I know you guys want grandchildren, but we've decided to remain childless. It's our life, not yours." This account calls up the ideology of individualism to justify an anticipated negative evaluation from family members in the couple's decision to deviate from the normative cultural script for married couples to have children.

The variety of contradictions experienced by relationship partners is substantial, and dialectical researchers argue for the importance of appreciating the unique contradictions that face given relationship partners. To date, dialectical processes have been identified in a variety of relationship types in the United States, including dating relationships, divorced pairs, employee relationships, marital couples, marital couples in which one partner has been diagnosed with dementia, marital couples transitioning to parenthood, members of abusive relationships, mother-daughter relationships, older dating partners, parent-child relationships, platonic friendships, retirement-home relationships, romantic pairs, and stepfamily relationships. Contradictions vary by culture as well. Relationships in collectivist societies, for example, are not animated by the ideology of individualism the way mainstream Americans are when they relate; thus, the separation-integration contradiction doubtless is experienced entirely differently, if at all, by pairs in collectivist societies.

Relational partners jointly act in ways that negotiate the interplay of contradictory oppositions. Sometimes partners act in the moment to center one system of meaning, thereby marginalizing or silencing competing systems of meaning. The couple who acts to give priority to their relationship over each party's individual competing demands for time from work, school, other family obligations, and so forth is centering connection in the meaning of their relationships while marginalizing autonomy. If they repeat this same prioritization over time, they have positioned connection as an authoritative meaning in their relationship. Alternatively, the pair could move back and forth between decisions to emphasize their relationship versus decisions to be responsive to individual demands for time and resources. One week, job demands might take priority while a relationship takes a secondary

priority; next week, however, the couple might privilege the value attached to the relationship and take a 3-day getaway weekend. The relationship parties could also enact compromises, giving partial attention to all relational and nonrelational demands on them. In addition, the parties could reframe what it means to prioritize the relationship, moving beyond either-or thinking. For example, a pair might agree that putting in overtime at work is a way to prioritize the relationship because it goes into saving for the down payment on a house. In this way, work demands and relationship demands are reframed in a manner that is not viewed as competitive by the parties. Rituals have been identified as an especially important communicative practice in which relationship partners reframe opposing meanings so that they all are honored. For example, the remarriage ceremony of an older married couple celebrates both the uniqueness of their marriage as well as the fact that marriage is a conventionalized social institution.

According to RDT, relationship satisfaction is linked to how a pair navigates dialectical processes rather than the presence of contradictions per se. Dialectical processes are ongoing, and parties are continually interacting in ways that navigate the salient struggles of the moment. Thus, dialectical processes are normal for relating parties, although they require effort for parties to negotiate them. In fact, many of the conflicts experienced by relationship parties often involve disagreements over basic contradictions such as those discussed in this entry. It is through navigating dialectical processes that relationship parties create the possibility for change in their relationships.

Researchers who study dialectical processes use both quantitative methods (often surveys) and qualitative methods. Most of the work has employed qualitative methods in which the talk of relationship parties (both in interviews and naturally occurring between partners) is analyzed thematically for the presence of competing discourses, a method known as contrapuntal discourse analysis.

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See also Change in Romantic Relationships Over Time; Conflict, Marital; Conflict, Patterns; Connectedness, Tension With Autonomy; Family Routines and Rituals; Ideals About Relationships; Turning Points in Relationships

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DISABILITIES, CHRONIC ILLNESS, AND RELATIONSHIP FUNCTIONING

Most long-lasting relationships with family and friends are touched by health issues. Illness and disability contribute to some of the most stressful life circumstances that individuals and relationships encounter. Accounts of coping with illness and disability in the context of relationships are often provided in popular media, particularly of families and couples coping with cancer, Alzheimer's disease, and HIV/AIDS. Illness and disability as a result of these illnesses and others such as diabetes, depression, cardiovascular disease, and respiratory problems, affect social roles, future hopes and dreams, and companionate activities of everyday life: work, leisure, sex, and social support. Although challenging, the results are not always negative, as might be presumed.

This entry provides an overview of human relationships in the context of illness and disabilities, including the types of questions one might ask about relationships and illness, general findings of research of illness impacts on relationships and relationship impacts on illness and disability, relationship theory, and promising approaches to support relationships through this challenging experience.

The Growing Presence of Illness and Disability in Human Relationships

The gift of longevity has guaranteed a prominent place for chronic illness now and into the future. In the past, people lived shorter lives due to poor public health, infectious disease, accidents, and wars. There was also a high mortality rate from cardiovascular disease, respiratory conditions, and other illnesses.

Chronic illness is currently the main cause of both death and disability worldwide. Of the 58 million deaths that occurred in 2005, approximately 35 million, or 60 percent, were due to chronic, disabling health problems, primarily cardiovascular disease, diabetes, cancer, and respiratory conditions. People are living longer, but they are living longer with health problems and disabilities.

The extent of people worldwide living with chronic conditions is significant; for example, the number of people over age 80 in Western Europe has quadrupled in the past 60 years. Of the 17 million people currently living with long-term conditions in Britain, up to 80 percent need support for self-care.

A substantial proportion of care is provided within the context of family and intimate relationships. It is important to note that those in the most disadvantaged socioeconomic groups experience the highest prevalence, mortality, and morbidity (ongoing health issues and disability), and the gap in health inequalities across the globe has been widening. Furthermore, those in disadvantaged groups are less likely to experience equality of access to services and support in regard to their health and social care needs. This circumstance can increase stress and burden of care for disadvantaged individuals and their families and can contribute to social isolation. Physical inaccessibility of housing and lack of transportation are some of the practical issues faced in sustaining relationships.

There are numerous relevant themes to consider in examining the interface between illness and relationships: the impact of illness and disability on relationships, how people adapt relationships in the context of illness, relationship theory, and specific relationship functioning (couples, parent-child, health professional), the impact of relationships on coping with illness, and approaches (policies and

practices) to improve relationship quality. In many instances, researchers are expanding beyond middle class, Western relationships to study these themes as they are experienced in different cultures, geographies, and socioeconomic contexts—for example, families coping with AIDS in Africa, inner-city couples dealing with a spinal cord injury as a result of violence, serious health problems in uninsured immigrant families, and so on.

Many of these issues have been studied both quantitatively (e.g., self-report measures on relationship quality, laboratory research on the effects of stigma) to examine theories and population characteristics and qualitatively (e.g., observations, personal accounts, focus groups) to capture richness and detail about the relationship-illness experience. The research literature is filled with studies of network, marital, and family functioning, as well as detailed accounts of the experience of illness, including relationship threats and resilience.

Impact of Illness and Disability on Relationships

How do illness and disability affect relationships? Surprisingly, there are many similarities in impact across a large diversity of health problems. Changes are reported to occur in both relationship quality and social network characteristics such as size and density (i.e., the level of interconnectedness of network members) of the network. Persons with chronic illness and disabilities tend to have smaller social networks with greater density. Relationships with family and health professionals are often core elements. If mobility and energy have been reduced, network members often live close by, and the variety of companionate activities is reduced. Many of these changes are initiated by the person with the health problem to preserve energy and reduce fatigue. Furthermore, the relationships of family caregivers are substantially affected when they are involved in extensive, day-to-day caregiving. The demands of care reduce caregivers' opportunities to get out into the community, socialize, and maintain their own relationships.

Studies have shown that divorce rates increase as a function of chronic illness and disability, primarily in younger couples in their 20s and 30s.

Loneliness and social isolation often increase with illness and disability and sometimes result from what seem like minor changes to functioning. For instance, recent studies of minor stroke often result in substantial lifestyle and relationship impacts. Overall, there is a higher than average depression rate in both individuals who have had a stroke and their family caregivers. The same is true in caregivers of family members with dementia.

Illnesses that have a neurological and behavioral component such as acquired brain injury, stroke, dementia, and similar neurological conditions may result in personality and relational changes that are known to cause significant challenges to the relationship, frequently because of their long duration, unpredictability, and the losses associated with such changes. Such alterations in functioning require considerable adaptations on the part of family members. These alterations involve not only the acquisition of new social roles that may have previously been carried out, but also, and of particular importance, emotional adjustment to perceived loss of valued aspects of the relationship, such as shared hobbies such as dancing or travel. Inevitably, some families may be better able to manage this change than others. In some circumstances, these changes can result in relationship breakdown within families.

There are also issues of social stigma, which in the case of such illnesses as dementia and schizophrenia, can lead to marginalization within the person's and families' community. With illness and disability, there are frequently issues of social stigma combined with caregiver burnout. These situations can sometimes include abuse and in some rare cases, murder of the ill person by family members. For instance, older adults with dementia are sometimes killed in Africa because they are viewed as bad luck and they consume scarce resources. Overall, studies of support services for family caregivers in most regions of the world and for most illnesses and disabilities are reported as inadequate.

Interestingly, many studies and accounts suggest that the experience of serious illness can also be perceived as improving relationships. For example, men sometimes report that caregiving had widened their horizons and helped them to grow. Furthermore, recent studies have focused upon the means through which families and couples work to

maintain their preexisting relationship. Couples made considerable efforts to sustain their relationship in the context of a diagnosis of dementia. Unhappy relationship situations are more likely to be terminated with the reassessment of life priorities that is reported with the presence of chronic illness. However, individuals sometimes feel forced to stay in unsatisfactory relationships as a result of guilt, finances, and high support needs. Illness opens a Pandora's Box in relationships, exposing characteristics of individuals and of their relationships that may have been present but not addressed, such as willingness to provide social and practical support or conflicting values about commitment in tough times.

Despite some consistencies in the effects of illness, individual, relational illness, and contextual (e.g., culture) characteristics, all influence relationship quality. Characteristics of the illness, such as physical, social, cognitive, and emotional characteristics, are important. A key element is illness course. Is the course of the condition stable, uncertain, or degenerative? Is one's mate or friend going to become sicker, more disabled, or die? Companionate activity, how mates and friends spend time together, is an important factor in relationship quality and the potential for change due to illness. For instance, couples who place a high value on travel and must now severely limit these activities due to treatment or disability will need to make substantial adjustments as compared to couples whose companionate activity is not particularly affected by the illness.

Impact of Relationships on Adaptation to Illness

Relationships with family and friends are important determinants of how an individual copes with illness and disability. On the positive side, emotional and instrumental support can be helpful, but there is a potential dark side when friends and family hindered rather than helped. Often people are present and supportive early on, but as an illness drags on, their presence and offers of support tend to diminish. Many people resist receiving support, either to maintain their personal sense of autonomy or to preserve the balance of give-and-take in the relationship. Indeed, preservation of

baseline levels of functioning in couple relationships may take priority over a willingness to admit that change has occurred. As a result, the true extent of a couple's difficulties may not be exposed until a serious challenge is experienced (e.g., death of a spouse). Such issues as stigma and fear of long-term consequences may be motivating factors behind the reluctance to acknowledge the need for assistance. Social support, both emotional and instrumental support, increases, and as a result, concerns regarding the balance of reciprocity within relationships can exist. Loneliness, often caused by feelings of social inadequacy and physical isolation, can be a barrier to self-care and physical recovery. Communal coping (how people cope together) is an important element in coping.

Human Relationships Theories

Several theories of human relationships are useful in understanding the impact of illness. For instance, social support, exchange and equity theories can be used to examine the provisions of relationships in the experience of illness, give-and-take, and fairness. Communal coping theory can offer explanations for how people in their relationships cope together (or alone) with illness. Attachment Theory can contribute understanding of individual styles of responding to major life crises and of the extent to which people rely on partners and friends for assistance. Communication theory can be useful in examining verbal and nonverbal communication about illness and its effect within couple and family relationships and within the broader social world. Finally, theories of attribution processes and social cognition can contribute to understanding how people conceptualize and explain relationship issues or changes as a result of illness and disability.

Interventions to Improve Relationship Functioning

There is considerable agreement among health leaders that the challenge for society, now and into the future, is how to reduce preventable illness and the preventable distress of illness and disability. Research has consistently demonstrated inadequacies in health and social service systems

in addressing the full range of illness-related social and psychological issues. Relationship functioning is an important but often overlooked issue. There is a need to create a more supportive family, community, and service environment for individuals with the health problems and for people dealing with a relationship partner's illness. Clarity for action can be built upon the strong foundation that has been developed in research and theory about both human relationships and adaptation in illness and disability. Although numerous studies have identified relationship problems, more clinical and intervention research is needed to develop and test efficacious strategies. Knowledge translated from such relationships and illness research could lead to improvements in service and policy. Clinical and community approaches involve couple therapy and support-group interventions focused on relationships and illness. Policy interventions that affect relationship quality can include addressing social issues such as housing, transportation, and improvements to physical and social accessibility of public facilities. These interventions should include health professionals (psychologists, social workers, family therapists) who can assess and address relationship problems. Sharing stories and strategies over the Internet and in self-help documents can also be useful. How individuals with illness and disability use the Internet and cell phones for everyday communication is a new and promising area for research and intervention.

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See also Alzheimer's Disease and Relationships; Attribution Processes in Relationships; Change in Romantic Relationships Over Time; Effects on Relationships; Exchange Processes; Family Functioning; Health and Relationships; Social Identity Theory

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DISCIPLINE IN FAMILIES

A broad definition of discipline, which derives from the Latin *disciplinare*, or to teach, would encompass the whole of socialization, the process by which children develop values and capacities for self-regulation, self-direction, and competence. More narrowly, discipline refers to the training of children with the purpose of fostering some form of correspondence or conformity to the requirements of parental authorities.

Prior to the 1970s, research on discipline was guided by an implicit unilateral framework of assumptions. Parents were considered to be active causal agents, and influence was assumed to flow in a unidirectional manner from parent to child. Children were considered to be passive recipients

of parental influence, and their resistance or failure to conform was interpreted as deviance. Moreover, research tended to ignore the larger context in which discipline occurred. For instance, parents and children were considered interacting as separate individuals rather than in an interdependent relationship context, and the meaning of the interactions for parents or children was disregarded. Thus, research on socialization tended to focus on correlations between isolated parenting techniques and presumed outcomes such as children's compliance or values and transformed a dynamic long-term interactive process into a one-sided analysis of isolated parenting techniques. The prototypical example of a unilateral perspective is traditional authoritarianism, according to which discipline is equated with parental application of force, including corporal punishment, in order to obtain the child's compliance with the parent's directives.

In recent decades, research on socialization has increasingly incorporated a bilateral perspective where parental influence occurs in a relationship context in which children also contribute their own influences. The four contemporary perspectives on parental discipline and children's conformity that are reviewed in this entry show an increasing integration of several assumptions. These assumptions include that the ideas that influence between parents and children is inherently bidirectional, that parents and children are equally active agents, and that the dynamics of parent-child interactions take place in a distinctive long-term interdependent relationship context.

Behavioral Perspective

The behavioral perspective on discipline and conformity has conceptual roots in operant theory and functional analysis of behavior, which emphasize the study of parent-child interaction in terms of immediate observable contingencies between antecedents and consequences as causes of behavior. A trademark of the behavioral perspective is that it avoids the inference of mental constructs such as the relationship, the meaning of parent and child behaviors and goals and motives in analyzing parent-child interactions. In addition, the behavioral perspective was shaped by clinical research on children with conduct disorders whose

presenting problems include severe noncompliance. The Coercive Process Model, which provides a rationale for behavioral interventions, focused on parental failures to manage children's noncompliant behavior as the primary cause of children's aggression and other forms of deviance. The model proposes that parental mishandling of ordinary acts of noncompliance during early childhood may become part of a causally interconnected chain of mutually aversive behaviors that escalate in the context of the family interactions and lead to the child's involvement in antisocial behavior throughout development. Behavioral interventions in families of noncompliant children are designed to train parents to manage children's behavior by the effective application of external contingencies. Critical skills include identifying children's noncompliant behaviors; monitoring children's behavior outside the home; providing clear, direct, and forceful commands and administering contingent rewards for compliance; and contingent but noncoercive punishment such as time-out or work chores for noncompliance.

Contemporary behavioral perspectives consider bidirectional influence in the sense that noncompliance contributes to the dynamics of coercive family interactions and to impairments in parents' ability to manage their children's behavior. However, parents are emphasized as the critical agents of change in interactions involving discipline with children considered in a reactive role. Moreover, there is little consideration of the importance of relationship context or relationship variables that affect the dynamics of disciplinary interactions.

Self-Determination Theory

Self-Determination Theory derives from longstanding internalization perspectives, which emphasize children's development of internal motivations for conformity as crucial in socialization. Self-Determination Theory assumes that people are active organisms, with innate tendencies toward psychological growth and development, who strive to integrate their experiences into a coherent sense of self. Children are considered to be reflective, self-determining agents capable of judging the motivational origins of their

own actions and who act on the environment with a sense of choice. Parents are important in this process because their actions for guiding or controlling children's behavior can either support or undermine their natural tendencies toward active engagement and psychological growth. Common with earlier internalization perspectives, Self-Determination Theory assumes that children have various motives for complying with parental directives, the most important distinction being between external control or mere compliance and self-accepted internal control. Various motivational systems have been proposed as sources of children's internal control including guilt, empathy, and sense of autonomy. In Self-Determination Theory, it is argued that internal motives themselves have intrapsychic counterparts to internal and external motivation so that children can experience their conforming behavior as constraint or autonomous choice.

Internalization theories emphasize parenting behaviors employing minimal use of coercive power, reasoning, and autonomy support as a way of promoting internal control of conformity. According to Self-Determination Theory, three types of parental practices, including autonomy support (gentle control, provision of appropriate choice), structure or clear expectations, and caring interpersonal involvement, are important in facilitating children's development of an integrated and self-accepted internalization of self-regulation.

Regarding contemporary theoretical assumptions, Self-Determination Theory acknowledges children's agentic motives as key, and parents are encouraged to engage in practices that support children agency. However, most of this literature focuses on dimensional approaches to measuring parental behavior and the parent-child relationship rather than the dynamics of parent-child interaction. Although bidirectional effects are recognized, there is little research on the interactive processes by which these come about.

Contextual Perspectives

Behavioral theory and Self-Determination Theory consider parental discipline practices in terms of uniform, trait-like strategies, or dimensions, and implicitly ignore the role of context as a factor in

determining parental choice of strategy or children's responses to parental requests. However, researchers have long advocated a contextual approach to discipline where socialization experiences and self-regulation are considered to occur within specific situational contexts or qualitatively different social domains that have different requirements and follow different principles of parent-child relationships.

As an example of a situational approach, the argument is that individuals interpret the meaning of different situations that they encounter in their everyday lives and behave accordingly to the standards of conformity that are appropriate for each situation. Depending on the specific situation, a socially competent person may exhibit conformity to rules and expectations using the varying standards of exact immediate compliance, durable internal control in the absence of surveillance, or a more flexible standard of conformity consisting of negotiation and accommodation within close relationships. Studies have found that parental disciplinary choices have been highly situation specific, with parents choosing between ignoring, negotiation, power assertion, and reasoning depending on the nature of the misdeed. Moreover, different standards of children's conformity are accepted by parents as appropriate depending on the meaning of the situation. Social Domain Theory in particular has identified qualitatively different meanings that parents and children ascribe to situations, including moral, conventional, prudential and personal issues, which determine parental disciplinary choices and children's acceptance or resistance to parental pressures to conform.

Another contextual perspective considers socialization domains at a higher level of analysis. In this perspective, socialization is organized within larger domains that are activated at different times during socialization. Four domains have been proposed: protective caregiving, control-authority, group identification, and mutual reciprocity. In essence, each domain constitutes a different but complementary route to socialization with different principles for optimal interaction, somewhat different outcomes, and requiring different parenting practices.

Contextual perspectives provide a more complex and dynamic view of discipline in the parent-child relationship than the external control and

internalization perspectives. In terms of theoretical assumptions, contextual theories acknowledge bidirectional processes in that it is generally some characteristic of the child or the child's misdeed that activates parental behavior. However, although children's autonomy motives are considered, most theories emphasize parents' interpretations of situations. The essence of parental competence is the ability to adapt their mode of functioning to meet the requirements of different situations. This can be achieved more successfully if parents can accurately perceive their children's point of view or appropriately interpret the meaning of children's transgressions and tailor their interventions accordingly.

Social Relational Theory

Social Relational Theory emphasizes that socialization and the dynamics of parent-child interactions should be understood as occurring in the context of close personal relationships. In earlier research, dimensions of parent-child relationships such as parental acceptance, nurturance, involvement, and warmth were considered as background variables that enhanced the effectiveness of parental discipline practices. Recent relational perspectives propose that parent-child relationships rather than parental discipline strategies are the foundation for successful socialization. Parenting that contributes to the formation and maintenance of relationships characterized by mutual responsivity and reciprocity provides the early foundation of children's cooperation with parental requests and demands. Links between children's early compliance and measures such as secure attachment, positive affect, and responsive parental behavior in nondisciplinary contexts provide evidence for this view.

Particular to social relational perspective is a focus on the process of parent-child interactions and especially on the contribution of the relationship context to interaction dynamics between parents and children. Processes having to do with bidirectional influence and the experience of agency and exercise of power depend on the relationship context. Critical sources of dynamics include interacting on the foundation of expectancies developed in the prior history of the relationship, future anticipations that consider the effects of current

disciplinary choices on long-term outcomes or the future of the relationship, and the mutual interdependence of the needs and goals of both parents and children. Children's agency and autonomy is enabled by the relationship that is a source of both parental receptivity and vulnerability to the influence of children. Social Relational Theory is based on a dialectical conception of bidirectional influence where parents and children as human agents have capacities for interpreting the meaning of each others' behavior and for anticipating and adjusting to each others actions. Although parents and children have different needs, goals, and strategies, they are nevertheless embedded in an interdependent relationship that constrains their actions.

The relationship context helps to explain numerous bidirectional phenomena of family life, including parental receptivity to children's influence, mutual cooperation, negotiation, conflict, ambivalence, and parental tolerance of appropriate forms of resistance in their children. For both parent and child, the competent expression of agency involves accommodating to the mutual constraints of a reciprocal relationship. Whereas in earlier perspectives on discipline, the focus was on parents' management of power struggles so as to effectively force or persuade children to comply with parental commands, in the relational perspective, the primary focus is on the formation and management of the long-term relationship, a function that places constraints on the parent's use of coercive power.

In conclusion, contemporary theory on discipline is marked by an increased interest in the process of socialization, context, and a progressive integration of assumptions of bidirectional influence, the agency of parents and children, and the centrality of the parent-child relationship for understanding the processes and outcomes of socialization. An important problem is the translation of these scientific insights into applied perspectives and clinical interventions that often remain unidirectional and acontextual. However, there are signs of change. Guidelines for the effective use of discipline published by the American Academy of Pediatrics reflect a developmental perspective and places traditional concerns regarding compliance and internalization within a relationship system. It suggests that an effective approach

to discipline must contain three elements: a learning environment characterized by positive, supportive parent–child relationships; a proactive strategy for systematic teaching and strengthening of desired behaviors; and a reactive strategy for decreasing or eliminating undesired behaviors. New clinical interventions for conduct disorders are based on a synthesis of behavioral and developmental research on discipline and parent–child relationships. These propose that child misbehavior cannot be evaluated apart from the overall quality and sustainability of the parent–child relationship. Thus, relationship management is added to behavior management as a locus for change in maladaptive disciplinary practices.

Leon Kuczynski

See also Behavioral Parent Training; Parent–Child Relationships; Parenting; Socialization

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DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Discourse analysis is an umbrella term for a range of methodological approaches that analyze the use and functions of talk and text within social interaction. These approaches are used across social science disciplines such as psychology, sociology, linguistics, anthropology, and communication studies. Discourse analysis is interdisciplinary in nature, developed from work within speech act theory, ethnomethodology, and semiology as well as post-structuralist theorists such as Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida and the late works of philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein. Discourse analysis approaches are crucial for understanding human relationships because they focus primarily on interaction: How people talk to each other and the discursive practices (talking, writing) through which relationships develop, fall apart, and so on. This entry covers central features of discourse analysis, methodological issues, and some of the most commonly used versions of discourse analysis.

Common Features of Discourse Analytical Approaches

Discourse analysis approaches combine a set of theoretical assumptions about what discourse is and how it is used with a rigorous methodology that determines what kind of data are appropriate and how they should be analyzed. The distinctions between different versions of discourse analysis have led to many heated debates within the field, particularly where researchers are working within a specific discipline (such as psychology).

There are, however, underlying commonalities across discourse analysis approaches. First, most theorists agree that discourse—all forms of talk and text (and for some researchers, this includes bodily movements or eye gaze within social interaction)—is central to everyday life and thus, to human relationships. The term *discourse* is commonly used to highlight the focus on language use rather than grammatical or linguistic features.

The second area of commonality is the assumption that discourse is social action, that social practices are performed in and through discourse. This is seen in three ways. First, discourse is treated as constructing or constituting the world. That is, discourse does not merely reflect reality; rather, it constructs reality in particular ways. When people describe the world, they are thus building up a certain picture of the world (or person, for instance) that is open to challenge, collusion, or negotiation. This is a crucial departure from many linguistic and communication theories, which argue that language is a passive medium (or conduit or pipeline) through which ideas, thoughts, and so on are accessed.

Second, social action is also produced through there being many versions of the world that can be constructed in discourse. That is, if people assume discourse constructs reality, then it follows that different discourses construct reality in different ways. For example, newspapers may report on the same event, but the story is different each time. There is thus variability in talk and text, as discourse is produced in different contexts and for different functions; hence, as the function or context changes, so does the discourse. Discourse analysts argue, to a greater or lesser extent, that each version is as true as any other, that people cannot objectively claim to know the real version of events. Reality may thus be regarded as a series of multiple realities, each of which are brought to life through various discursive practices. It is within this area that there is much cause for dispute among discourse analysts, as some argue that to make a relativist claim (that there is not one truth but many truths) means that one cannot then state which version of the truth is the right or correct one. Those who take a more realist line (that there is an underlying truth behind discourse), however, claim to be able to take a political stance (a point of view or perspective) on an issue.

The final way in which social action is produced is through the coproduction of meaning within discourse. As discourse constructs reality or realities, the location of meaning making is treated not as an individual product (e.g., of how someone thinks) but as the product of social interaction. A helpful analogy here is to imagine the visual illusion that flips between being two heads (sideways on, facing each other) and being a vase. Meaning, it is argued, is created in the space between people (the vase) rather than within the people (heads) themselves. What people mean by a statement is thus not a matter of what they thought about when they said it, but how the words are interpreted and responded to by others. For example, whether or not a partner claims to love oneself is not about their intentions or feelings but about how they say it and how this statement functions in the interaction. This means that discourse must be understood within a historical, social, and cultural context. Again, there are differences of opinion as to how context should be defined: as only the words that people say (and how they say them); whether issues such as age, gender, and ethnicity should be defined; or as broader historical or cultural contexts.

Using Discourse Analysis as a Method

The social constructionist basis of most forms of discourse analysis means that it cannot simply be used as an interchangeable method within research (as if it were another tool in the toolbox of methods). This is because, as noted above, it requires the researcher to buy into certain theoretical assumptions: that discourse constructs reality and that context is fundamental to understanding discourse in any human relationship. That aside, the steps for acquiring and using discourse analysis are broadly similar, though they are by no means a straightforward recipe in terms of analysis.

Discourse analysis research involves the audio or video recording of social interaction (e.g., telephone conversations or family mealtimes) or the collecting together of textual documents (e.g., personal diaries or health promotion literature). A large corpus of data is accumulated on a particular topic. Data collection is guided by a research question(s) in a topic area. For instance, an interest

in the negotiation of household tasks within a relationship might lead to the collection of either interviews with couples or families who live together or the video recording of the family as they discuss tasks over the dinner table. If audio or video data are used, a written transcript (i.e., a word processed copy of the talk) is produced to be analyzed alongside the audio or video files and to be used to report findings in publications.

The data corpus is then coded by searching for recurring patterns, themes, or instances of a particular phenomenon. This process is guided by past research and the research question. The transcript will be read many times in order to get a feel for the data and to ensure that the initial stages of coding are as inclusive as possible. Continuing the example above, this might mean selecting those areas of talk where people seem to be in conflict or disagreement over duties. Analysis of the data then requires an in-depth examination of discursive devices such as use of pronouns, categories, or rhetorical features (where alternative versions of reality are directly or indirectly argued against). Styles of analysis vary greatly depending on which version of discourse analysis is being used from looking closely at the way in which people take turns in talk and how the sequential organization of interaction helps to construct the meaning of talk (discursive psychology) to considering the use of concepts such as synchronicity (the smooth coordination of people's talk) and shared ways of speaking (sociolinguistics and ethnographic approaches).

The resultant discourse analysis is often in the form of a set of themes and illustrative points that relate back to the research question. Extracts from the transcribed data are used to evidence the analytical points, enabling the reader to view the data directly and to decide for themselves about the veracity of the claims being made. As such, discourse analysis approaches are purely qualitative in method, but they are also extremely applied in that findings can be used to relate back directly to the setting in which the data was collected (or similar settings).

Versions of Discourse Analysis

The divergent roots of discourse analysis have led to many different varieties. Here, three strands are

outlined, along with more subtle variations within each, as these are most relevant for the study of human relationships.

Discursive psychology refers to a strand of discourse analysis that has emerged from the work of Derek Edwards and Jonathan Potter in the 1990s and develops Jonathan Potter and Margaret Wetherell's seminal work on discourse analysis in social psychology in 1987. This version examines how psychological concepts (such as emotions, attitudes, and beliefs) are constructed and understood in everyday interaction. This work is particularly suited to human relationships and has been used to examine, for example, marriage and family counseling sessions and family mealtime interaction. A slight variation on this approach is the discursive psychology developed by Rom Harré, which places more emphasis on cognitive processes (i.e., what people are thinking or mentally processing) and their role within talk. Edwards and Potter's version of discursive psychology is more agnostic about cognition. A third area within this branch of discourse analysis is that known as *critical discursive psychology*, which focuses on similar psychological notions but uses a broader notion of context, taking into account cultural and historical frameworks as well as the discourse itself. For instance, research by John Dixon and Margaret Wetherell examines issues of social justice and gender within talk about household labor.

A second major branch of discourse analysis is known as *critical discourse analysis*, which is based upon broadly Marxist principles: that some groups in society have more power than others and that oppression is mediated through discourse. Key theorists in this area are Norman Fairclough and Teun Van Dijk, and research has been carried out on topics where there is some level of inequality or abuses of power. It is this notion of power and of being critical (within discourse analysis, this is broadly used to refer to approaches that take a more realist perspective and thus can stake a claim about what version of the truth is more appropriate or acceptable than another) that is central to this version of discourse analysis. For instance, these approaches often focus on discourses around racism, sexism, or other perceived inequalities in society. There are strong similarities with *Foucauldian discourse*

analysis, which is routed in the work of philosopher Michel Foucault and which treats power as a more fluid concept. Here, power can be positive as well as negative, and it is closely connected with knowledge and discourse. Power is not something owned by groups through virtue of their ways of talking; it is flexible and can be used by individuals through use of different discourses and ways of representing others.

The third main strand of discourse analysis is characterized by approaches such as interactional sociolinguistics and the ethnography of speaking. These approaches take a broader perspective on context and are interested in areas such as interethnic communication, communicative styles (fixed ways of talking that are often associated with groups or communities of people) and the notion of speech genres, where talk is characterized by particular features and functions as a consequence of being associated with a particular area of communication (e.g., conversations between parents and children over mealtimes).

Sally Wiggins

See also Communication, Norms and Rules; Communication Processes, Verbal; Interaction Analysis; Language Usage in Relationships; Qualitative Methods in Relationship Research

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DISILLUSIONMENT IN MARRIAGE

Disillusionment is the decline in positive affect about and perceptions of the spouse and the marriage and a corresponding increase in negative affect about and perceptions of the partner and the marriage (e.g., feeling increasingly disappointed, bitter, and defeated; less close to the partner; and less fulfilled in the marriage). This entry outlines the theory on disillusionment in marriage, provides evidence of the prognostic value of disillusionment early in marriage for later marital instability, and traces its roots to spouses' idealization of one another and their relationship during courtship. It concludes by describing the Marital Disillusionment Scale that can be used to assess perceptions of disillusionment in marriage.

Theory on Disillusionment in Marriage

An important characteristic of courtship is the process of idealization. According to Willard Waller, partners see each other fairly realistically at the beginning of a dating relationship. As the relationship develops and partners' feelings for each other become deeper, however, dating partners increasingly feel a strong sense of enchantment and wish to display only some of their personality characteristics in order to live up to the images they believe the other partner may have of them. They also tend to focus on what they perceive to be their partner's virtues. As a result, they have mostly positive interactions with and develop favorable impressions of their partners' personality. Although dating partners are not necessarily unaware of each other's shortcomings, they often fail to realize what effect their partners' shortcomings may have in the future; rather, they focus their attention on the positive side of their partner and the good qualities of their courtship.

Once partners are married, however, and interdependence increases, spouses begin to engage less in impression management and generally become more aware of each other's true personality and character. Evidence of the partner's shortcomings inevitably begin to emerge. This lack of congruence between people's perceptions of their partner and the evidence of their partner's behavior is experienced

as threatening because it has the potential to undermine people's belief that their partner truly is the right person for them. Moreover, spouses' views of each other usually change and become less positive, setting them up for disillusionment.

Research on Disillusionment in Marriage

Research shows that disillusionment during the early years of marriage is of prognostic importance for later divorce. Two studies in particular demonstrate the significance of disappointment and disillusionment in marriage for subsequent divorce. Kim Buehlman and colleagues studied 52 married couples over a period of 3 years using an oral history interview as well as observational and physiological measures to predict marital stability. They found that spouses', especially husbands', disappointment in their marriage, as captured in the expression of depression, hopelessness, and defeat, was the single most powerful predictor of divorce 3 years later.

Ted Huston and his colleagues examined disillusionment early in marriage and its effect on marital stability. They found that disillusionment during the first 2 years of marriage, as reflected in (a) loss of love, (b) declines in affection, (c) decreases in one's perception of the partner as a responsive person, and (d) increases in feelings of ambivalence about the relationship, distinguished couples headed for divorce from those who stayed married.

Courtship Antecedents of Disillusionment in Marriage

Waller's Theory of Idealization during courtship, and subsequent disillusionment in marriage, has spurred interest and empirical research among social scientists. One of the earliest empirical studies examining the premarital predictors of disillusionment in marriage was conducted by Charles Hobart more than 50 years ago. He found support for the notion that men's premarital romanticism was associated with disillusionment early in marriage. More recently, Sylvia Niehuis and her colleagues systematically examined the courtship predictors of disillusionment early in marriage. Their research findings suggested two different

patterns of idealization during courtship, each one predicting disillusionment in marriage. Specifically, some premarital partners seemed to rush blindly into marriage, driven mostly by extremely passionate courtships. These partners fell in love with one another very quickly, engaged in premarital sex very soon, and early in the relationship felt certain of wanting to marry one another. They also had very short courtships that left little room for testing partners' differences and compatibility. Instead, premarital conflict and feelings of ambivalence seemed to add spice to their relationship. These couples may have experienced disillusionment early in marriage because of their discoveries about their partner and the quality of their relationship.

Other partners seemed to have been aware of problems in their premarital relationship as indicated by partners engaging in many relationship maintaining behaviors and dating each other for a very long time before they got married. These couples also had courtships characterized by very little passion. Partners took much longer to fall in love with each other, to have premarital sex for the first time, and to feel certain about wanting to marry one another. For these couples, a crushed hope of a better relationship after marriage may have been the primary reason for disillusionment early in marriage.

Assessing Disillusionment

Despite its importance for understanding marital instability, marital disillusionment has not received much attention from researchers. This is partly due to the lack of direct measurement. Disillusionment, by definition, is a process that occurs over time, and most researchers have used short- or long-term longitudinal designs to assess it; this approach requires much time, effort, and multiple points of measurement. Moreover, some have conceptualized disillusionment as changes in feelings for, behaviors toward, and perceptions about the partner rather than directly assessing participants' perceptions of disillusionment.

Niehuis and her colleagues developed the Marital Disillusionment Scale to provide a direct measure of perceived disillusionment that could be used in survey research. Disillusionment as assessed by their

scale encompasses both a decrease in perceived positive and an increase in perceived negative feelings, behaviors, and cognitions over time. The scale consists of 16 items (e.g., “Marriage was not at all what I had expected it to be; I felt very disappointed and bitter”; “I used to love spending time with my spouse, but then it started feeling like a chore”; “Before we got married, my spouse put his/her best foot forward; later he/she no longer bothered”) and has high internal consistency and high convergent, discriminant, and criterion validity.

Sylvia Niehuis and Kyung-Hee Lee

See also Idealization

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DISPLAY RULES

Display rules is a term originally coined by Paul Ekman and Wallace V. Friesen, who used it to explain how people of different cultures manage their displays of emotion, depending on context. It refers to the rules, norms, guidelines, and expectations that people learn to manage and modify emotional displays depending on social circumstances. Display rules explain how individuals may alter and manage their emotional expressions depending on whom they are interacting with. Most people, for example, would readily express anger toward a younger sibling at home but would be more hesitant to do so toward their boss at work because they have learned a display rule not

to display such aggressive emotions toward people of higher status in that context. This entry discusses why display rules exist, how they work, and the cultural similarities and differences in them.

Why Do Display Rules Exist?

Display rules play a major role in every culture and society because they aid the regulation of behaviors in social contexts. They allow individuals to engage in normative behaviors prescribed by social roles in specific situations and help to maintain culture-specific meaning of social relationships. Not displaying anger toward one's boss, for instance, helps to ensure that one does not aggress behaviorally toward his or her boss, keeping social hierarchies intact and ensuring that the boss–subordinate relationship stays within culturally prescribed boundaries for appropriateness. The importance of display rules to social regulation may be seen most dramatically, perhaps, when individuals express emotions that violate their culture's display rules; for example, when a person smiles at a funeral or displays anger at a wedding. Display rules work to make sure things like that do not happen, and social interaction is regulated.

How Do Display Rules Work?

Display rules can modify expressions in different ways, depending on the situation. Individuals may learn to express emotions as they are with no modification (i.e., what one sees is what one gets), such as when people are alone or with close friends or family members. Display rules may deamplify an expression, showing less than is actually felt, such as when individuals show their displeasure but not in its entirety to a store clerk in public. In other circumstances, display rules may amplify an expression, showing more than what is felt, such as when subordinates laugh at the boss's not-so-funny jokes. Display rules can neutralize expressions to show nothing (the poker face) or to qualify an expression by displaying it with other emotions that comment on it. Adults often express anger toward children with a smile, for instance, or sadness and distress with a smile toward their friends. In these cases, the smiles

qualify the meaning and interpretation of the anger or sadness. Display rules can mask an expression by concealing it and showing another in its place, such as when individuals smile even though in reality they feel angry or sad. Finally, display rules can encourage individuals to simulate expressions when no emotion is actually felt.

Cultural Similarities and Differences in Display Rules

People of all cultures learn display rules early in life. For example, studies have documented children as young as preschool age masking negative emotions with smiles. Certainly in young childhood—primary school years—children are able to verbalize many of the rules they have learned, demonstrating conscious knowledge of display rules.

There are universal and culture-specific aspects to display rules. For example, people of all cultures probably learn to not display emotions of anger, contempt, or disgust toward higher-status others, especially in public contexts. Thus there is a functional universality of this display rule. Yet people of different cultures also learn different, specific ways of putting this display rule into action. Some cultures, for example, may foster neutralization of one's anger, showing nothing to the boss. Other cultures, however, may foster masking of the anger, showing something else altogether (often a smile). Others may encourage the display of anger toward the boss but at the right time and place and at lower intensity (deamplification). Thus, there are major cultural differences on what may be considered the tactical level of display rules even though there are universal aspects to their functional or operational level.

In fact, there are many functionally universal display rules on the operational level. For example, individuals tend to endorse the greatest emotional displays when alone, then with family and close friends, then with acquaintances, and finally with strangers, and this effect appears to be universal. Emotional exchange appears to be a central component of close relationships; the history, familiarity, and intimacy of these relationships provide individuals with the safety of expressing emotions in a context in which they know how they will be judged.

Accordingly, the management of emotional displays and the perception of one's emotional display management by others are important factors in the start of friendships and other communal relationships.

Display rules also differ according to context and culture. Individuals endorse emotional expression with ingroup others more than when with outgroups, and this difference appears to be universal. But there are also cultural and emotion-specific differences in this ingroup–outgroup difference. Members of individualistic cultures tend to endorse more negative and less positive emotions to ingroups and more positive and less negative emotions to outgroups. Conversely, members of collectivistic cultures tend to endorse the opposite: more positive and less negative emotions toward ingroups and less positive and more negative emotions to outgroups.

When individuals mask or qualify their emotions, they usually do so with smiles. Yet the smile of true enjoyment is behaviorally different than smiles used to mask or qualify emotions. True enjoyment smiles not only involve the smiling muscle (zygomatic major), which pulls the lip corners up, as is characteristic of masking smiles, but also involve the muscle surrounding the eyes (orbicularis oculi), which raises the cheeks and provides the twinkle in the smile. True enjoyment smiles are known as Duchenne smiles, named after the French physiologist who discovered their coupling. (Spontaneous smiles of true enjoyment also involve smooth onset and offset of the facial muscles and symmetry on both the right and left sides.) Other smiles fall into the large category of non-Duchenne smiles. Thus, although smiles are the most commonly used expression to mask or qualify emotions, they are distinguishable behaviorally by whether or not they are Duchenne smiles.

David Matsumoto

See also Communication, Nonverbal; Emotional Communication; Emotion in Relationships; Emotion Regulation in Relationships; Expressed Emotion; Facial Expressions; Nonverbal Communication, Status Differences

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DISSOLUTION OF RELATIONSHIPS, BREAKUP STRATEGIES

The dissolution of a relationship can be considered one of the most painful and stressful events in the life of an individual, with psychological and emotional effects that may extend to the family and social network. With current divorce rates at approximately 50 percent, there is a clear need to learn more about both marital and premarital relationship breakups. This entry describes one specific part of the dissolution process—the strategies that are used to disengage from intimate relationships.

Relationship researchers do not characterize the breakup as a single event but rather as a process that may lead to a change in or the eventual termination of a relationship. Behavioral or communication strategies are considered in most stage models of relationship dissolution. There are several stage models of the process that have been proposed that include the common patterns that a couple may go through. The process typically begins with the realization that one or both partners are dissatisfied with the relationship. Once the decision has been made to act on or to discuss this dissatisfaction, a number of breakup strategies may be used.

Breakup strategies include both verbal and non-verbal methods to disengage from or terminate a relationship. These strategies are considered goal-directed and proactive and are typically examined from the perspective of the initiator. Most breakups are not mutual—in most cases, one partner unilaterally wants to end the relationship more

than the other. It is the initiator who engages in the behavioral and communication strategies that are instrumental in changing or ending the relationship. There are, however, some strategies that have been identified that partners may use when the decision is mutual.

Research focused on understanding more about these strategies and their role in the breakup process has had two primary goals. The first goal has been to identify and classify the particular strategies that individuals use during the dissolution of relationships. A second goal has been to investigate whether the selection of breakup strategies depends on particular factors, including individual attributes (e.g., age, gender), relationship attributes (e.g., the level of intimacy), or situational factors (e.g., marital vs. premarital, amount of overlap in shared social networks).

Classification of Strategies

Researchers have identified numerous breakup strategies by asking individuals to generate or recall methods that they have used to end relationships. Example strategies that have been identified include “openly express the desire to end the relationship”; “avoid contact with my partner”; “reduce displays of affection”; “ask someone else to break the news” and “act unpleasant so that my partner initiates a breakup.” Statistical techniques (e.g., factor analysis, cluster analysis) have been used to determine the commonalities among the various strategies. Research by Michael Cody and colleagues supports the classification of strategies into five general categories: (1) behavioral de-escalation, (2) de-escalation, (3) justification, (4) positive tone, and (5) negative identity management. Research by Leslie Baxter has identified four categories: (1) avoidance/withdrawal, (2) manipulatory, (3) positive tone, and (4) open confrontation.

Baxter suggested that both unilateral (i.e., non-mutual) and bilateral (i.e., mutual) breakup strategies can be described by two underlying dimensions. The first is the *directness* (or indirectness) of the strategy. This dimension describes whether or not the initiator is explicit or unambiguous in stating that the goal is to terminate the relationship. Less direct strategies may not require

such an explicit statement. The second dimension is the degree of other-orientation. Other-oriented strategies show concern and attempt to reduce hurting one's partner. In contrast, self-orientation strategies are done with less consideration for protecting the feelings of one's partner. Examples of strategies will be illustrated with respect to these two dimensions.

Direct strategies include *fait accompli* in which there is a direct, unilateral ending of the relationship by the initiator. Such a strategy can also clearly be classified as more self- than other-oriented because the initiator pronounces the relationship ended with no opportunity for the partner to engage in discussion or negotiation. Another direct strategy has been called the state-of-the-relationship talk. The initiator clearly is concerned about his or her partner, and this strategy has the appearance of being more mutual than it is, allowing the partner to save face.

There are two main strategies that are used when both partners desire a breakup. Attributional conflict, as the name implies, involves each partner blaming the other for causing the end of the relationship. In contrast, a negotiated farewell is direct but far more other-oriented. The discussion may focus on shared blame or external causes and may occur in the context of desired or anticipated future contact (e.g., because of a shared social networks or children).

Less direct strategies include those described as withdrawal-avoidance (e.g., reducing contact, disclosure, or intimacy). Such actions are considered both self-oriented and unilateral, as they may leave the partner feeling confused and hurt. Given the proliferation of new communication technologies, a subcategory of avoidant strategies has emerged that involves avoidance via distant communication (e.g., e-mail, text messaging). Pseudo-de-escalation (i.e., "let's just be friends") is a unilateral decision that hides the intention of exiting the relationship through the desire to redefine it or to reduce the level of intimacy. Because the true intention is not made known, this is a relatively indirect strategy. A manipulatory strategy such as cost-escalation (i.e., acting inconsiderate or unpleasant in the hopes that the partner will initiate the breakup) is also considered an indirect and self-oriented strategy.

Factors Influencing the Choice of Breakup Strategy

A number of studies have identified some of the factors that may influence the choice of particular strategies. Direct strategies are more likely to be selected when a high level of closeness or intimacy existed in the relationship. Moreover, direct strategies are likely to be used if the cause of the dissatisfaction can be characterized as external or if there is the desire to maintain contact. Recent research has shown that different strategies vary in how compassionate they are to the partner being left with certain types of direct, other-oriented strategies that are rated as very compassionate, even though the intent is to end a relationship. External factors (e.g., the need to relocate for school or employment) are associated with the selection of very compassionate strategies, whereas the special case of partner betrayal or infidelity is associated with the least compassionate or other-oriented breakup strategies.

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See also Compassionate Love; Dissolution of Relationships, Processes; Extradysadic Sex; Facework

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DISSOLUTION OF RELATIONSHIPS, CAUSES

With the current rate of divorce in the United States being approximately 50 percent, not only do the spouses who are divorcing try to understand what caused the dissolution of their relationship but also do social scientists. This entry will examine possible causes of both divorce and the dissolution of other types of romantic relationships. Before doing so, it is important to address several issues pertaining to the causes of relationship dissolution.

Complexities in Determining Causes of Relationship Dissolution

Identifying the cause or the causes of relationship dissolution is a very challenging endeavor for a number of reasons. First, there are important distinctions among what people report to be the cause of their breakup (i.e., the public perspective), what they actually believe to be the cause of their breakup (i.e., the partner perspective), and what may have actually caused the breakup (the researcher perspective). Research has suggested that people who are going through a divorce or dissolution typically create a public story of what happened in their relationship that led to its termination. These stories often present the individual in a positive light, minimizing the individual's role and attributing the dissolution to either one's ex-spouse or ex-partner or to unfortunate circumstances. Thus, these stories may be both incomplete and even inaccurate with respect to how the events surrounding the divorce actually unfolded. In addition, individuals may come to actually believe their stories, even if they were distortions of the truth. For example, partners often divide themselves into the leaver and the person who was left. However, research by Joseph Hopper indicates that it is not a simple matter to determine who was the one to leave and who was left and that individuals often assume these roles even though both parties were dissatisfied with the relationship and both may have been thinking of dissolving the relationship.

In addition, researchers attempt to identify the causes of divorce on a grander scale in the sense that they look for regularities in factors that may

lead to dissolution among people in general. Whereas the partner perspective identifies each individual's view of what caused the dissolution of his or her relationship, the researcher perspective uses empirical investigations to identify factors that seem to account for dissolutions in the general population. Thus, the partner and researcher perspectives have different goals and may reach apparently divergent conclusions. For example, many individuals blame the termination of their relationship on infidelity. However, because many relationships survive instances of infidelity, the researcher perspective suggests that infidelity is seldom the primary cause of dissolution. Each perspective taps a different, but important, aspect of the complex picture of why dissolution occurs.

A second major challenge is that no single cause is likely to be sufficient to explain why dissolution occurred. The challenge is to identify the multiple factors that are causally responsible for the termination of the relationship. Finally, the factors reviewed in this entry do not always lead to relationship dissolution but increase the chances that it will occur.

First, this entry considers individual and relationship factors that contribute to divorce and then it reviews some possible societal factors implicated in high dissolution rates.

Individual and Relationship Factors

Researcher Caryl Rusbult suggested that three factors determine the likelihood that a romantic relationship will terminate. First, when partners are dissatisfied with the relationship, they are more likely to try to end it. Second, when the partners have few resources invested in the relationship, they are more likely to terminate the relationship. Investments include the presence of children, co-owning real estate or personal property, or simply spending considerable time together. Finally, when partners believe that they have high quality alternative relationships available to them, they are more likely to leave their current relationship. For example, if one partner believes that she or he could find a much more supportive and loving partner than her or his current one, she or he is more likely to leave the relationship. The discussion below is organized around these three factors that can contribute to relationship dissolution.

Relationship Satisfaction

Low levels of relationship satisfaction increase the chances of dissolution. Because most relationships begin with both partners having relatively high levels of satisfaction, it is clear that there are factors that erode these high levels of satisfaction in relationships that eventually end in dissolution. First, research suggests that relationship partners who have overly high relationship expectations (e.g., they believe that passion should always remain high) tend to become disappointed as these expectations are not fulfilled, and they become less satisfied over time.

Second, individuals may have certain personality characteristics that led both partners to become less satisfied with the relationship. In particular, neuroticism (i.e., high levels of negative emotions, particularly anxiety) has been identified as a characteristic that often leads the person to feel insecure, anxious, and unsure about how well the relationship is functioning. Equally important, one partner's high level of neuroticism also erodes the other's level of relationship satisfaction. It is difficult to remain satisfied in a relationship when one's partner is frequently anxious, insecure, challenging, and testing of one's fidelity and trust. If both partners are neurotic, even though they may experience some comfort in both having some of the same feelings and thoughts, the negative effects on the relationship may be particularly great.

Other psychological characteristics may contribute to the likelihood of dissolution. Relationships in which one or both of the spouses suffer from a personality disorder, mental disorder, and/or substance abuse all have an increased risk for relationship discord. These psychological challenges can lead to divorce or dissolution by increasing tensions in the relationship and detracting from either or both partner's relationship satisfaction.

Third, relationship satisfaction may diminish due to high levels of conflict. Individuals who come into the relationship with poor conflict management skills have an increased chance of relationship conflict and tension in any of their relationships. There is even evidence that divorce proneness has a genetic component, presumably because there is a genetic component to personality characteristics that increase relationship conflict and that detract from relationship satisfaction.

Fourth, stress from having stepchildren can lower relationship satisfaction. There is evidence that second (and subsequent) marriages are more likely to end in divorce than are first marriages at least partly because of the stresses arising from having stepchildren. The stepparent-stepchild relationship can be quite stressful not only for the stepparent and stepchild but also for the biological parent and siblings.

Finally, many partners report that infidelity was the primary cause of their breakup, presumably in part because it detracts from relationship satisfaction. However, it is also difficult to determine whether the transgression led to the relationship dissatisfaction, whether relationship dissatisfaction led to the transgression, or whether both causal mechanisms are operative. Nevertheless, although research suggests that infidelity by itself is seldom the only cause of dissolution, it clearly contributes to an erosion of relationship satisfaction.

Investments

Investments refer to resources that serve as barriers to ending the romantic relationship. Typical investments include joint ownership of real estate and/or personal property, considerable time spent together as a couple, and a large number of mutual friends. To the extent that couples have made these investments together, their chances of dissolution are reduced.

Another investment that reduces the chances of dissolution is when a couple has its own biological children. Parents typically become more reluctant to break up when they have children because they are fearful of the potential negative consequences on their children. In fact, there is even some evidence that the sex of their children influences decisions to stay together or break up. Couples with at least one boy are less likely to divorce than are couples with only girls, presumably because parents, especially fathers, believe that boys are more vulnerable and because boys are more valued than girls.

Being legally married is also an investment that reduces the chances of dissolution. The institution of marriage is legally recognized in every state and provides married couples with precise provisions and legal recourse in the event that the marriage is dissolved. Cohabiting couples are not afforded this same protection, and in the

event of the dissolution of the relationship, the laws are much less clear regarding what the rights are of each individual in the relationship. Therefore, married spouses have an investment in the institution of marriage that cohabiting partners may not have, an investment which may reduce the chances of dissolution. Not having a marriage certificate may also make it easier to break up from an emotional perspective.

In addition, individuals who are very religious and whose religions strongly discourage divorce face barriers to divorce that less-religious individuals and those with allegiances to religions that are more accepting of divorce do not. Thus, religiosity may serve as an investment that may lessen the chances that either or both spouses will initiate a divorce.

Finally, financial investments decrease the likelihood that couples will dissolve their relationship. When couples have considerable shared assets, such as a house or automobiles, it can be more costly to divorce or break up than when the couple has few assets. In addition, it is less expensive to live together in one household than in two. Finally, if one does not believe that he or she can manage financially on only his or her income, that partner may feel pressure to stay in the relationship.

Relationship Alternatives

Relationship alternatives refer to how easily the partner believes that he or she could find an alternative partner to the present one. Certainly, the factors listed earlier that erode away at relationship satisfaction also would lead one to believe that he or she could possibly obtain a more satisfying alternative partner. In addition, individuals who have more power and independence in the relationship may believe that they have more attractive relationship alternatives. Partners with higher-paying occupations and/or those with substantial savings may feel less tied to the present relationship because they know that they could function well financially outside of the relationship. By contrast, those who believe that they are financially dependent on the partner are likely to be reluctant to explore relationship alternatives outside of the present one. With women having more economic and employment equality than ever before, many women may be disinclined to stay in unsatisfactory relationships because they

are no longer as financially dependent on their partner as they were in the past.

However, the impact of power differentials is not restricted solely to financial resources. Those partners who believe that they can manage well without the current partner because they are psychologically and socially prepared to live on their own may be more likely to end the present relationship.

Another example involves individuals who believe that they are attractive relationship partners (e.g., they are physically attractive, have engaging personalities, and/or are intelligent). These partners may be more likely to consider alternative relationships than would those individuals who believe that they are relatively unattractive relationship partners.

Finally, attractive alternative relationship partners are more accessible than ever before. Never before in history have individuals had more opportunity to communicate and interact with other individuals who may become relationship partners. In particular, the widespread popularity and use of the Internet, as well as matchmaking services that partners may choose to use even though they are presently in a relationship, may present temptations and attractions that increase the chances of meeting individuals whom they perceive to be more attractive than their current partner. Additionally, people are more geographically mobile than ever before, a factor which may further increase the chances of finding and meeting an attractive alternative partner. Therefore, the birth of the personal computer and the increased mobility of society have become factors contributing to the risk of relationship dissolution.

Societal Factors

There are a number of societal factors that may have an influence on the likelihood of dissolution. One of these factors refers to the legal landscape concerning divorce. As recently as 40 years ago, the laws in most states required the spouse filing for divorce to allege, and to be able to prove if necessary, that his or her spouse was at fault for the divorce. Some of the more common allegations were infidelity, physical or emotional abuse, substance abuse, incarceration, and abandonment.

Not only is protracted litigation to substantiate sufficient allegations expensive, but individuals lacking sufficient legal grounds to be granted a divorce often resorted to making up allegations, either with their spouse's consent or at the expense of an otherwise amicable dissolution.

To simplify the process and to take away the need for deception, almost all states have now adopted what are known as no-fault divorce statutes. These statutes do not require any allegation of fault other than a general allegation that the marriage is irretrievably broken. Opponents of no-fault divorce statutes believe that making divorce easier to obtain caused an increase in the divorce rate. However, there is evidence to show that the divorce rate had increased dramatically before the changes in divorce laws. Thus, it appears that the changes in divorce laws were themselves caused at least partly by pressures from the growing number of couples who wanted easier, more truthful, and less litigious avenues toward obtaining a divorce. However, in selected instances, it is still possible that easier legal access to divorce has removed some barriers that previously may have kept unhappy couples married and, therefore, may have contributed to selected divorces.

Another societal factor that may impact couples is the economy. Downturns in the economy may lead to loss of employment or a reduction in wages, both of which place considerable stress on relationships. Even though financial difficulties may also serve as a barrier to leaving a relationship, the stress resulting from these strains, for some couples, may be powerful enough to lead to relationship termination. World events, such as the September 11, 2001, attacks or the war in Iraq may also affect the likelihood of divorce or dissolution because they may add to individuals' stress levels, change people's priorities in life (e.g., life is too short to stay in a dissatisfying relationship), and/or lead to lifestyle changes that negatively impact the relationship.

As a final example, changes over time in societal norms may impact the divorce rate. Partly because it is more common, divorce has become more socially acceptable in the United States and less stigmatized in the last 40 years. This greater social acceptance as a whole may lead some to pursue a divorce when they would not have in earlier eras when a greater stigma was attached to divorce. Related to societal norms is the issue of cultural

world views. Individualistic cultures, like the United States and other Western countries, are more accepting of divorce and/or relationship dissolution than are more collectivist cultures, such as those in Africa and Asia.

Variations in Causes of Dissolution

There is considerable evidence that different groups of individuals vary in terms of the factors leading to dissolution. Among these are the partner's age, sex, and race/ethnicity.

Age

As individuals age, their expectations for romantic relationships are likely to change. Younger, less experienced individuals may have overly high expectations regarding how much passion and intimacy should and will be in their romantic relationships. Their relationship satisfaction may decline if, as is typically the case, passion abates in their relationship. If their satisfaction is sufficiently diminished, they may be more prone to pursue relationship dissolution.

Older individuals may have more practical motivations for being in and staying in romantic relationships, such as financial security and companionship. These partners may understand that passion typically declines over time and armed with these realistic expectations, adjust well to this change in their relationship. However, if their financial well-being is threatened, if they are not having their companionship needs met by their partner, and/or if their partner is not contributing adequately to household and childrearing tasks, they may be more likely to think about and/or to initiate dissolution than would younger partners. On the other hand, older women and women with children may feel that they are less competitive in the relationship market should they leave and, thus, may be less likely to pursue relationship termination.

Sex of Partner

Research has consistently shown that women are more likely to legally file for divorce than are men. However, this does not necessarily mean that women actually initiate the process of separating

and eventually divorcing. Research indicates that it is extremely difficult to determine which partner played which roles as the process unfolded. However, a few patterns are worthy of note. More women than men experience depression and anxiety disorders, so men are more likely to report that their spouse's psychological distress was the cause of their divorce. In contrast, men have a greater propensity for alcoholism, substance abuse, and infidelity, which lead women to be more likely to identify these factors as the cause of their divorce. Again, however, researchers cannot state with any certainty that any or all of these factors are actual causes of the divorce.

Race and Ethnicity

Although research studies have shown that African Americans are more likely to get divorced than any other racial/ethnic group, researchers know little about why this is the case. Some have suggested that African Americans, because single parenthood is more common in their communities and because there are more available women than men in the African-American community, are more accepting of relationship breakup in general and divorce in particular. Some ethnic groups, such as Hispanic Americans, may hold a strong stigma against divorce, believing that marriage is a lifetime commitment and that divorce is a violation against the family.

Conclusions

As stated earlier, it is difficult to determine with precision why a relationship ends in divorce or dissolution. In future research, scholars need to work at both the micro- and macrolevels. At the microlevel, researchers need to conduct intensive interviews with partners, ideally both during the dissolution process as well as after it, to understand the meanings they attach to various relationship events and how these events led to the breakup. At the macrolevel, researchers need to study large groups of nationally representative samples of dissolving couples to identify factors that seem to be causally related to relationship termination in the future. At both levels, longitudinal research that studies individuals and couples multiple times over an extended period is necessary. Through this multifaceted approach,

researchers can hopefully gain a better understanding of what researchers have identified as the partner, public, and researcher perspectives on the causes of dissolution.

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See also Dissolution of Relationships, Coping and Aftermath; Dissolution of Relationships, Processes; Divorce, Prevalence and Trends; Intergenerational Transmission of Divorce; Marital Satisfaction and Quality; Relationship Distress and Depression; Stepfamilies

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DISSOLUTION OF RELATIONSHIPS, COPING AND AFTERMATH

The emotional landscape of a romantic separation is vast and complex. For some people, the end of

a relationship is a high point, a moment of relief and newfound freedom that is demarcated by the courage to stand up and end that which was bad. For other people, a breakup hurts in the worst possible ways; loneliness, emptiness, and depression can be fixtures of even the most normative of grief responses. Over time, most people in this situation recover well and regain their normal levels of functioning. For still others, though, grief responses can be much more protracted, evolving into depressive episodes or precipitating problems with substance abuse. In these cases, the breakup can exert a lasting negative toll on one's overall mental health and life satisfaction. This entry reviews research on the psychological consequences of romantic breakup experiences as well as research on the moderators and mediators of adult breakup adjustment, which are explained in detail below. The analysis focuses on the known mechanisms of successful recovery from a breakup and discusses who fares well or poorly in the aftermath of a separation experience. Although there are obvious differences between a nonmarital separation and a divorce (especially when children are involved), both topics are considered here largely because it is expected that coping responses to these experiences differ in quantity more than in kind.

The Consequences of Romantic Separations

This review begins with an important question: Do romantic separations lead to increases in psychological distress? The short answer is yes, but a longer and more detailed analysis suggests that many of the putative consequences of a breakup experience may be causes of the separation itself. Several studies indicate that the psychological problems commonly associated with marital separation (e.g., depression, substance use and abuse, decreases in life satisfaction) predate the divorce and sometimes even the marriage. These findings hold true for nonmarital breakups as well, but the evidence remains mixed, with some research demonstrating that high levels of depression (among those who break up) existed before the separation and other studies showing that depression is a distinct consequence of the end of a relationship. These selection-causation effects may differ depending on the outcomes of interest. Evidence

indicates that problems of substance abuse, including diagnosable substance use disorders, increase in the wake of a separation. Perhaps the strongest evidence for the causal effect of romantic separations comes from genetically controlled studies of twins discordant for mood disorders. Given that monozygotic twins have an identical genotype, differences in life events are presumed to be causal agents in the onset of psychopathology when the twins are discordant for a particular psychological profile. In twins discordant for major depression, marital separations yield a raw risk of 21.6 percent for the onset of a major depressive episode in the first month after the event, which suggests a strong causal effect from divorce to a depressive episode. (This finding, unfortunately, says little about subclinical experiences such as loneliness, longing, generalized dysphoria and sadness, and loss of satisfaction with life, which are among the most commonly described consequences of a separation experience.) Overall, there is clear evidence that negative psychological states can both select people out of marriage and emerge as a specific consequence of the separation experience.

Integrating the Mind and the Body

A small but growing body of evidence suggests that romantic separations can have deleterious effects on physical health outcomes. Although epidemiological studies show clear associations between divorce and physical illness, the psychological correlates of these associations remain poorly understood. For instance, women experiencing a stressful marital separation have elevated levels of evening cortisol and urinary testosterone relative to their married counterparts. Evidence also indicates that among divorced adults, continued attachment to a former spouse is associated with worse immunological outcomes. More research is needed to understand how psychological variables play a role in maintaining, attenuating, or consistently reactivating potentially harmful biological stress response.

Understudied Outcomes of Interest and Populations

With the exception of the health outcome literature described above, most published reports of

nonmarital and marital separation adjustment rely solely on participants' reports of their subjective mood states. This is a clear limitation of the existing literature, and there is much that can be gained by moving beyond the assessment of subjective mood states. Combining reports of subjective experience with the methodologies of cognitive science, informant ratings (such as a friend's report), psychophysiological methods, and/or behavioral samples (such as natural language use) seem likely to provide a more nuanced account of individual differences in emotional recovery. Certain groups of people are understudied as well. Little is known about how breakups impact adolescents, and a great deal of research remains to be conducted on the end of homosexual relationships, as well as with other cultural groups and subgroups.

Resilience Is the Norm, Not the Exception

Most people ultimately fare well following a separation experience. By 2 years after a divorce, many adults report having used the window of change as opportunity for growth, transformation, and personal discovery. Two primary pathways are proposed for understanding the ways in which individuals may flourish following the end of a relationship. The first is a stress-relief pathway in which separation experiences relieve the stress of an unhappy marriage; the second is a crisis-growth pathway in which the challenges of the relationship upheaval provide a critical window for personal growth. Growth and resilience frameworks call for greater emphasis on the positive outcomes of dissolution experiences; indeed, breakups may hold a unique position among stressful life events—they are among the strongest and the most systematic precipitants of emotional distress, but they may also provide some of life's most critical openings for rejuvenation and growth.

The Moderators and Mediators of Separation Adjustment

Moderators of separation adjustment are variables that increase risk for or protect against poor outcomes following separation experiences. Moderators are usually static variables such as gender, demographics (including demographics

specific to the separation, such as whether a person initiated the separation or was left by his or her partner), personality factors, and the availability of social support. In contrast, mediators of breakup separation are the specific-proximal psychological variables that may explain the association between relationship dissolution and subsequent mental health outcomes; although it is clear that mediators of interest may themselves represent important outcomes (e.g., meaning making, one's sense of self-identity), these psychological variables are considered the best targets for experimental interventions and treatments aimed at promoting positive adjustment.

The Moderators

Moderators of separation adjustment get most of the attention in the research literature, and several findings are noteworthy. First, the literature is mixed on gender differences after separation experiences. Relative to women, men tend to report more emotional distress and greater health problems in the wake of a divorce, and it is theorized—although never proven empirically—that this effect is due to the loss of women's protective buffering. In marriage, women tend to monitor men's health behaviors and encourage them to eat better, sleep more, and drink and smoke less. When relationships dissolve, men tend to engage in many more unhealthy behaviors. At the same time, however, women are more likely to become depressed after a separation experience, and this is especially so in situations where negative economic changes are large and persistent. Women suffer a much greater economic toll in divorce than men, and financial instability can be a strong precipitant. Second, initiator status plays a strong role in separation adjustment. People who feel left or dumped by a partner are more likely to report ongoing emotional difficulties in the months after a separation. This does not mean that the experience of initiating or leaving a relationship is an easy one. Initiators often experience guilt and periods of sadness, but these emotions typically predate the decision to end the relationship.

A third moderator of interest is attachment style. Attachment styles refer to people's mental models of relationships—how people typically see themselves acting toward close others and how

they see close others acting toward them. Attachment styles vary along two main dimensions, anxiety and avoidance, with each dimension playing a role in how people regulate emotions. Numerous studies indicate that adults high in attachment security (i.e., those persons low in anxiety and avoidance) evidence the fastest course of recovery following a separation. It is presumed that highly secure individuals view themselves as worthy of future love and view others as worthy of providing love to them, even though the most recent relationship ended disagreeably. In contrast, adults high in either anxiety or avoidance tend to show more persistent patterns of distress; this is especially so for people who are high in anxiety and low in avoidance, which results in a preoccupied attachment style that is associated with frequent bids for reunion with an ex-partner and prolonged states of mourning and distress. Like other moderators, attachment styles merely confer risk or protection against postbreakup distress. Fourth, contact with one's ex-partner has emerged as an important moderator of separation adjustment. A small group of studies have demonstrated that having contact with one's ex-partner increases sadness and anger in the wake of a nonmarital separation experience. In this sense, contact is a moderator because it increases the likelihood of subsequent distress and slows trajectories of recovery over time. It is not clear, however, if the immediate reports of sadness and anger (following contact) are associated with maintained distress or more positive long-term outcomes, such as creating meaning of the event or working toward forgiveness; presently, only the short-term effects of contact are known. This topic requires much more research, especially in light of joint custody arrangements and postdivorce family life.

The Mediators

What is it that changes as people move from feeling distressed about their separation to feeling more calm and organized? When people receive social support, what benefits are conferred by these interpersonal connections? Both of these questions center on the proximal, psychological variables that promote or hinder adaptive change. As relationships dissolve, many adults experience a sense of mental confusion, disbelief, apprehension,

and a loss of hope for the future. Creating a restored sense of cognitive organization is a critical emotion regulatory task for coming to terms with a dissolution experience; from this perspective, the mediators of breakup adjustment can be regarded as appraisal strategies that people invoke to understand and control their emotional experiences. The available evidence indicates that two broad classes of cognitive-emotional mediators explain breakup adjustment: cognitive organization-meaning making and nonacceptance-rumination.

Cognitive Organization and Meaning Making

A great deal of writing suggests that the creation of a coherent, meaningful narrative about one's separation experience is a critical task for successful adjustment. From this perspective, coping and social support help people create acceptable accounts, which provide psychological structure to the event and a more positive outlook of the future. Although only a few studies have tested these ideas empirically, evidence does indicate that people who report better breakup adjustment are more likely to describe (separation) stories that make sense, hang together, are structured in an organized manner, and include detailed examples. Recent studies have begun investigating natural language use as the process through which narratives are communicated to others. In a recent study, relative to men and women coping poorly with a breakup, women coping well talked more about their social networks, used greater linguistic certainty, and used fewer third-person references. The latter finding suggests that well-adjusted women use fewer other-focused words when discussing their separation experience, a tendency which may reflect less psychological preoccupation with one's ex-partner.

Conceptually similar to meaning making, forgiveness is an appraisal-based coping strategy that involves letting go of negative thoughts toward a wrongdoing and in some instances, responding positively toward a transgressor. Within intact relationships, forgiveness toward a partner following an infidelity is associated with a decreased probability of a subsequent breakup. Following divorce, positive forgiveness (i.e., wishing for good things toward an ex-partner) is associated with greater emotional well-being, and the presence of

negative forgiveness (i.e., not feeling vengeful toward an ex-partner) is associated with less depression and less state and trait anger. In a relatively large treatment study; however, forgiveness did not lead to clear improvements in mental health outcomes. Thus, to date, correlational evidence indicates that greater forgiveness is associated with positive outcomes following a separation experience, but experimental interventions have not yet discovered how to teach forgiveness as a way that promotes divorce adjustment.

In addition to meaning making and forgiveness, recent evidence indicates that people's sense of self-identity is closely tied to their breakup adjustment. Much of self-identity—that is, answers to the question, “Who am I?”—is embedded in close relationships, and when love relationships dissolve people are often left with the sense that the essence of their personal identity has dissolved as well. The loss of self-identity clarity was a major feature of Robert Weiss's (1975) qualitative accounts of divorce adjustment, which was among the first systematic study of postdivorce emotional adjustment. Recent evidence suggests that the end of a positive dating relationship is associated with substantial changes in one's self-concept. This finding is important because other work has shown that the degree of identity loss following dissolution is positively associated with feelings of sadness and loneliness. Furthermore, the end of a poor quality relationship is associated with greater personal growth, and this association is statistically mediated by greater rediscovery of the self, more positive emotions, and less loss of the self.

Nonacceptance and Rumination

Evidence indicates that a class of perseverative coping behaviors forecasts poor emotional adjustment. Nonacceptance (which involves longing, disbelief, continued attachment to an ex-partner) and rumination (which involves persistent attention to how bad one feels) are described as a class of coping behaviors because both processes involve repetitive preoccupation, either with the ex-partner or with how bad one feels; although nonacceptance may be more closely related to separation experiences, rumination is characteristic of many depressive episodes and is important for understanding loss responses.

A high degree of nonacceptance (at the end of a relationship) is associated with poor mental health outcomes in both marital and nonmarital samples. Following a nonmarital separation, nonacceptance fully mediated the association between attachment security and sadness recovery; in one prospective study, young adults low in attachment security evidenced longer times until complete sadness recovery, and this association was accounted for by ongoing feelings of disbelief, pining for the ex-partner, and hope for reunion. Nonacceptance is strongly associated with divorce adjustment, both in the short- and long-term. Evidence indicates that up to 12 years after a divorce, adults who remained nonaccepting of the initial separation tended to report more depression. Of course, the direction of this effect remains in question, but it is clear that longing, disbelief, and ongoing attachment to a former partner are associated with greater emotional distress after a separation. As described earlier in this entry, high nonacceptance also is associated with weaker immunological responses after a divorce.

Relative to the study of nonacceptance, fewer investigations have addressed rumination following a breakup. In a large sample of young adults experiencing a breakup, brooding and negative regret were associated with negative adjustment and less positive signs of coping. Interestingly, research on this topic also indicates that reflection, which may be an adaptive form of trying to understand an experience and put it to rest, was associated with positive emotional outcomes. This finding is consistent with work on ironic processes, work which suggests that maladaptive behaviors (including psychological acts) often begin with well-intentioned efforts to understand and solve the problem of negative affect; efforts to reduce negative emotional states become ironic when they unintentionally maintain distress, as in the case of rumination or ongoing pining. It will be informative for future research to understand when, why, and how reflection about a breakup spills over into rumination and regret.

Concluding Remarks and Future Directions

Both the nonmarital breakup and divorce literatures are hampered by a reliance on correlational

methods. Consequently, although many potential mediators of adjustment exist, few have been identified as truly causal. For example, does creating a meaningful and coherent account of one's divorce lead to improved emotional adjustment or follow from it? To answer this question and others like it, experiments that target specific mechanisms (e.g., increasing people's narrative coherence of the separation experience) are needed. In the nonmarital breakup literature, there exists only a single experiment studying the mechanisms of separation adjustment and only a handful of treatment studies exist in the divorce literature. No other work has targeted specific mechanisms of change in a theoretically driven way. To advance the understanding of separation adjustment (and ultimately, to promote positive outcomes), research of this kind will be increasingly important in the next decade of study.

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See also Dissolution of Relationships, Breakup Strategies; Dissolution of Relationships, Causes; Dissolution of Relationships, Processes; Divorce, Effects on Adults; Stress and Relationships

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DISSOLUTION OF RELATIONSHIPS, PROCESSES

“Breaking up is hard to do,” according to a song by Neil Sedaka. Though Sedaka may make a seemingly obvious point, he and the countless other songwriters who manage to put words and melodies to the experience of relationship breakup are clearly on to something. Songs about relationships, and especially their endings, land at the top of music charts for two very simple reasons—humans are relational creatures, and interpersonal relationships often end. For these same reasons, the ending of relationships has occupied an important place in interpersonal relationship research since the late 1970s and early 1980s.

What Sedaka did not take note of in his anthem to relationship dissolution is the fact that breaking up is hard to research. Given the ethical constraints that deny researchers the choice of random assignment to partners at the start of relationships, research has typically dealt only with partners who are known to have been in already broken relationships or else are asked to imagine what that would be like, and only recently have longitudinal studies been attempted. Data from most available research are either retrospective or imaginative, and this allows participants to put their stories into

an orderly report irrespective of what might actually have happened in the process of breakup. This can lead to the reports of breakup being rationalized or stripped of some of the complexity that they most likely deserve.

Given this proviso, there have been many explanations offered by researchers about the causes of, stages of, and processes of what has been termed relational dissolution, termination, disengagement, and deterioration, but capturing and generalizing about this phenomenon has proven somewhat challenging due to the dynamic nature of relationship change and negotiation, as well as limitations of research methods. Although most research and literature focuses on romantic relationships, there is distinct research that delineates the disengagement processes of marriages, friendships, and dating relationships separately. This entry gives a modest overview of that research, showing the various ways relational scholars have attempted to characterize the nature of relationship dissolution across and within relational types.

Causes of Relationship Dissolution

As most know from experience, relationships end for a variety of reasons. Sometimes they end suddenly due to a particular event, whereas other times they end more gradually due to a deterioration of feelings and communication. The processes of relationship dissolution may differ depending on relational type. For example, friendships are voluntary nonexclusive relationships that require active effort to maintain and do not necessarily require a declaration of dissolution to end. Often, friendships are simply allowed to wither away due to decreased time spent together and communication in general, that is, calls or text messages cease or are not returned, plans are not made, and so on until no active relationship exists. Of course, some friendships do end more suddenly due to some event (e.g., betrayal).

For marital and dating relationships, which are expected to be exclusive, monogamous and serial, dissolution may be more complicated, or at least more formal. Typically, at least one party will make a declaration that the relationship has ended, though it may not always be the case in relatively short-term and uninvolved dating relationships

(which may dissolve more like many friendships do). Researchers have identified several potential causes for disengagement in romantic relationships such as conflict and negativity, lack of time for relational investment, unsatisfactory or incompatible change or growth of partners, violations of expectations of partner behavior, and one or both partners' romantic involvement with another party.

Theories generated in psychology have been applied to relationships to help explain the process that partners go through when determining whether or not to stay in a relationship (either romantic or friendship). Two social exchange theories that focus on the value placed on the relationship by each partner are called Interdependence Theory, proposed by John Thibaut and Harold Kelley, and Equity Theory proposed by Elaine Hatfield [Walster]. These theories claim that relational partners weigh the costs, or investments they make to relationships, and compare them to the rewards that they receive from the relationships in return and are intent on maximizing rewards while minimizing costs. Interdependence Theory says that partners evaluate their relational outcomes by comparing the costs and rewards to their expectations of costs and rewards, as well as to other relational options they perceive to be available to them (e.g., a different romantic partner or no relationship at all). Equity Theory makes similar claims but allows for equitable relationships rather than an equal relationship assumed by other social exchange models. That is, if partners perceive that their own rewards are proportionate to their input and the two partners are making about comparable inputs for their rewards, then a relationship is equitable, even if it is not equal (one partner could work hard and get more, one partner could work less and get less, and yet both would still feel that the relationship was fair). When the relationship is perceived as inequitable, negotiation may be required to restore equity. Partners may make decisions about dissolution based on what they perceive to be the optimal situation that yields maximum rewards in relation to costs (in Exchange and Interdependence Theory) or fair and equitable outcomes (in Equity Theory). So if these theories are accurate, a potential cause of relationship dissolution for both romantic partners and friends may be simply that the relationship just is not worth the effort required or is not providing fairly balanced outcomes relative to each partner's input.

Strategies of Accomplishing Dissolution

Once the decision to terminate a relationship is made, the deciding partner must devise a strategy for accomplishing said goal. Most people know from experience (whether on the giving or receiving end) that delivering this news is not always easy, and at times, dissolution is complex, requiring multiple strategic moves instead of a simple conversation. Curious about the way termination is accomplished, some researchers have looked for the strategies used by partners to end relationships. Leslie Baxter first looked at strategies used to disengage friendships and found several strategies, which varied on dimensions of directness versus indirectness and self orientation versus other orientation. In line with Baxter's work, Michael Cody found five strategies used to terminate romantic relationships: (1) behavioral de-escalation, which involved avoidance and withdrawal; (2) de-escalation, which involved explaining advantages of termination and regret over termination sometimes with hints of possible reconciliation; (3) justification, which involved giving clear reasons for the termination; (4) positive tone, which involved consideration of the feelings of the other; and (5) negative identity management, which involved lack of explanation and consideration for the partners' feelings or face. Later, Baxter and colleagues looked at romantic relationships and again found that directness-indirectness was an important aspect of strategy (but that greater intimacy decreased the likelihood that withdrawal and avoidance would be used), that partners usually perceived themselves to be more direct than they perceived their partners to be, and that one-sided breakups tended to be more direct than mutual breakups. They also found that mutual breakups were more indirect (for both parties) and produced both more positive reactions to termination and fewer regrets about the nature of termination.

The above strategies describe those felt to be put into action by initiators of dissolution, but do the noninitiators employ strategies of their own? Recent research has shown that marital partners on the receiving end of attempted termination do report employment of strategies of disengagement resistance. The resistance strategy reported to be used most often was called commitment and

entailed the manipulation of love, care, affection, and obligations of commitment. Another reported resistance strategy was alignment, which seemed to be an attempt by the noninitiator to be perceived as a bonded couple (by the initiator and other people). A third resistance strategy was called negativity and was described as an attempt to make a relationship more equitable by heightening positive attributes of the noninitiator or accentuating negative characteristics of the partner. The last and least often reported strategy was called karm and entailed using violence against competitors or relationship rivals.

Mapping Relational Dissolution

Many scholars have proposed what are called stage models of relationship dissolution in attempts to outline different stages that relationships go through during disengagement. Stage model approaches are appealing in their simplicity, but like the participants' reports upon which they are based, they sometimes fail to account for the complex process of dissolution. The following models are general maps of dissolution, but do not capture the dynamic and often ambivalent nature of relationship endings.

Distinctions have been made between marital dissolution and other romantic relationship dissolution. Marital relationship dissolution may be more complicated due to social constraints of stigma, religious affiliation, economic interdependence, and the existence of children, not to mention the legal processes required for divorce. Paul Bohannon characterized divorce as a process that spouses report experiencing in six different stations. The first station, emotional divorce, involves a distancing of partners in emotional and social realms. This distancing and realization of potential end may cause partners to grieve over the lost relationship. The station of legal divorce is just as it sounds—spouses file for a divorce, which is carried out through the legal system. In the midst of the legal divorce, divorcing spouses may experience an economic divorce as well as a coparental divorce (if children are present). In the economic station, spouses divide marital assets and negotiate alimony and/or child support. The coparental station involves negotiations over primary caregiving of

children and other custody arrangements, as well as adjusting to those arrangements. The fifth station, community divorce, involves the reconfiguring of social networks that can involve the loss of certain family and friends that were gained through or during the marriage. The final station, psychic divorce, occurs when the ex-spouses report having separated themselves from the other person both in terms of identity and influence.

Although some models, such as Bohannon's, focused on the process of divorces specifically, others examined the process of relational disengagement more generally. Steve Duck claimed that although levels of commitment, interdependence, and barriers may differ, the basic elements of the termination process are perceived to be the same across various types of romantic relationships. Models that included a broader approach to relational dissolution include Irwin Altman and Dalmas Taylor's model of depenetration, Mark Knapp and Anita Vangelisti's stages of relational breakdown, George Levinger's ABCDE model of relational development and dissolution, Duck's model of relationship dissolution, Loren Lee's model of five critical events, and Leslie Baxter's flow chart of relational dissolution trajectories. Although these models share some common characteristics, each makes its own claims about what the stages of dissolution entail.

Altman and Taylor's early model was simply a reversal of their model of relationship development, which focused on the amount and type of self-disclosure between partners. According to this model, partners develop relationships by increasing the depth and breadth of self-disclosures and achieve relational disengagement in the opposite manner—by communicating in superficial, non-intimate ways until the relationship unravels. Somewhat similarly, Levinger extended models of relational attraction to include relational disengagement. His ABCDE model stands for acquaintanceship, buildup, continuation, deterioration, and ending. One important move that Levinger made was to consider the internal and external factors that constrain relationship termination, such as routine and emotion (internal) and religion and social networks (external).

Another model of dissolution connected to one of development is the Knapp and Vangelisti model of relational breakdown. These scholars outlined

five stages focusing on the type of communication that occurs during each stage: differentiating (partners begin focusing on differences and disengage joint identity), circumscribing (partners no longer communicate frequently or about personal matters), stagnating (interaction comes to a standstill), avoiding (partners avoid face to face communication or physical copresence altogether), and terminating (terms of dissolution are negotiated and breakup is declared).

One model that seems to apply to both romantic relationships and friendships is one that Duck first proposed in the early 1980s and then recently revised with colleague Stephanie Rollie. Rollie and Duck offered six phases for dissolution that encompass both communication and cognition about disengagement: breakdown processes, intrapsychic processes, dyadic processes, social processes, grave dressing processes, and resurrection. During breakdown, one or both partners become dissatisfied with the relationship. If one person reaches the point where the discontent is unbearable, that person enters the intrapsychic process. Here, the individual ruminates about the partner and the relationship, the costs of termination, and the potential rewards of alternative relationships. The individual contemplates disclosure of dissatisfaction to the relational partner but usually represses it. Eventually, the person may reach the point where ending the relationship seems justified.

If this happens, the relationship reaches dyadic processes, where a decision is made about confrontation or avoidance. This usually results in talks about the relationship, where conflict and/or negotiation can occur. If there is a possibility to repair the relationship, this is the opportunity for partners to do so. If there is no room for or attempt at repair, one or both partners may reach another threshold and decide to terminate. Then, the dyad moves into social processes where social network members are told about relational problems. If the partners continue toward termination, the dyad enters grave dressing processes, where partners engage in adjustment behaviors. Here, partners make attributions about relational issues and give separate accounts of the breakup to their social networks. Finally, the resurrection process is where each person readies him- or herself for a different kind of relational life.

Lee's model of dissolution focuses on five critical events or stages in the relational dissolution that are fairly similar to the stages discussed in Duck's model: discovery of dissatisfaction stage, exposure stage (dissatisfaction is discussed), negotiation stage (relationships issues are discussed), resolution stage (decision is discussed), and the transformation stage (discontinuation or relational redefinition). Lee also defines three parameters that influence the nature of dissolution: the operator, referring to the partner who acts as an agent of relational change; the content, referring to the communicative substance of each phase; and the latency, referring to length of time between stages and the overall dissolution process.

In an effort to represent the nuanced and complex processes of relational disengagement, Baxter took a somewhat different approach in creating her map of relational dissolution by using a flow chart instead of a traditional stage model. The flow chart includes various choice points and consequent relational trajectories that Baxter described as the critical features of the relational dissolution process: the gradual versus sudden onset of relational problems, the unilateral versus bilateral desire to exit the relationship, the use of direct versus indirect actions to accomplish the dissolution, the rapid versus protracted nature of the disengagement negotiation, the presence versus absence of relationship repair attempts, and the final outcome of relationship of relationship termination versus relationship continuation. The chart includes various options that partners might choose at different relational junctures and therefore does not characterize every relationship as dissolving in the same way.

Concluding Remarks

Understanding the process of relationship dissolution is a key component to understanding how people relate more generally. Although this entry gave a short overview of the research literature that exists on dissolution, there is much that was not covered. Other relevant research on relationship dissolution has looked at such aspects as how individuals cope with dissolution, the revealing nature of dissolution narratives and individuals'

adjustment to breakups, how dissolution operates in long-distance relationships, and turning points in dissolution between friends. The research presented in this entry provides a look into potential causes of relationship dissolution, strategies individuals use to accomplish dissolution, and what dissolution looks like when broken down into stages. It is doubtful that research focused on dissolution will cease any time in the foreseeable future, given its salience to the emotional and social state of individuals. Relationship dissolution seems to be an unavoidable constituent of relational life—without breakups, there surely would be less to sing about!

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See also Betrayal; Dissolution of Relationships, Breakup Strategies; Dissolution of Relationships, Causes; Dissolution of Relationships, Coping and Aftermath; Postdivorce Relationships

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DIVISION OF LABOR IN HOUSEHOLDS

The division of household labor involves the allocation of chores among members of a family or household. Household chores include those tasks that are considered necessary to the function of the household and encompass activities such as cooking, cleaning, doing laundry, mowing grass, and other such tasks. As the total sum of household labor required by any given household typically exceeds the ability of one person to complete them all, chores are commonly allocated among various household members. Understandably, this allocation process and the ensuing patterns of chore performance are not always equally shared among family and household members. Both historically and in the contemporary regard, the division of

household chores has been along traditionally gendered lines. This entry discusses the division of household labor and the explanations for the patterns of chore allocation that have been recognized by researchers.

Conceptualization and Measurement

In most industrialized nations, the division of household labor is often regarded as one of the most intransigent qualities of family life. In conjunction with traditional gender roles, the domain of the paid labor force has often been regarded as men's work, while the performance of chores within the home has typically been considered to be women's work. Although it is not necessarily made explicit within societies, most cultures maintain an expectation that women should bear the brunt of responsibility for the performance of household labor. This decidedly gendered pattern of the division of household labor has been examined by researchers for decades and has shown little evidence of change. In recent history, there has been considerable change in the participation of women in the paid labor force, along with substantial increases in the percentages of women obtaining a college education. These particular changes have been associated with slight variations in the overall allocation of chores; women are now performing less, yet these changes by no means approach a level of equity or equality in the division of household labor.

Household labor has been assessed by researchers in a variety of manners, such as by the use of large national surveys, self-maintained time dairies, and retrospective interviews. Each of these methods offers its own advantages, and the practical assessment of the division of household chores largely depends upon whether the researcher intends to pursue either a quantitative or qualitative measurement. In conceptualization, though, the division of household labor is typically regarded as having three basic forms.

The first, and most obvious, conceptualization addresses the amounts of absolute time that each individual allocates to the performance of chores around the home. Since the division of chores implies that each person will have to commit some of his or her time (e.g., daily, weekly) to executing

the tasks, it is necessary to make relative comparisons of the total amounts of tasks that are performed. This comparison in and of itself provides a good indication of how chores are being divided in a given household. However, since the nature of the division of household labor involves head-to-head comparisons of effort, the absolute total contributions of each person may not adequately exemplify the allocation processes. A second and equally useful conceptualization is the relative share of the total labor in a given household performed by each person in the home. This conceptualization allows for a more precise appraisal of the division of labor given that it focuses not on individual totals but rather more exactly on how much each person does relative to others. Since household members will typically compare their chore performance to others, this conceptualization makes logical sense. Finally, it is also necessary to recognize not just the total amounts and relative shares of household labor that each person performs but also the kinds of chores that each person does. It is conceivable, for example, that a husband and wife perform exactly the same total amounts of labor around the home, yet each performs a unique set of tasks (e.g., a wife does all of the cooking and cleaning, while the husband does all of the yard work and laundry). Hence, the third conceptualization of the division of household labor involves how specific chores are segregated among the members of the household.

Patterns of Household Labor Allocation

Across numerous studies, both in the United States and in other countries, the division of labor among adults has consistently been shown to be quite skewed; women perform the vast majority of chores. Although the total amounts of labor vary somewhat from one study to another, women are typically shown to perform between 32 to 38 hours of household labor each week (not including time spent in childcare). Men's contributions on average are considerably less, with most reports revealing a total anywhere between 12 to 18 hours of housework each week. In the absolute, then, women typically perform approximately twice as much household labor as men. In the relative comparison of men's and women's

contributions, there is simply no semblance of equity within the typical allocation of household chores.

Furthermore, research that has focused more precisely on the segregation of chores commonly notes that the individual tasks of men and women are quite distinct. Women tend to exert the majority of their total time performing traditional chores, such as cooking, cleaning, and laundry tasks. Men, on the other hand, tend to spend the majority of their time performing chores that take them outside the home, such as yard work, home repairs, and automobile maintenance. It is this highly segregated nature of the division of household labor that leads many researchers to conclude that traditional gender roles continue to influence couples and families in meaningful and tangible manners.

Beyond the quantitative dimensions of the division of household labor, there are also several qualitative traits that should be recognized. Women, for example, are spending the larger portion of their contributions performing chores such as cooking and washing dishes. Such chores have a regimented quality about them, as they have to be performed daily and at specific times of the day. Men, who are more likely to perform chores such as mowing the yard or washing the car are able to pick and choose the day and time when they perform such tasks, thus allowing them great flexibility and control over the timing of their chores. Researchers have also suggested that the chores predominately performed by each sex will also yield different intrinsic rewards to women and men. Distasteful chores, such as the scrubbing of a toilet bowl, are more likely to be performed by women. These sorts of chores are onerous, demanding, and offer little intrinsic satisfaction for women. However, researchers have noted that men are often able to reap such intrinsic rewards from many of their typical chores (e.g., auto care), particularly as these chores may allow them to demonstrate their masculinity to others.

Explaining the Division of Household Labor

Researchers have long noted the disparities between the household labor contributions of women and men. There remains, though, the necessary question

of why chores are divided in such ways. Although a wide variety of theories have been offered across multiple social science disciplines as explanations of the division of labor, most fit within three broad perspectives. The first, which is based upon the relative resources that each person has, argues that the division of household chores inescapably comes down to the issue of power within marital and family relationships. Relative resource theories make several basic assumptions about the nature of housework and interpersonal relationships. Specifically, household labor is envisioned as being a set of onerous and undesirable chores. However, inasmuch as the chores must be performed, the allocation of chores is ultimately decided by the person who wields the greater power in the household. Power is derived from having the larger amount of human resources (e.g., employment, income) relative to that of other household members. Given that chores are considered to be undesirable, this theoretical perspective contends that the person with the greater power and authority will designate others to perform more chores than themselves. Although this makes intuitive sense, researchers have noted that power-based explanations are not often supported in their studies. For example, even with the substantial increases in women's labor force participation, the division of labor among dual-earner couples is shown to be similar to that of single-earner couples, wherein the husband is employed and the wife is not. Although power, as based upon relative resources, does appear to have some influence on the overall division of household labor, its impact is meager at best.

A second theoretical perspective is one based primarily on the rational choice of family members. In this explanation, the allocation of chores results from a simple consideration of which person has the greater amount of time available to perform the chores. Time availability, then, becomes the core component of any decisions regarding the division of chores. If a spouse is employed outside the home, for example, he or she will have less available time to do housework. Of course, this perspective assumes that spouses largely disregard gendered expectations concerning specific chores and that they simply perform chores on the basis of having sufficient time to do so. As with relative resource theories, this perspective seems logical

but has received little support among researchers. Comparisons of the paid labor hours and work schedules among dual-earner couples, for instance, have shown little effect upon the division of chores among wives and husbands.

Finally, a third perspective that has been posited by researchers involves socialization and gender ideologies. Many have proposed that the seemingly intransigent nature of the division of labor over time is the result of the intergenerational transmission of traditional gender roles. Through exposure to both the direct and indirect influence of their parents and other family members, individuals learn and internalize traditional gender roles. Specifically, over their childhood and adolescent years, individuals will view their parents performing certain gender-typed household chores. Likewise, parents will assign particular chores to their children, largely on the basis of the sex of the child. This long and sometimes subtle learning process results in the acceptance of traditional gendered expectations concerning the allocation of chores around the home. Of the three theoretical perspectives on the division of household labor, socialization and gender ideology contentions have garnered the most support. The sex typing of chores among children has been consistently demonstrated, as well as the consistency of gender role attitudes concerning domestic roles across generations within families. Clearly, the patterns of the division of household labor represent one of the more static dimensions of marital and family relationships.

Sampson Lee Blair

See also Equity Theory; Family Functioning; Gender Roles in Relationships; Marital Satisfaction and Quality; Power Distribution in Relationships; Socialization

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DIVORCE, CHILDREN AND

Unlike the majority of adults who enter divorce more or less voluntarily, for children, parental divorce is imposed upon them. Some children, particularly older ones, may have seen it coming, whereas others are completely unprepared and do not know what to expect or how to act. Initial reactions often include feelings of shock, anger, confusion, disappointment, and even distress. How long do these feelings last and how common is it for children to suffer more serious adjustment problems, such as getting seriously depressed, blaming and doubting themselves, performing poorly in school, or acting out (lying, cheating, stealing, alcohol and drug use)? How much do children differ in how they adjust to divorce, and which factors are associated with these differences?

This entry explores how children adjust to their parents’ divorce. First, it examines several outcomes that children and adolescents in divorcing families commonly perform worse on than their peers in nondivorced families, including academic achievement, self-concept, social competence, and intimate relationships. Then it reviews evidence on psychological and interpersonal adjustment among young adults whose parents have divorced, including

a discussion of the increased risk of their marriages ending in divorce. Throughout the discussion, this entry describes possible reasons why parental divorce is linked with child maladjustment and factors that may explain why children of divorce are disadvantaged. In the concluding section, this entry examines areas of personal growth and maturation.

Dimensions of Child Adjustment

There is abundant evidence that on average children who have experienced parental divorce fare worse on several indicators of social, emotional, and behavioral adjustment than their counterparts in families with continuously married parents. Methodologically rigorous studies as well as authoritative reviews of the literature consistently indicate adverse effects of parental divorce on child, adolescent, and young adult adjustment. In other words, the average adjustment level for children of divorce is somewhat lower than the average level for children who have not experienced parental divorce. Yet there are wide differences in adjustment within both groups of children, and many factors are related to these differences. This entry recognizes the general pattern whereby child adjustment is disturbed following parental divorce, but it concentrates on describing why some children of divorce fare better and others fare worse. Thus, the objective is to describe the nature of these differences in children’s short-term and long-term postdivorce adjustment and factors that help researchers understand why some children adjust more effectively than others.

Children’s Initial Reactions

Differences in children’s reactions to parental divorce are evident as soon as they are notified of the news. Interviews with parents of children ages 6 through 12 have found that approximately half of the children responded to news of the separation with distress or sadness, fewer than 1 in 10 (9 percent) were angry, a similar proportion (8 percent) were relieved, and the remainder either asked questions or had no visible reactions. When children themselves were asked to describe their feelings upon hearing that their parents were

separating, they described a wide range of emotional responses. Reflecting a sense of loss, the most common reaction (reported by half of the children) was sadness. Other emotions children reported feeling in abundance included being confused (22 percent), scared (22 percent), surprised (15 percent), angry (13 percent), and glad (11 percent). By 1 year postseparation, children were feeling better and stronger and less sad and guilty, but a small percentage (9 percent) continued to feel angry. It should be noted that although the prevailing initial reactions were negative in tone a substantial minority of children were described as being relieved or described themselves as glad. For many children, parental divorce signals a transition in family relationships whereby daily tensions, bickering, and hostility between parents subside, creating hope for a happier family environment.

Academic Achievement

On average, children of divorce do more poorly than their peers on various measures of academic performance, including grade point averages, standardized test scores, and educational attainment. For example, children whose parents divorced are more likely to drop out of high school than their peers with continuously married parents. Research shows that differences across family types tend to be small, however, and these differences often disappear when other relevant variables are taken into consideration. For example, studies have documented that many children who are not doing well academically following divorce were not doing well prior to marital dissolution. Other studies have found that deficits in academic performance among adolescents whose parents divorced were as much due to lower levels of family, social, and financial resources as the divorce itself.

Looking exclusively at children who have experienced parental divorce, there are wide differences in children's achievement on reading tests. Nearly three in five boys (59 percent) and nearly half of girls (47 percent) scored within the average range on a reading comprehension test 1 year after marital disruption. At the same time, roughly one fourth of boys (23 percent) and girls (24 percent) whose parents divorced scored below average, while a significant minority (19 percent of boys and 29 percent of girls) scored significantly above

average. Changes in reading achievement were assessed by comparing children's rankings at a baseline measurement prior to family disruption and then a follow-up 1 year postdisruption. Researchers found that there was no change in the year of the study for half the sample (50 percent of boys and 57 percent of girls), whereas scores declined for roughly one in three boys (29 percent) and girls (32 percent) and improved for a smaller group of children (21 percent of boys and 11 percent of girls). In sum, there is considerable variation in how children's academic performance is affected by parental divorce, with approximately one in three children performing worse in the year following divorce and a slightly smaller proportion improving academically.

Conduct Problems

A widely studied topic in divorce research is the consequences of marital dissolution on children's conduct problems. One reason this research question receives so much scholarly attention is that conduct problems appear to be the aspect of children's functioning most seriously influenced by divorce. Although children of divorce on average score only marginally worse than other children on measures of social and psychological adjustment, they suffer more pronounced behavioral problems.

Studies consistently report that on average children whose parents have divorced experience more behavior problems (e.g., aggression, disruptive behavior), engage in more delinquent activities, and exhibit higher rates of alcohol and drug use than their peers living with continuously married parents in either happy or distressed marriages. Specifically, boys and girls with divorced parents were more likely to shoplift, purposely damage property, run away from home, be drunk in a public place, be picked up by the police, or have gone to court. In addition, research has found that across a variety of community contexts drug use is more prevalent among adolescents living in single mother, single father, and stepparent households than among their peers living in households headed by two biological parents. Results such as these suggest that the effects of divorce on children's conduct problems are robust, but there is also evidence indicating that family processes (such as parenting behaviors) associated with divorce also

exert important influences on adolescent behavior. For example, child behavior problems are directly associated with parents' use of negative control (i.e., disapproval, criticism, and hostile threats). Further, the behaviors of both residential and non-residential parents are important. Research has observed fewer conduct problems among adolescents with a highly involved nonresidential father compared to those with a relatively uninvolved nonresidential father.

Notwithstanding the importance of the consistent finding that children whose parents have divorced are more likely to engage in problem behaviors, there are many notable differences among children in this domain. Researchers have tracked changes in children's behavior problems during the year immediately following the ending of their parents' marriage and demonstrated that on average parental divorce had no significant effects on girls' behavior and modest effects on boys' behavior. It is important to note, however, that there was substantial variation in how children responded to parental divorce, with behavior problems increasing for some and declining for others. Part of this variation is associated with gender. For example, following divorce, nearly half of boys (49 percent) and girls (43 percent) scored within the average range on the Behavior Problems Index. However, a large minority of boys (42 percent) and nearly one third of girls (31 percent) exhibited more problems than average, and behavior problems were below average for roughly one in ten boys (9 percent) and one in four girls (26 percent). In sum, similar to the pattern reported earlier for children's academic achievement, the occurrence of behavior problems did not change for nearly half of children in the year following parental divorce, but such problems increased for more than one third of children and decreased for a smaller proportion. Taking into account children's predivorce behavior problems, nearly half (48 percent) of boys and girls exhibited no change over the 2-year period spanning from before the divorce to 1 year following the divorce. Over the same period, scores worsened for one third of the sample (35 percent of boys and 33 percent of girls) and scores improved for nearly one in five boys (18 percent) and girls (19 percent).

Similarly, studies have reported an overall pattern that children of divorce are somewhat more

likely than their peers to use drugs, but there is considerable variation in drug use among adolescents living in different family types, with higher use among boys, Whites, adolescents who moved more often, those who dropped out of school, and those reporting lower quality attachments to their parents. There are also large differences in how often children use drugs depending on the type of family they live in following divorce. Compared to drug use among adolescents living with both biological parents, drug use was approximately 13 percent higher in mother-only and mother-stepfather households and 23 percent higher in father-only households, and 25 percent higher in father-stepmother households. Once again, findings such as these suggest that family processes (in this case, with whom the child lives) have an important influence on children's development in addition to the effects stemming from the divorce by itself.

Intimate Relationships and Adolescent Sexual Behavior

Research consistently supports an association between parental divorce and both early sexual activity and the risk of adolescent childbearing. Studies have reported that boys and girls in divorced, single-parent families and stepfamilies began sexual activity at earlier ages and had higher rates of sexual activity than did their peers with two continuously married, biological parents. For example, research estimates that boys' median age when they have their first sexual experience was 17.3 in families with two biological parents, compared to 16 in single-parent families and 15 in stepfamilies. Unfortunately, few strong studies with large, representative samples have followed families through the divorce process to examine changes in interpersonal relationships and adolescent sexual behavior.

The behaviors and attitudes of residential parents (typically mothers) and nonresidential parents (typically fathers) largely account for the increased likelihood of early sex among children of divorce. For example, compared to parents in other family types, divorced parents are more likely to have permissive sexual attitudes and are less likely to closely monitor their children's activities. Divorced parents' greater acceptance of adolescent sexual

activity, their greater tendency to engage in (and thus model) nonmarital sexual relationships, and their more sporadic supervision of their teenage children increase the risk of teen sexual activity. For example, divorced parents are less likely to discourage their children's relationships with peers who may be sexually active.

Consequences of Parental Divorce for Young Adults

Research on women ages 19 to 35 indicates that parental divorce exerts relatively small effects on young women's heterosexual relationships. Although the differences are not robust, compared to their peers whose parents were continuously married, young women with divorced parents reported less trust in their partners, less relationship satisfaction, more love for their partners, and more ambivalence, conflict, and negativity. Parental divorce appeared to influence young men differently, with effects depending on whether their partners' parents were also divorced. For example, in marriages in which both partners experienced parental divorce, men reported less trust in their partners' honesty and benevolence. But in marriages in which just the man experienced parental divorce, men reported greater trust in their partner's benevolence. These findings are consistent with a large body of research and theory suggesting that compared to men women are socialized to value intimate relationships to a greater extent and invest more heavily in them. When parental divorce occurs, women may respond with more realistic views and more caution in their own relationships. Among young women whose parents divorced, reports of friendship-based love in their romantic relationships vary considerably. For some women, the pain and disappointment associated with parental divorce elicits a fear of intimacy and mistrust in romantic partners, whereas other women respond with a more positive, adaptive, and realistic understanding of the difficulties of intimate relationships.

Intergenerational Transmission of Divorce

Even though research suggests that divorce has relatively small effects on young adults' romantic

relationships, adults whose parents have divorced have a slightly higher likelihood of divorce than do adults whose parents never divorced. The reasons for this intergenerational transmission of divorce effect are not entirely clear but could be due to young adults of divorce being more willing to end unhappy relationships because they have witnessed their parents do so, children of divorce possessing more favorable attitudes toward divorce, inheriting certain undesirable personality characteristics from their parents (e.g., neuroticism, narcissism, depression-proneness), and observing and learning unhealthy relationship interactions. Most likely, the intergenerational transmission of divorce effect is caused by some combination of genetically-based personality dispositions and modeling effects.

Personal Growth and Maturation Following Divorce

Although there are a number of negative effects of divorce, there also appear to be a number of positive outcomes that may follow divorce. With respect to the negative effects of divorce noted earlier in this entry, there is evidence that these effects are short-lived and that most children and young adults return to their predivorce level of functioning within 2 to 3 years following the divorce. Rigorous studies following families through the divorce process demonstrate that both children and parents have the most difficulties during the period when parents separate physically and for the next 1 to 2 years. For example, an analysis of a national sample of adolescents tracked changes in their well-being from 3 years prior to divorce to 3 years following divorce. The researchers found that among adolescents whose parents divorced, objective indicators of academic performance (e.g., test scores in science, reading, and social studies) exhibited a continuous and linear decline. However, self-report measures of educational aspirations, self-esteem, and locus of control were characterized by a U-shaped pattern, whereby the lowest levels occurred during the divorce, after which levels rebounded to predivorce levels. Perhaps divorce initiates a downward behavioral spiral in academic achievement that is difficult to reverse, whereas divorce has only a short-term effect on personality and cognitive variables.

In addition, research suggests that approximately 10 percent of children with continuously married parents exhibit serious behavior problems, compared to 20 to 25 percent of children with divorced parents. Although this may seem to be a large difference, note that the vast majority of children in both groups are considered to be well-adjusted. Such findings support the idea that children are resilient in that they bounce back relatively quickly from an upsetting event, such as divorce. Support for the idea that children are resilient to the effects of divorce also comes from the children themselves. John Harvey and Mark Fine gathered accounts of the divorce experience from thousands of college students whose parents divorced earlier in their lives. A consistent theme in their stories about their experiences was that they managed to cope well in the face of upsetting circumstances and that their adjustment improved over time.

There is also evidence that divorce may have some positive, growth-inducing effects. Research has suggested that the experience of divorce may help children mature more quickly and that they learn some life management skills more quickly than they would had their parents remained married. Young adults, for example, may have more realistic expectations about romantic relationships, may have an enhanced ability to empathize with their parents and others experiencing difficult circumstances, and may have clearer and more carefully thought-out life goals than those whose parents did not divorce. Thus, divorce is not a uniformly negative experience. Negative effects tend to diminish over time, and there are some often overlooked positive or maturational effects as well.

Divorce as a Process

Researchers initially studied divorce as if it were a single event that required adaptation, similarly to how individuals adjust to such single events as natural disasters or traumas. However, long-term studies have clarified that divorce is more accurately thought of as a process rather than as a single event. It is a process in several ways: It not only requires long-term adjustment but also there are a number of predivorce (e.g., high levels of parental conflict, disrupted parenting) and postdivorce experiences (e.g., legal conflicts between the

ex-spouses, parental disputes regarding childrearing and the amount of time that each will spend with their children) that separately and together contribute to how well children and young adults adapt to their changing circumstances. Perhaps the most important implication of this focus on process is the notion that one must consider where an individual is situated on the journey through the divorce process when trying to understand that person's experience with and adjustment to divorce.

Another implication of this focus on process is the notion that there are important differences in how children and young adults adjust to divorce. Not only are all individuals unique in some ways in terms of how they cope with stressful circumstances, but also individuals vary in terms of such societal and cultural dimensions as race/ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, and the type of family in which they live. To understand an individual's adjustment to divorce, it is important to take into account not only where in the process the person is but also where he or she is situated in terms of these societal dimensions.

For example, there is some evidence to suggest that divorce has fewer and less severe effects on African-American children than it has on European-American children. In terms of the child's gender, there was initially some speculation that boys were more negatively affected by divorce than were girls. However, more recent research has suggested that there are few clear-cut gender differences in reactions to divorce and that predivorce differences between boys and girls affect their adjustment to divorce.

Although the popular culture and mass media perpetuate images of parental divorce as a devastating experience, research suggests that for most children, adolescents, and young adults, adjustment to parental divorce is a process that typically lasts for a couple of years, after which most individuals respond successfully. The experience of parental divorce tends to be stressful and painful during the period leading up to and immediately following parental separation, but the experience is best viewed as a process that involves family reconfiguration, resilience, maturation, and personal growth.

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See also Dissolution of Relationships, Coping and Aftermath; Dissolution of Relationships, Processes; Divorce, Effects on Adults; Divorce, Prevalence and Trends; Intergenerational Transmission of Divorce; Postdivorce Relationships; Single-Parent Families; Stepfamilies

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DIVORCE, EFFECTS ON ADULTS

Divorce is the legal dissolution of a marriage. Divorce is a complicated and painful experience that includes an emotional, financial, and social dissolution of a couple. Divorce is listed among the most stressful events an individual can ever encounter. However, the effects of divorce are not the same for all adults. For some it is a stressful negative crisis, and for others it can be a welcome relief. But for most there is probably a combination of both positive and negative effects. The effects of divorce to be discussed in this entry include changes to the psychological (e.g., life satisfaction, happiness, divorce adjustment), physical (e.g., acute and chronic disease, mortality), and financial well-being (job loss, financial stability) of former spouses. Divorce adjustment is measured in a variety of ways, which include how

happy one is with the divorce, whether the individual perceives the divorce as a good or bad idea, and how attached the individual is to the former partner. The effects of a divorce on adults can vary based on several factors, including individual characteristics, the quality of the marriage predivorce, and the presence of children. This entry will review the positive and negative effects of divorce on adults as influenced by various individual and situational factors as well as by the differences of gender.

Negative Effects of Divorce

Divorce is a stressful significant life event that represents loss and transition. One loses a valued relationship and the emotional and material resources provided by that relationship. This loss requires numerous adjustments as one transitions from a married to a single lifestyle. As with any change, an individual may encounter feelings of anxiety, insecurity, and doubt. Divorce also requires individuals to manage responsibilities (household tasks, childcare duties, financial matters, etc.) that one's spouse may have previously handled. These additional duties can serve as daily hassles that can be further sources of stress. In general, the accumulation of stress associated with divorce can have a negative impact on the well-being of those affected.

Accordingly, scientists have found that the well-being of divorced adults is substantially lower than that of married adults. When compared to married adults, divorced adults have lower rates of life satisfaction and happiness; higher rates of depression, anxiety, and acute and chronic disease; higher likelihood of alcohol abuse, suicide, and death; more social isolation; and lower economic stability and wealth. Divorced adults also have higher rates of institutionalization in correctional facilities, mental institutions, hospitals, and convalescent homes than married adults. The negative effects of a divorce subside after a few years for some, but for others they persist indefinitely. The emotional support provided by repartnering or remarrying is largely credited for resolving the negative effects of divorce for most adults.

Divorce negatively affects the financial stability and wealth of most individuals. However, compared

to men, women are more likely to be affected due to the higher likelihood of maintaining custody of the children, the low levels of child support most receive, and the gender disparities in salaries and employment opportunities. Furthermore, married women are more likely to be unemployed and responsible for childcare and household duties, which negatively impact their professional development and earning potential when they return to the workforce postdivorce. Men fare better after a divorce than women do because their new households are generally smaller and because they do not contribute the same proportion of their income to their former households after the divorce as they did prior. In addition, being married and having children does not negatively affect their career advancement. In general, men do not equally share in the domestic chores; therefore, they are more likely to remain continuously employed and thereby able to consistently sharpen their professional skills and protect their earning potential.

Positive Effects of Divorce

Most studies that examine the effects of divorce on adults primarily focus on negative outcomes; however, there are some positive consequences following divorce. For many, divorce is often interpreted as a second chance at life. For example, research shows that divorced adults report higher rates of autonomy, personal growth, self-awareness, and occupational success than married adults. These benefits may be related to their increased sense of freedom and independence. However, these advantages are more likely when there are adequate levels of financial and social support from friends, family, or new partners. Employment also provides divorced adults with financial support and alleviates the stress of reentering the workforce. In fact, individuals who are employed at the time of their divorce report less divorce related stress than those who are not employed. Moreover, divorced individuals with new partners show greater positive adjustment and life satisfaction than those who have not developed new romantic relationships. A new partner positively affects well-being because it lessens the anxiety, depression, and social isolation experienced after the loss of a companion.

There also is assistance with household tasks and expenses.

Individual and Situational Differences

The adjustment to and distress experienced after a divorce may depend on a variety of factors. One such factor is an individual's perception of the meaning of marriage. Individuals who perceive marriage as a lifetime commitment experience higher levels of depression after divorce than those who view marriage as just another relationship that comes and goes. In addition, individuals who endorse several dysfunctional attitudes about divorce (e.g., getting divorced means the people are damaged goods or divorce will permanently damage the children) report higher levels of postdivorce distress than those who endorse a few of these attitudes.

A person's perception of the cause of the divorce also can affect adjustment to divorce. Individuals who blame themselves or external factors, such as work or family interference, for their divorce have poorer adjustment than those who attribute the divorce to incompatibility (partners too dissimilar or too young for marriage) or to their spouses (spouse cheated). Paul Amato and Denise Previti suggest that people who believe the divorce was avoidable because of the choices they made have more difficulty recovering from the divorce and letting go of their former spouse than those who believe the relationship itself or their spouse was flawed.

The distress experienced postdivorce also may vary depending on whether or not the individual initiated the divorce and/or wanted the divorce more than his or her former spouse. Although studies suggest that both initiators and noninitiators are likely to experience distress, there are differences in the timing of the distress. Cheryl Buehler asserts that the initiator is more likely to have started the grief process before the legal separation is final, whereas the noninitiator is not likely to begin the grieving process until the legal process becomes a reality. Overall, however, the initiator reports more positive divorce adjustment than the noninitiator. Similarly, the spouse who wanted the divorce most reports higher levels of divorce adjustment and life satisfaction. Scientists

believe initiating the divorce may aid in divorce adjustment because one is taking an active role in finding a solution to a problem, and this decision gives the individual the perception of control over one's life.

The age at divorce and duration of marriage also are associated with divorce adjustment. Older individuals and those who have been married longer have a more difficult time adjusting to divorce. Amato and colleagues explain that this difference in adjustment could be due to greater marital investments made into the marriage (children, emotional effort, and financial support) and the perception of fewer dating opportunities once divorced. It could also be that older adults have less favorable perceptions of divorce.

The quality of the marriage prior to the initiation of a divorce is another factor related to divorce adjustment. Some argue that divorce serves as an escape from a poor marriage. In support of this perspective, research has found that individuals from highly distressed marriages report greater levels of happiness following divorce than those from low-distress marriages. In addition, adults dissolving unsatisfactory or unfair marriages are less depressed than those dissolving satisfying and fair marriages. (Divorces in these cases were probably not mutually desired.) However, relief does not come for all who leave unsatisfactory marriages. Adults who leave marriages high in conflict (e.g., verbal or physical aggression) do not immediately experience relief. Instead, these adults face a greater likelihood of depression following divorce because divorce may trigger more conflict from abusive spouses.

Gender Differences

Research shows that divorce is more detrimental to the psychological well-being of women than to men. Specifically, women have been found to experience higher rates of depression and lower levels of happiness following divorce than men. The likelihood of depression and a decline in happiness is even greater if women have preschool-aged children at the time of the divorce. In addition, women who have small children are more likely to abuse alcohol post-divorce than women who do not have small

children or older children. The gender differences in psychological well-being following divorce have been partly attributed to the differential economic changes that accompany divorce. It has been consistently found that women suffer more financially after divorce and are more likely to maintain custody of the children. For example, women who experience divorce with young children will likely require full-time childcare. These childcare costs can drastically affect her household budget. In addition, as the custodial parent, she must deal with the difficulties of misbehavior and illness, which can be a financial strain and can affect her own psychological and physical well-being.

Nonetheless, the picture is not completely bleak for divorced women. Studies show that since women are more likely to be the initiators of divorce, they also are more likely to recover successfully from the divorce. In addition, women are more likely than men to be satisfied with the legal settlements associated with divorce in terms of custody, visitation, and asset allocation. Being the initiator of her divorce and thereby taking an active role in changing her life, receiving a favorable legal settlement, and having a higher likelihood of seeking support from family and friends all allow women to effectively adjust to the challenges a divorce brings.

Although men are not as likely as women to openly express the hurt and pain they are experiencing, divorce is not easy for them. Research shows that men have an increase in alcohol abuse following divorce. In addition, men who are fathers of preschool-aged children have higher rates of depression postdivorce. This depression may be due to the loss of daily contact with their children or to the diminished parental control they have over their children's lives. Divorced fathers are significantly less likely than divorced mothers to maintain custody of their children, and many fathers have strong concerns about the courts' favoritism toward mothers in determining custody and visitation arrangements.

There also are differences in the psychological well-being between divorced adults with children (particularly preschool-aged children) and those divorced adults with no children or adult children. These differences can be partly explained by the continued contact with the former spouse

due to parenting obligations. Continued contact may exacerbate the conflict and feelings of anger and hostility between former spouses. The conflict may include legal, verbal, and physical disputes. Divorced individuals with no children or adult children do not have to maintain a relationship with their former spouses and can more effectively escape the conflicted relationship.

In the future, researchers should examine the dynamics of nonmarital relationship breakups now that fewer adults are marrying and are cohabitating with their partners instead. It will also be important to understand the characteristics of successfully remarried divorced adults in order to help the divorced prepare for their next marriage since the second marriage is at a higher risk of divorce than the first.

Pamela B. Trotter

See also Divorce, Children and; Divorce, Prevalence and Trends; Divorce and Preventive Interventions for Children and Parents; Longitudinal Studies of Marital Satisfaction and Dissolution

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DIVORCE, PREVALENCE AND TRENDS

All marriages end in either divorce (many researchers also include separation as a means to end a marriage and thus equate it to divorce) or death. Historically, death has been the predominant means by which marriages have ended. Over the past century, however, declines in mortality and increases in divorce have altered the predominance of death as the ending state of marriage. This entry focuses on prevalence and trends in divorce in the United States. For women born just before the turn of the 20th century, about 17 percent could expect to see their marriages end in divorce, with the remainder 83 percent seeing their marriages end in death. For women born around the middle of the 20th century, divorce had increased to claim 42 percent of marriages. It is more difficult to make predictions for women born after the middle of the 20th century because they are still at the ages where both death and divorce can occur. A best estimate, however, is that about 44 percent of recently contracted marriages will end in divorce. This figure is among the highest in the world. For example, in France, Germany, the Netherlands, and Hungary about 38 percent of marriages are expected to end in divorce. The figure is 25 percent in Switzerland, 15 percent in Israel, 6 percent in Turkey, and 1 percent in India.

Interestingly, for women born in the first quarter of the 20th century, declines in mortality more than compensated for increases in marital dissolution so that women spent a growing percentage of their lives married. Since that time, however, increases in divorce (in conjunction with substantial increases in age at marriage) have reduced the percentage of life a woman spends married. Recent data indicate that women can expect to spend only about 41 percent of their lives married.

For the most part, divorce rates (measured as divorces per 1,000 married women age 15 and over in a given year) in the United States have risen steadily since the end of the Civil War. Less than 2 marriages per 1,000 ended in divorce in 1870 compared to about 18 marriages per 1,000 in 2000. The risk of divorce has not increased monotonically over time, however. For example, divorce was

higher than expected following World War I, much lower than expected during the Great Depression, and much higher than expected immediately following World War II. The 1950s and early 1960s once again saw lower than expected rates of divorce, followed by a dramatic increase in divorce rates starting in 1965 that led to higher than expected rates during the 1970s and early 1980s. Since about 1980, however, rates of divorce have stabilized and have even declined somewhat. Indeed, the stability and decline in divorce rates evidenced since 1980 indicate an unusually long plateau in the long-term historical rise in divorce rates. At no point in the last 150 years have divorce rates failed to increase for such a lengthy period of time.

Instead of asking what fraction of marriages end in divorce in a given year (with divorces in a year being composed of marriages that were formed over a large number of years in the past), researchers can ask what fraction of marriages contracted in a given year will eventually end in divorce (with these divorces spread out over a large number of years in the future)—that is, moving from period divorce rates to cohort divorce rates. Looking at the proportion of marriages formed in a given year that eventually end in divorce, there is a similar long-term upward trend in divorce, followed by a plateau beginning about 1980. Note, however, that deviations from the long-term upward trend using this second measure are much less substantial because divorces are cumulated across the lifetime of a marriage cohort. That is, for a given marriage cohort, the risk of divorce is averaged over a number of historical periods that may include periods of both below-average and above-average risk. For example, women married in the mid-1950s would have been exposed to the relatively low divorce rates of the late 1950s and early 1960s as well as to the substantially higher divorce rates of the 1970s and the subsequent stability and decline in divorce rates in the 1980s and onward.

Period Influences and Cohort Influences

These two ways of measuring divorce reflect the fact that there are two basic ways for explaining changes across time in the occurrence of divorce: period and cohort. Period influences refer to those

factors that affect the risk of divorce uniformly for all marriages at a given point in time irrespective of when those marriages were formed. For example, the negative economic circumstances associated with the Great Depression are assumed to have depressed the risk of divorce for all married couples during the 1930s, irrespective of when their marriages were formed. Cohort influences, on the other hand, focus on circumstances affecting divorce that are unique to a given marriage cohort, circumstances that reflect the unique configuration of historical circumstances impinging upon that marriage cohort. For example, marriages formed in the 1950s may have been uniquely impacted by the convergence of relatively prosperous economic conditions and small cohort size that rendered their marriages unusually stable over their lifetime.

Choosing between period and cohort explanations is a difficult task made even more complex by the necessary mathematical relationship that occurs between the two when combined with age (the so-called age-period-cohort conundrum; e.g., cohort is simply the difference between period and age). Yet not denying the possibility that cohort effects occur in conjunction with period effects, most analysts agree that period effects on divorce have dominated, at least over the span of time that reasonable data are available (the last 100–150 years in the United States). Period effects can and have been used to explain the long-run rise in divorce, as well as to explain the deviations from the long-term trend. For example, some of the sharpest shifts in divorce rates over the past century have been attributed to period forces such as the Great Depression, World War II, the rapidly evolving attitudes toward out-of-wedlock childbearing, women's labor force participation, no-fault divorce laws, reduced stigma attached to divorce, and non-marital cohabitation that occurred in the 1970s.

In their simplest form, period and cohort concepts are simple accounting mechanisms. That is, they can be used to describe patterns of change across time but without additional information do not by themselves elucidate reasons explaining the observed pattern. Although this procedure perfectly describes any temporal variation in divorce, it does little to explain why such variation has occurred. Deeper explanations require information about the nature of periods and cohorts—that is,

the behavioral mechanisms that lead periods (or cohorts) to vary from each other. These behavioral mechanisms are necessarily tied to the demand for marriage relative to available alternatives (e.g., cohabitation), which when altered disrupts the balance of marriage and relevant alternatives and leads to a change in the risk of dissolution (either upward or downward).

Normative and Structural Arguments

Most research focusing on changes in the demand for marriage can be characterized as emphasizing either structural or normative forces. Structural arguments most often focus on decline in the number of functions performed by families associated with the rise of extrafamilial institutions responsible for employment, education, health care, and so on. That is, the demand for marriage has tended to decline over time because the bundle of amenities formerly available only in a marriage is now available elsewhere. One of the most significant structural changes noted by previous researchers that has affected marriage is the movement of married women into the paid labor market, a trend that is argued to reduce the economic interdependence of spouses, thus increasing the risk of divorce.

Normative arguments, on the other hand, emphasize the growth of individualism over time, an increase in value placed on personal gratification and a decrease in a sense of family obligation. Normative arguments thus predict a lowered demand for marriage as various alternatives become more attractive. As a consequence of these cultural changes, societalwide norms regulating divorce have been replaced by norms allowing individual decisions based on rational choice—where rationality includes efforts to maximize individual happiness. This cultural shift has led to a reduction in legal barriers to divorce, as well as a proliferation of adult alternatives to marriage (e.g., cohabitation, living alone). The net result of these shifts in normative orientation is also a greater risk of divorce.

Of course, both structural and normative shifts are likely to have occurred simultaneously as components of larger processes of industrialization and modernization. Indeed, it is likely that structural

and normative changes have reinforced each other over time. For example, divorce in one generation becomes the engine of divorce in the next generation. As men and women adapt to the consequences of divorce, they set the stage for even greater weakening of the historical interdependence of spouses and openness to new alternatives for adult living. Divorce becomes an acceptable solution to domestic dissatisfaction, and withdrawal from the labor force that generates economic dependence becomes a risky venture that few men and women are willing to take. There is also evidence in support of an intergenerational transmission of divorce where children of divorce are more likely to divorce themselves. Thus, changes in marriage and divorce are multidimensional, and failure to recognize this fact will only lead to a more limited understanding of changes that have occurred, as well as the plausibility of future paths that change may take.

Increasing rates of divorce over time imply, therefore, a scenario wherein both the structural and normative foundations of marriage have weakened over time. Husbands and wives have become increasingly less interdependent economically and public stigma associated with divorce has waned. Accordingly, spouses are increasingly making choices about staying together that are not limited by economic necessity and that are made in a context of permissive attitudes toward divorce and a growing range of viable living alternatives outside of marriage. This is a somewhat crude theoretical position, but it does remind researchers to consider a broad range of alternatives when thinking about what drives differences in rates of divorce, both period and cohort.

Concluding Remarks

Finally, it is difficult to make firm statements about differentials in the risk of divorce that remain constant across time. Change in risk factors occurs because marriage is based on different foundations across different eras, and different eras offer different alternatives to marriage. That said, recent decades have witnessed the following differences (among others) in the likelihood that divorce will occur. Blacks are more likely to divorce than are Whites; marriages formed at young ages are more

likely to dissolve than marriages formed at older ages; marriages preceded by a spell of cohabitation are more likely to end than marriages not preceded by cohabitation; marriages that involve a premarital birth are more likely to end in divorce; marriages in which at least one of the partners was married before are more likely to dissolve; marriages involving spouses with less education are more likely to end; and marriages that involve spouses with heterogamous traits (e.g., wide differences in education, age, race) are more likely to dissolve. Finally, there appears to be an intergenerational transmission of divorce. That is, marriages in which at least one of the spouses has divorced parents are more likely to end in divorce.

Jay Teachman

See also Dissolution of Relationships, Causes; Divorce, Children and; Divorce, Effects on Adults; Divorce and Preventive Interventions for Children and Parents; Families, Demographic Trends; Intergenerational Transmission of Divorce; Postdivorce Relationships

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DIVORCE AND PREVENTIVE INTERVENTIONS FOR CHILDREN AND PARENTS

Every year in the United States, more than a million children experience their parents' divorce, and nearly half of all children will spend some portion of their lives in a single-parent family.

There is substantial variation in the course of children's long-term adjustment. However, most children experience considerable distress in the early stages of a breakup. Variation in children's long-term outcomes depends largely on how their parents handle the end of their marriage and the quality of family life they create for their children over time. The impact of divorce on children is shaped by a number of risk and protective factors including individual child characteristics, parenting and family factors, and the quality of support available to children and families. Research on these mediating factors is valuable because this knowledge base can be translated into essential ingredients for effective policies, best practice standards, and evidence-based interventions for children and families. This entry describes preventive interventions that incorporate protective factors known to relate to more positive outcomes for children and their parents.

Risks Associated With Divorce and Children's Adjustment

Numerous studies underscore the role of divorce and family conflict as a major stressor for separating parents and their children. A meta-analysis of 95 studies involving over 13,000 children showed that divorce poses specific risks for children socially, emotionally, and academically. Children whose parents divorced had more than double the rate of difficulties requiring mental health services compared to children from never divorced families. Problems may endure into adulthood for a significant minority of children, including a heightened risk of social and emotional difficulties, socioeconomic problems, poorer subjective well-being, and a greater likelihood of divorce in their own marriage. These sobering outcomes warrant concern and intervention, but they are not inevitable, nor are they applicable to all children who experience divorce. Preventive interventions designed to help children cope with family changes have been shown to enhance children's adjustment to this major life change.

Preventive Interventions for Children

Coping with unwanted, uncontrollable, and often unexpected life-altering experiences can be

enormously challenging, if not overwhelming, for most children. As they watch their parents grapple with painful emotions, children often keep their own distress to themselves—often furthering their isolation. Programs such as the Children of Divorce Intervention Program (CODIP), created by JoAnne Pedro-Carroll and her colleagues, provide shared group support and coping skills and have been shown to reduce the stress of a breakup on children and to foster their resilience and adaptive coping.

Protective factors such as effective coping skills are like shock absorbers that help children manage strong emotions and deal with myriad family changes. Providing children with age-appropriate information and clarifying misconceptions about divorce are approaches that are related to better outcomes for children. Children who blame themselves and who have harmful misconceptions about the divorce have been shown to have more adjustment difficulties. The CODIP focuses on supporting children emotionally by providing a safe setting where they can share their feelings, strengthen effective coping skills, clarify misconceptions, and learn to disengage from problems that are beyond their control. Several studies show that program children were rated by their teachers and parents as having improved in their adjustment at home and at school more than control groups of children who did not participate in the program. Children in the program reported feeling less anxious and more confident about their ability to deal with problems and life changes than nonprogram children. The positive benefits of this preventive intervention even extended to children's health. Two years after participating in the program, children had fewer visits to school health offices with complaints of headaches, stomach aches, and general malaise than children in a nonprogram control group.

What are the active ingredients that contribute to the effectiveness of children's programs such as CODIP? Studies show that active coping that involves problem solving, communication skills, and positive thinking are related to less depression and help to mitigate the effects of stress on children. Children's evaluations of the success of their coping efforts in the face of stressful situations appear to be linked to their active coping and reduced anxiety. In other words, children can be empowered

with skills for helping them express and manage their emotions and cope effectively with difficult times. Divorce poses enormous challenges that children are often expected to take in stride. Apparently, learning skills and strategies for dealing with family changes gives children a sense of competence and confidence that there are *some* aspects of their family circumstances over which they do have control. As one 10-year-old participant said of his experience in CODIP, "This group has been a safe place where I could talk about anything . . . it's helped me to see that divorce is sad, but it's not the end of the world for me or my family."

Preventive Interventions and Educational Programs for Parents

How children fare after a divorce depends heavily on how their parents go about ending their marriage and on the quality of life they create for their children. Specific family factors have been identified that have a profound, positive impact on children's lives over time. Most effective programs for parents are based on these protective factors. One such parent education program is ACT-For the Children (Assisting Children through Transition) in New York, which provides information and skills in a 7-hour, two session class for separating parents. Effective approaches that parents can use to nurture their children's resilience and healthy adjustment are based on the factors summarized below.

Encapsulated Parent Conflict

Ongoing conflict between parents is consistently linked to children's psychological problems. Especially toxic is conflict that is verbally or physically hostile, unresolved, and child focused. Nonaggressive conflicts that are resolved tend not to distress children any more so than nonconflictual discussions. Interestingly, if children are told that a conflict has been resolved, the negative impact on them is reduced. In contrast, unresolved and ongoing conflict sensitizes children to further acrimony, disrupts parenting, and is linked to behavior problems.

The implications of this research for educational and preventive interventions for parents are clear: Contain, resolve, or encapsulate conflict, and do not allow it to seep into every aspect of life and

erode precious relationships and one-on-one time with children. Parent education programs such as ACT-For the Children encourage parents to use skills for effective communication, conflict resolution, anger management, and to renegotiate their marital relationship as former spouses and lovers to a coparenting relationship with a vested interest in the important business of raising their children. The analogy of a business relationship implies a more formal, collegial, and less emotional way of relating to contain anger and defuse inflammatory verbal exchanges and interactions. Above all, the goal is to protect children from the harmful effects of ongoing conflict between parents.

Legal policies are needed that reduce acrimonious proceedings that exact a heavy toll on all family members—especially the children. Mediation and Collaborative Law are increasingly popular effective alternatives to adversarial approaches that can intensify parent conflict and negatively affect children. Significant positive outcomes were found in one 12-year follow-up study comparing divorce mediation to litigation. Just 5 hours of mediation resulted in greater satisfaction with the process, increased contact between nonresidential parents and their children, and reduced court hearings. Such proactive approaches hold much potential for reducing the negative consequences of divorce on children and families.

Parental Functioning and Psychological Well-Being

Another reliable predictor of children's healthy adjustment is the health and well-being of their parents. Divorce is an undeniably stressful process that can leave adults vulnerable to psychological and physical problems. Marital disruption has been shown to be related to suppressed immune system function, which may increase divorced adults' susceptibility to disease, chronic and acute medical conditions, and even death.

At a time when children are grappling with stressful family changes, they often encounter parents who are unable to provide the emotional stability and support that their children so urgently need. For children who are feeling vulnerable and worried about their future, having a well-functioning parent provides a protective pathway to healthy adjustment. Effective preventive interventions such

as ACT-For the Children emphasize to parents the importance of taking care of themselves physically and emotionally so that they can care for their children. Providing parents with information about healthy management of stress, warning signs that professional help may be needed, and links to additional supportive resources once a program has ended are effective approaches. Many programs provide such information and skills training. Although most parent education programs are of short duration, one consistent benefit appears to be that parents' awareness and use of supportive resources is increased. These programs should not be viewed as an end point for parents but as a means to the end of seeking additional support as needed to maintain healthy family functioning. Help seeking should be seen as a sign of strength, not weakness. This message has important implications for shaping legal policy to ensure that adults are not penalized in court proceedings because of having sought mental health care.

Solid, Supportive Parent–Child Relationships and Effective Parenting

Research on children's resilience in adverse circumstances has recurring themes in common with research on children and divorce: the importance of a supportive relationship between children and at least one parent or caregiver.

Studies consistently show that a healthy attachment relationship between a child and at least one parent or caregiver is a critical foundation for children's competence and resilience. Unfortunately, parent–child relationships can erode significantly after divorce, especially in high-conflict situations. Equally noteworthy is the fact that a solid, healthy relationship with one parent has the potential to buffer children from a negative relationship with the other parent. High-quality relationships serve as a lifeline that protects children from divorce-related stress, enhances their feelings of security, reduces fears, and conveys a message that help is available if needed.

A preventive intervention program called New Beginnings at Arizona State University is a program that includes dual components for residential mothers and their children. This intervention focuses on parenting skills, especially effective

limit setting and strengthening parent–child relationships through positive interactions and one-to-one time spent in pleasant activities. Short-term results of the program included reduced behavior problems in children. Impressive results were found in a follow-up study 6 years later. Adolescents whose mothers participated in the program had reduced symptoms of emotional difficulties, fewer acting-out behaviors, lesser use of marijuana and alcohol, fewer mental health problems, and fewer sexual partners.

Studies such as these underscore the central role of parent–child relationships and the protective process that can occur under conditions of emotionally secure connections between parents and children. Parenting skills that include warmth, nurturance, involvement in one-on-one time with children, and authoritative parenting with effective discipline contribute to high-quality relationships between separating parents and their children. Interventions targeted to separating parents that teach these effective parenting practices and strengthen parent–child relationships show much potential for reducing children’s stress and bolstering their resilience and healthy development.

Preventive interventions for children and parents highlight pathways toward reduced risk and in the optimal case, resilience. Separating parents and professionals working with them may want to consider the following practices:

- Provide a process and structure to resolve or contain conflict and reduce adversarial interactions.
- Educate parents about the power of collaboration and when safe to do so, working together on behalf of their children.
- Reduce economic decline for families—significant dollars are spent on protracted adversarial proceedings. Protect children’s right to financial support during their childhood and college years.
- Remind parents of the importance of healthy self-care and that seeking help when needed is a sign of strength.
- Protect children’s need to be kept out of the middle of parents’ conflicts.
- Encourage and affirm the importance of effective parenting and healthy relationships between the child and both parents.
- Give children age-appropriate information and prepare them for family changes.

- Reassure children in words and actions that they are loved and will always be well cared for—as children in support groups often say to their parents “even if you think we already know, tell us again.”

JoAnne Pedro-Carroll

See also Conflict, Marital; Conflict Resolution; Coping, Developmental Influences; Divorce, Children and; Divorce, Effects on Adults; Divorce, Prevalence and Trends

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DOUBLE STANDARD IN RELATIONSHIPS

In its general form, a double standard is a set of rules, guidelines, restrictions, or a moral code that is applied more strongly to one group than another. Double standards typically emerge in areas characterized by stereotypes or different value systems, such as race, religion, or gender.

One type of double standard, which may be called an actor–observer double standard, can occur in romantic relationships. The name actor–observer comes from the actor–observer bias, which is the tendency for people to interpret other people’s negative actions based on their personality rather than on the situation, while basing their own actions on the situation rather than on their personality (e.g., “I act the way I do because of the situation I am in, while he acts the way he does because of the way he is”). A person in a relationship may consider his or her own actions to be normal, harmless, or nonthreatening, while considering those same actions by the other partner to be very troubling. Some examples include going out with friends of the opposite sex, forgetting to call on the phone, or being unresponsive. For instance, if a wife tells her husband she will call him at 8 o’clock but does not do it, he may attribute her behavior to something threatening, such as not wanting to call him, ignoring him, or cheating on him and may become quite upset. It may be the case that her cell phone battery died, she got a flat tire, or she simply forgot. If, however, the man fails to call his wife, he attributes his behavior to his situation (e.g., forgetting, flat tire), not to his personality.

This double standard may be especially common when one partner in the relationship has a preoccupied attachment style. A person with this type of attachment style is very concerned with closeness and is worried about being abandoned. Preoccupied people have chronic accessibility to thoughts about abandonment and closeness seeking, so many types of behavior, no matter how innocent, are often interpreted by them as a threat to the relationship. In summary, people may hold relational double standards so that what is appropriate behavior for them is not appropriate for their partner.

Perhaps the most common domain characterized by a double standard is that of sexual behavior. In Western society, it is widely believed that a sexual double standard (sometimes known as the double standard) exists so that more rigorous standards exist for sexually active women than men. Sometimes this is given the “studs versus sluts” designation; when a man is purported to have slept with many women, he is given nicknames such as stud or player, nicknames which are considered to be compliments. However, women who have purportedly slept with many men are often given derogatory nicknames such as slut or ho.

Although this type of double standard seems quite prominent to most people, much research suggests that a sexual double standard may not be as common today as it once was in the 1950s and ’60s, when some research indicated that women were perceived more negatively than men for engaging in high levels of sexual activity. Contemporary research by Michael Marks and his colleagues sheds some light on this disparity. One study shows that people in a social situation are likely to display a sexual double standard. This is because when people are in a social situation, they are more likely to act in a way they believe to be consistent with social norms. For instance, the researcher Solomon Asch found that people tended to do very well in a matching task when alone but when in the presence of others, tended to go along with the group, even when the group was wrong. Because many people believe the sexual norms surrounding the double standard to be true, they may act in accordance with them in order to appear consistent with social norms and avoid punishment (e.g., insults, teasing).

Another reason why a sexual double standard may seem prominent is the use of stereotypes in judging sexually active men and women. When a person is in a laboratory (which is generally a very quiet, socially isolated room) evaluating a sexually active person, it is very easy for that person to focus all of his or her mental resources to evaluating and thinking about that person. This makes it more likely that the target person is evaluated on things like personality than on how much sex that person has had. In true social situations, however, it is much harder to think about individual people because there is so much information to attend to. People have to pay attention to their own behaviors

and interpret signals from others. This means they have less mental energy to devote to person perception and therefore need to take mental shortcuts such as stereotyping. If this is the case, then the target person may be evaluated based on things such as how much sex that person has had (or is perceived to have had based on rumors, gossip, etc.) instead of their personal attributes.

Finally, it may be the case that people have a bias toward information that supports a sexual double standard. In other words, people remember more information that is consistent than inconsistent with stereotypes. Thus, it may be easier for people to notice and remember women being derogated and men being rewarded for sexual behavior than vice versa. Therefore, even if men and women are treated equally based on their sexual behavior, the instances that are noticed and remembered by people are the ones that are consistent with the double standard, giving rise to the appearance of its existence.

As a closing note, it is important to point out that holding or endorsing a double standard is not necessarily the same thing as hypocrisy. A double standard is holding different sets of rules for different people, whereas a hypocrite is someone who acts differently from what he or she says or believes. For example, if a person believes it is his or her right to have an extramarital affair but does not allow his or her spouse that right, the person holds a double standard. A person who claims extramarital affairs are immoral and wrong while maintaining one is a hypocrite.

Michael J. Marks

See also Sex Differences in Relationships; Sexuality; Sexual Standards

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DUAL-EARNER COUPLES

Dual-earner couples can be defined as those in which both partners are employed for pay while simultaneously maintaining a family life together. A significant subset of dual-earner couples are designated as dual career, defined as those in which both heads of households pursue high status occupations characterized by lifelong commitment and an opportunity structure that allows the expectation of advancement. The purpose of this entry is to give an overview of research on dual-earner couples, highlighting findings on both the strengths and challenges of this relationship type.

Research in this area began in the 1960s in England. Dual-career couples were viewed as a radical alternative to what was then perceived to be the most efficient and optimal division of family labor in which men were the primary financial providers and women the primary caretakers. This point of view largely ignored the fact that, prior to the Industrial Revolution, men and women had a long history of working collaboratively to maintain families. Indeed, it was not until the end of the 18th century and later that waged work was increasingly viewed as improper for women. This changed somewhat during World War II when women held factory and industrial jobs, but after the war, middle-class women were again encouraged to return home.

By the 1970s, influenced by economic and political factors, including the need for women's labor and the advent of feminism, increasing numbers of White middle-class women began to enter the paid workforce. Guided by the doctrine of separate spheres, few questioned that women would simply add the responsibilities of paid employment to those of the home, and most expected that paid employment would be experienced by women as harsher and more stressful than full-time homemaking. This gave rise to concerns of role overload (having to do too much) and role conflict, both work to family and family to work, so that fulfilling the demands of one role

(paid employment) would interfere with or preclude the ability to fulfill the demands of other roles (parenting and homemaking).

Contrary to expectation, however, studies found no negative effects of paid employment *per se* on women or on their children. In fact, there were often benefits. Despite increased demands on their time, research consistently showed that parents in dual-earner relationships spent no less time with their children than parents in relationships in which the mother was home full time, and their children scored just as well on measures of emotional and social development. Furthermore, children in dual-earner families often showed more egalitarian and less gender stereotypic attitudes as well as increased academic achievement, especially for girls. For women, across both race and class, the role of paid worker seemed to be a source of independent identity, increased self-esteem, purposefulness, enhanced social contacts, and inherent interest.

Findings also showed, however, that the extent of the benefits was influenced by a number of individual, occupational, and relational factors. On the individual level, women who had access to high-quality childcare and women who perceived paid employment as desirable were less depressed and less anxious than women without childcare and women who were employed but preferred to be home full time, respectively. On the relational level, women whose husbands supported their employment both behaviorally, by sharing the responsibilities of home and children, and attitudinally, by respecting the importance of their wives' work, were found to be less depressed than women whose husbands were unsupportive. On the occupational level, positions characterized by greater control, autonomy, challenge, and flexibility were associated with more positive outcomes than positions characterized by less control.

In 1975, as research in this area was just developing, approximately 45 percent of U.S. wives with children under 18 were employed. Only 15 years later, the percentage had risen to two thirds. Currently, dual-earner couples are the modal couple type in the United States with the result that approximately 78 percent of all employees are in dual-earner families.

More recent research has expanded the originally asymmetrical focus on women to include

men. Such studies find that work and home offer different emotional and cognitive benefits to both: home—relationships and time with family; work—stimulation and a chance to excel as well as significant financial benefits. In 2005, the median income of married couple families in which the wife was in the paid labor force was \$78,755 compared to \$44,457 for those in which the wife was unemployed. Although men, on average, continue to earn significantly more than women, wives' earnings contribute between 35 and 41 percent of family earnings, and some have estimated that as many as a third of dual-earner wives earn more than their husbands.

Wives' rising financial contributions led many to expect that family relations would become more egalitarian. Yet studies showed that increases in wives' financial contributions do not predict proportional increases in husbands' contributions at home. Wives' employment and wives' earnings take place in a cultural and relational context. In fact, studies in the United States and Israel and in industrialized countries in Europe and Asia showed that endorsement of key beliefs including the extent to which (1) masculinity is defined by the breadwinner role, (2) women work from choice rather than necessity, and (3) that infants need full time maternal care is a strong determinant of the availability of cultural and partner support for employed women. Among Western industrialized countries, Sweden has moved the furthest from these beliefs. As a result, dual earners, who now comprise close to 85 percent of Swedish couples, receive strong institutional supports including liberal paid parental leaves and extended childcare.

Over the last 3 decades, attitudes in the United States have changed dramatically. As a result, mothers who did on average one third more childcare than their husbands in the late 1970s do about one fourth more today. Responsibility for domestic work and the maintenance of relationships, however, remains considerably more asymmetrical, with women doing significantly more. Indeed, these asymmetries probably explain why professional women are more likely than professional men to be unmarried and childless and why studies find that husbands report more negative feelings about work than wives, while wives report greater negative feelings about home life than do husbands. Thus, one of the themes of current

research is identification of the kinds of programs, both corporate and cultural, such as work flexibility, supportive supervisors, paid parental leave, and quality childcare that will support work–life balance for both women and men, making dual-earner relationships less stressful and more beneficial for both the partners and their children.

Janice M. Steil

See also Division of Labor in Households; Egalitarian Relationships; Marriage and Health; Money and Couple Relationships; Work–Family Conflict; Work–Family Spillover

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DYADIC DATA ANALYSIS

Dyadic data analysis refers to a set of statistical techniques that model data from individuals who are connected or paired in some way. Dyads may be siblings, spouses, roommates, coworkers, neighbors, colleagues, or any other pairing that may be of interest to a researcher. Data analysis involving interconnected individuals violates the common simplifying assumption of statistical independence among units. As this entry describes, dyadic data analysis presents challenges for performing standard statistical tests, creating research designs, and constructing clear psychological hypotheses. Although complications do arise to make the statistical treatment more challenging, the payoff from dealing with these challenges is a richer understanding of social life from the most basic of human couplings—the dyad. This entry discusses several statistical issues surrounding the analysis of dyadic data and reviews selected methods that have been useful in empirical research.

Violations of Independence

Observations or units are sometimes connected, and those connections often come in pairs. Typically, statistics instructors stress the importance of collecting independent data points when constructing statistical tests. Independence makes statistical estimation and inference more tractable, but it may not be realistic in settings involving dyads and groups. Even in basic statistics, there are at least three common violations of the independence assumption in social science studies, two of which are generally well understood. Two data points can be related (i.e., not independent) because they are taken from the same person on the same variable at two points in time. Repeated-measures analyses, time series, and latent growth curve models handle violations of independence due to time. Two data points can be related because they are collected on two different variables from the same person. Correlations, multiple regression, factor analysis, and structural equation modeling are all well-known methods for handling violations of independence due to multiple variables from the same person.

What characterizes these two well-known methods for modeling violations of independence is an appreciation that the violation of independence can illuminate the underlying mechanism. Time series analyses can illuminate how participants grow or change at different rates; correlations between variables can illuminate the underlying factor structure of multiple variables.

The third type of violation of the independence assumption is less well known. Two data points can be related because they are taken from two individuals who are related in some way and can be considered members of the same dyad. For example, the researcher may ask both the husband and the wife how satisfied each is with their marriage. Those two data points are not conceptually independent from each other and so are probably not statistically independent. If the marriage is devoid of intimacy, both partners are likely to report low satisfaction. If the marriage is awash in intimacy, both partners are likely to report high marital satisfaction. Cases where one partner is satisfied and the other not are also interesting. The point is that because both individuals share a common dyadic experience—the marriage—their evaluations of

that experience may be related. Each person serves both as a member of the dyad, or the context, as well as an evaluator of the dyad. If these two individuals are called rater 1 and rater 2, it is easy to see that the two raters can be correlated because they are judging the same object.

Some researchers will either throw away or not collect data from one partner so that analyses can be simplified—with only one observation from each dyad there cannot be a violation of the independence assumption. Although it is true that data deletion simplifies the analysis and preserves the independence assumption, it comes at a very high cost—the researcher is no longer studying the dyad or the influences of social life as dictated by the experience of a dyad.

Statistical Tests and Measures

Association between variables due to dyadic membership can provide an important ground for theory testing. Many methodologists now view dyadic analysis as an opportunity for modeling social behavior. In the early days of dyadic data analysis, the emphasis was in understanding the effect of the independence violation on significance testing. Several procedures were proposed for adjusting *p*-values, for instance, according to the degree of the independence violation. However, methodologists and researchers alike soon realized that this view was shortsighted. An independence violation may not be a problem that needs correcting but rather a diagnostic feature that could be studied to yield important information about dyadic processes.

Fortunately, there has been active development of new statistical techniques for dyadic data. The classic measure of group or dyadic process is the intraclass correlation, developed over 100 years ago. Unlike the usual Pearson correlation that measures association, the interclass correlation measures similarity. A high positive intraclass correlation suggests high similarity between dyad members, a negative intraclass correlation suggests dyadic dissimilarity, and an intraclass of zero suggests independence between the two dyad members.

The intraclass correlation also plays an important role in statistical tests of more advanced regression models applied to dyads. When there are two or more variables collected from each dyad member, then the test of significance between

variables across dyad members, such as the correlation between, say, the husband's satisfaction with the marriage and the wife's commitment to the marriage, is heavily influenced by the intraclass correlation within variables. That is, each dyad member can influence each other on the same variable (e.g., husband and wife satisfaction ratings are likely related) and each dyad member can influence each other across variables (e.g., husband's satisfaction with the marriage related to the wife's commitment to the marriage). The test of significance for the cross variable–cross person correlation (e.g., husband satisfaction to wife commitment) is influenced by the within-dyad correlation on the same variable (e.g., husband and wife correlation on satisfaction).

There are many types of intraclass correlations depending on the nature of design and data. For example, dyad members may be distinguishable on some theoretical basis (male–female dyad members, first born–second born sibling pairs, supervisor–employee dyads, etc.) or the members may be exchangeable in that there is no theoretical basis to distinguish each member with a certain category.

There are several approaches for assessing interdependence for cases where each dyad member provides data, and the research question involves using those data to assess the interdependence of the dyad members. One general approach to estimating the intraclass correlation is the hierarchical linear model, which treats individual dyad members as nested within the dyad. This analysis partitions variability into dyad-level variance (or between-dyad variance) and individual-level variance (or within-dyad variance). The intraclass correlation is the ratio of the dyad variance over the total variance (dyad plus individual variance) in the data. An equivalent way to implement the intraclass correlation is through structural equation modeling, where the dyad is treated as a latent effect. That is, the scores of each individual dyad member are treated as indicators of an underlying latent dyadic variable. The intraclass correlation is equivalent to the square root of the loading for each dyad member (under the constraint that each dyad member has identical loadings). The intraclass correlation can also be estimated from particular analysis of variance designs, and can be directly estimated through a special pairwise correlation setup.

Special Designs and Research Questions

As more variables are added to a dyadic design, richer and more inherently dyadic research questions can be explored. For instance, research questions of social influence between dyad members can be addressed. Does an individual's commitment to the marriage depend more on that individual's own marital satisfaction (an actor effect), or does it depend on the marital satisfaction of the partner (a partner effect)? This type of model is called the actor-partner model because it distinguishes the effect of the target person (the actor) from the effect of his or her dyadic partner. Research questions of shared variance can also be addressed with the latent variable model. This model generalizes the intraclass model by assigning a dyadic latent variable and an individual-level error to each observed variable. Correlations or regression paths can then be estimated between the dyadic latent variables as well as the individual-level error terms. Do shared commitment ratings between dyad members (a dyad-level latent variable) predict shared satisfaction ratings (a second dyad-level variable)? This question reflects a correlation between two dyadic latent variables. Does an individual's unique commitment (defined as unshared, or error variance, because this effect is over and above the shared or dyadic component) correlate with that individual's marital satisfaction? This question reflects a correlation between two individual-level variances. Determining whether processes play out at an individual level, a dyadic level, or both is an important research question about mechanism that will illuminate the study of dyadic processes.

As with all data analysis one needs to be mindful of the type of sample design used on a given research project. Were the dyads randomly selected from a population of dyads and then data collected on each member of the dyad (e.g., married couples randomly selected and both husband and wife provide data)? Is there a set of individuals and is each individual paired with every other possible individual as in a round-robin tournament? A recent research example is a speed dating paradigm where, for instance, 10 males meet with 10 females in all possible cross-gender interactions. Round-robin analyses permit the analyst to separate an observation into different components. Because a

person interacts with every other person, it is possible to disentangle processes related to how others perceive that person and how that person perceives others (very similar to an analysis of variance decomposition into different sources of variance).

Of course, the usual issues that arise in any data analysis situation are relevant in dyadic designs. For instance, the data analyst should check for outliers, reliability of measures, adjust for multiple comparisons, check the equality of variance assumption, deal with missing data, and so on.

Researchers should also be careful that their analyses address their conceptual research questions. This entry has already mentioned how research questions of social influence could be treated through the actor-partner model and how research questions of similarity could be treated through a latent variable approach to dyads. Even the simple index of computing difference scores between dyad members as a measure of similarity is appropriate for some research questions and misleading for others. For example, is the focus on the degree of matching (how close are the dyad members) or on the degree of influence (does one dyad member asymmetrically influence the other)? Different research questions such as these require different methods for handling difference scores in dyads.

Conclusion

The study of dyads presents researchers with an exciting opportunity. All too often nonstatisticians look at the special techniques developed for dyadic data analysis with frustration because their research is now made more difficult. At one conference the authors of this entry heard a prominent dyad researcher shrug his shoulders and say, "I just got nabbed by the independence police." The concern, however, is not that researchers should avoid violating the independence assumption for purely statistical reasons. Rather, for dyads the violation of independence may signal important psychological and interpersonal processes. If scores from two people in the same dyad are related, then there is evidence that there may be some social influence between the two individuals. The underlying mechanism could be interdependence, mutual influence, pressure to conform, or any number of other psychological

processes. Independence violations should be assessed, measured, modeled, and discussed because they provide an important window on social behavior.

Richard Gonzalez and Dale Griffin

See also Assortative Mating; Complementarity; Dependence; Interaction Analysis; Interdependence Theory; Quantitative Methods in Relationship Research; Social Networks, Dyad Effects on; Social Relations Model

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DYSSEMIA

A language is a set of symbols whose meanings are agreed on by those who use them. The word *ball* can be used to communicate to others about a ball without actually having that object in hand to show them. The word acts as a symbol or sign for that object. It is easy to understand how verbal language works. Less obvious is that nonverbal signs can function much like words do. For example, just as the word *smile* is a sign for the emotion of happiness, a physical smile is an external sign for an internal state of pleasure or joy. Nonverbal signs can be clearer and more powerful than words, especially when they reflect feelings. Although every verbal language has different words for smile, the actual behavior of smiling is accepted as a sign of happiness across most all cultures and across past and present time. This is known as nonverbal language.

Some people have mild or serious difficulties receiving or sending verbal cues; likewise, some

have trouble receiving or sending nonverbal language cues. Stephen Nowicki and Marshall Duke coined the term *dyssemia* (*dys* = inability; *semia* = to read or send signs) to refer to these deficits. There can be *receptive dyssemias* (difficulties in reading nonverbal cues) or *expressive dyssemias* (deficits in sending nonverbal cues) in any or all of the nonverbal channels. Individuals who have difficulty either reading or sending emotional cues nonverbally are the focus of this entry.

All languages have receptive and expressive components. To receive, one must learn to decipher or decode the meaning of signs and symbols that others send. In verbal language, this means trying to figure out the meanings of written or spoken words. Significant difficulty in accurately reading word cues and signs is called dyslexia (*dys* = inability; *lexia* = verbal signs or words). To express something, one must send or encode meaningful signs and symbols to others. In verbal language, this is done by speaking and writing. Serious deficits in the ability to generate and use appropriate words—for instance, being able to identify fingers on a hand but not being able to come up with the word *hand*—are often called expressive aphasias.

Just as verbal language has receptive and expressive aspects, so does nonverbal language. Receptive nonverbal language skill refers to the ability to accurately perceive the nonverbal cues of others by, for example, looking at their facial expressions or listening to their tones of voice. The important companion skill to receiving nonverbal information is learning to express the appropriate nonverbal cues through a variety of channels.

There are several important differences between nonverbal and verbal communication that can produce significant social impact. First, whenever the verbal and nonverbal messages do not agree in emotional tone, people are more prone to believe the nonverbal one. Nonverbal cues are not only more likely to be believed, they are also more continuous than verbal ones. Paul Watzlawick and colleagues have suggested that “you cannot not communicate nonverbally” (1967, p. 49). There are social implications of the fact that facial expressions, postures, and gestures never stop communicating emotional information.

Compared to verbal communication, nonverbal communication is more likely to take place without people being aware of it. Although people usually are aware of the words they and others use, they often are less conscious of the rich interplay of facial expressions, tones of voice, postures, and gestures that accompany those words.

The impact of rule breaking in verbal communication is different from that in nonverbal communication. When individuals break a verbal rule of language, such as using a singular verb with a plural subject (e.g., “we was there”), they risk evoking a negative intellectual response from others. Someone who makes that kind of mistake may be seen as not very smart or well educated or as emotionally threatening. However, breaking a nonverbal rule of communication usually has a more negative emotional, rather than intellectual, impact on others than verbal errors. People would feel uncomfortable in the presence of someone who is breaking nonverbal rules of communication, but ironically because most nonverbal communication takes place out of awareness, they may not always be aware that they are the source of their own and others’ discomfort. These are individuals who, for example, will sit next to another person in a movie theater even though there are only a few patrons and hundreds of empty seats. Or they will stare too long at someone with little awareness of the discomfort they are producing.

These four differences between nonverbal and verbal communication—nonverbal cues are more likely to be believed, are more continuous, are more likely to take place without our full awareness, and if broken, are more likely to produce an emotional response—provide insight into problems people may encounter in forming relationships. People with dyssemias can provoke negative emotional responses from others, provoke them continuously, and yet be unaware that they are causing these negative reactions. Nowicki and Duke have called this set of difficulties inherent to nonverbal deficits the *dyssemic core*, and they suspect that it causes many personal and social problems.

A final difference between verbal and nonverbal communication is that they are learned in different ways. In contrast to the formal and direct training individuals receive through parents and teachers to

read and write words, nonverbal communication skills are learned indirectly and informally, primarily by watching others. Because educational systems and society give individuals constant and direct feedback about their reading and writing skills, most of them generally know their verbal strengths and weaknesses. It is a much different picture for nonverbal abilities that remain largely unrecognized.

Although Paul Ekman and Wallace Friesen can be credited with introducing nonverbal communication to the field of psychology, Howard Friedman was responsible for emphasizing its role in the communication of emotion, and Robert Rosenthal and his colleagues were most responsible for expanding on this emphasis and in creating one of the most frequently used measures of nonverbal skill—the Profile of Nonverbal Sensitivity (PONS). The PONS was designed to assess nonverbal communication through tones of voice and movement of the face and body presented in film clips. Limitations in nonverbal abilities assessed utilizing the PONS have been linked to interpersonal failures. Nowicki and Duke introduced the Diagnostic Analysis of Nonverbal Accuracy (DANVA) to compensate for shortcomings in previous measures. The DANVA measures the ability to identify and express emotions in facial expressions, tones of voice, and body postures. Individuals who are dyssemic have been found to be less popular at all ages beginning at four, rated lower in social competence by teachers, more likely to have attention deficit disorder, nonverbal and verbal learning disabilities, social anxiety, depression, conduct disorder, psychopathy, and schizotypal personality disorder and speech and language impairment. Dyssemia not only appears associated with personality and social difficulties, but research has found that when intelligence is controlled for, those with problems in identifying emotions nonverbally achieve less than their peers. These findings leave little doubt that nonverbal skill is necessary for social and academic success.

Stephen Nowicki and Marshall P. Duke

See also Accuracy in Communication; Acquaintance Process; Communication, Nonverbal; Communication, Norms and Rules; Communication Skills; Rejection

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E

EARLY YEARS OF MARRIAGE PROJECT

The divorce rate in U.S. society skyrocketed in the mid-1980s. Given the high rates of divorce, many social scientists became interested in discovering what factors keep married couples together and happy and what factors predict divorce. The Early Years of Marriage (EYM) Project is a one-of-a-kind 20-year study of 373 couples. The project was designed to understand the factors that contribute to the positive development of marital relationships. At the same time, there was an understanding that the processes of marital development might be different in Black American and White American couples. Researchers had studied marriage for decades, but the EYM Project was the first to look at the development of marriage over time for both Black American and White American couples. The study also was designed to examine interpersonal (e.g., communication, conflict) and structural (e.g., economic issues, networks) factors and their connection to marital stability and happiness over time.

The project was initially developed in 1986, by Joseph Veroff, Elizabeth Douvan, and Shirley Hatchett, at the University of Michigan's Institute for Social Research. Joseph Veroff and Terri Orbuch have directed the project into the 1990s and beyond. This entry provides a general overview of the EYM Project and its contribution to the literature on marriage and divorce.

Who Participated in the Study and How?

The study began with a sample of 373 married couples (199 Black American; 174 White American), all of whom had applied for marriage licenses in Wayne County, Michigan, during 1986. To be eligible for the study, both members of the couple had to be of the same race, in their first marriage, and the wife had to be younger than 35 years of age. All eligible Black American couples and a random sample of White American couples were contacted and asked to participate. Of those contacted, 66 percent agreed to participate, a reasonably good response rate.

The couples were interviewed on multiple occasions. The first interview took place a few months after marriage, a time when most couples are firmly in the glow of the honeymoon period. Married couples were re-interviewed in Years 2, 3, 4, 7, and 16 of their marriages. All respondents, married or divorced, participated in a brief survey in Year 14. In Years 2 and 4, brief telephone interviews were conducted. In Years 1, 3, 7, and 16, married couples were interviewed at their homes by a race-matched interviewer. Each individual was interviewed separately and then with his or her spouse. In Year 16, for the first time, interviews were conducted separately with respondents who had divorced over the years.

Many different methods were used in the interviews. In the couple interview, spouses were asked together to tell the story of their relationship in narrative form. A behavioral observational procedure having them resolve differences about the

important rules for a good marriage also was used. In the individual interviews, a variety of questions were asked on topics such as marital happiness, family of origin, religion, employment experiences, housework and childcare, children, and perceptions of discrimination (Black Americans only).

It was extremely important to the goals of the project to obtain marital status and contact information on everyone from the original sample, whether married or divorced. Therefore, in Years 14 and 16 of the project, extensive telephone and field tracking took place to locate and obtain information on all members. For those individuals who could not be located, divorce records were searched from surrounding counties.

To compare the EYM sample with national statistics, the researchers used the General Social Survey (GSS) data from 1980 to 1994. After dividing the GSS sample into Black Americans and White Americans, and selecting out individuals by marital status (first married) and age (for the EYM range of 25–37 years), the sample was found to be consistent with national norms for first married individuals by race on income, education, parental status, likelihood of cohabitation, and a host of other demographic factors.

Several features of the EYM Project enhance the significance of the research project and findings: (a) the reasonably large sample size, (b) the analysis of both Black American and White American couples, (c) the continuous collection of data from both husbands and wives over 16 years, and (d) the ability of the researchers to locate and interview a high percentage of the original respondents in all years of the study.

Divorce Rates

A common question concerns the divorce rates in each year of the project and whether these rates differ for Black American (BA) and White American (WA) couples. In the 3rd year of the study, 14 percent (9 percent WA, 18 percent BA) of the original couples had divorced or separated; in the 7th year, 29 percent (20 percent WA, 37 percent BA) were divorced or separated; in the 14th year, 41 percent (30 percent WA, 50 percent BA) had divorced or separated; and in the 16th year, 46 percent (36 percent WA, 55 percent BA) had

divorced or separated. Thus, Black American couples were about 50 percent more likely than White American couples were to divorce or separate during the first 16 years of marriage. These divorce rates are consistent with other findings in the literature. The EYM project's tracking procedures and efforts were successful over time: The project was able to gather marital status information on 98.9 percent of the original sample, an exceptionally high rate for research of this sort. Very few respondents refused to participate in the study once they began the project.

Important Findings and Contributions

The EYM Project has been the catalyst for many scholarly publications. Two major books also have been written from the data. A list of current publications is available on the project Web site (<http://projects.isr.umich.edu/eym>). Many conceptual and methodological questions about marriage, parenthood, families, and divorce can and have been addressed using the EYM data. The following topics illustrate but do not exhaust the possibilities.

The project data are useful for describing couples in early marriage and over time. For example, about 55 percent of the Black American couples and 22 percent of the White American couples had children before marriage. About 65 percent of the Black American couples and 41 percent of the White American couples had cohabited before marriage. Moreover, more than 45 percent of the couples shared their home with others, usually their children, but sometimes with other adults as well. Also, wives were more religiously observant than were their husbands in all years of the study.

The project data also are valuable for understanding and identifying the factors that influence marital stability and quality over time. Given the project's focus on both structural and interactional factors, the data can identify whether and to what extent oppressive social conditions (e.g., low income, unemployment), challenges of parenthood and family responsibilities (e.g., childcare issues, network support), and interactive processes between spouses (e.g., conflict, sexuality) are critical for maintaining a marriage over time. Given that these data are longitudinal, it is also possible to examine whether spouses' earlier adaptation to

each other (e.g., integration of work and family roles) has consequences for long-term individual, marital, and family outcomes. For example, project findings suggest that all couples need to resolve several critical problems of adaptation in the early years of marriage. When couples are able to reconcile these challenges (e.g., weaving social networks, negotiating the world of work, becoming parents, and managing conflict), they are happier and more likely to stay together over time.

Another way to understand marriages over time and the factors that determine marital quality and stability is through the lens of race/ethnicity. Until recently, the vast literature on marriage and divorce emphasized White American marriages. Little attention had been given to Black American marriages and even less to divorce within the Black American community. The EYM Project is distinctive because project findings demonstrate that the racial/ethnic context of marriage is critical to understanding the meaning of marriage in the lives of individuals and couples. For example, Black American husbands are more egalitarian in their gender roles and are more likely to help around the home and with children than are White American husbands. Black American husbands' participation in home labor is important to Black American marriages because it reduces the risk of divorce. Husbands' participation in home labor is not predictive of the risk of divorce for White American couples. The effects of race on the risk of divorce and marital quality are not explained away by the introduction of interactional (home labor, conflict) or structural (education, income) variables.

Race/ethnicity also must be considered through the lens of gender. Even the experiences of being male or female in a marriage have unique meanings depending on whether one is Black American or White American. For example, wives' greater educational attainment protects couples from divorce, regardless of race. However, the risk of divorce does not go down for Black American husbands with increased education as it does for Black American wives and White American husbands and wives.

Extensive project data were gathered on divorce in Year 16, so the context of divorce for both White American and Black American individuals also can be tied to qualities and conditions of the earlier marriage. For example, outside factors (e.g., networks, work demands) are tied more to the stability of

Black American couples than of White American couples, whereas internal factors (e.g., commitment, managing conflict) are more tied to the stability of White American couples than of Black American couples. More specifically, husbands' concern about financial security predicts marital instability among Black American couples, but not among White American couples. In contrast, factors of conflict management are predictive of marital instability among White American couples, but not among Black American couples. A couple's position in the larger society can determine what marital factors are important in determining marital stability and quality.

Lastly, the EYM Project examines the nature of reconstructive memory for relationship development through a narrative technique that asks couples together to tell the "story of their relationship." Couples and individuals told stories of the development of their marriage, the birth of a child, and the divorce experience (if divorced) at several points in the project. These stories were coded and content-analyzed for their role in predicting marital, family and individual well-being over time. For example, for the majority of the couples, the courtship story was a collaborative effort between husband and wife, rather than a story told primarily by one spouse or the other. Also, for all but Black American husbands, having told their courtship story with some amount of conflict was indicative of lesser marital happiness. Not being able to agree easily on the story of the courtship early in marriage has long-term consequences for marital happiness.

Conclusion

The EYM Project is a unique study that follows a large and diverse sample of married couples over time. The researchers continue to track and make contact with all EYM respondents. The researchers send out a newsletter and an update form each year to all respondents and encourage respondents to update their contact information (and changes in marital status) via the project Web site. The researchers look forward to collecting additional data from all the original EYM participants in Year 25 of the project.

Terri L. Orbuch and Laura G. Hagan

See also Accounts; African-American Families; Change in Romantic Relationships Over Time; Divorce, Effects on Adults; Longitudinal Studies of Marital Satisfaction and Dissolution; Marital Satisfaction and Quality; Predicting Success or Failure of Marital Relationships

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ECONOMIC PRESSURES, EFFECTS ON RELATIONSHIPS

Economic pressure is an emotional, cognitive, and behavioral response experienced by family members who have had economic problems in their daily lives. How family members react to economic pressure depends on factors such as the type of pressure, the individual reactions, the type of economic problem, and the interaction of family members to each other. Glen Elder, a sociologist, along with his colleagues over the years, has studied economic pressure. Rand Conger and his research team have continued the investigation of

these concepts and have placed them within a family stress model. Other fields such as family economics, family studies, and consumer economics have also studied these concepts, but using the components and frameworks of well-being rather than a pressure and problem orientation. When several fields look at different parts independently, it adds to the complexity of describing a phenomenon. This entry describes what types of economic problems cause economic pressure, the source of problems, and the influence of economic pressure on family relationships.

Types of Problems Causing Economic Pressure

The same level of income is not viewed the same by every family. The amount of money brought into the family is only part of this complex issue. Many people study economic problems using an “income-to-needs” concept. This refers to the amount of money available to be used divided by the number of people who are dependent on the income available. The concept of available income has a connection to relationships and the family structure. In some families, it is assumed that the money is a shared resource and used for the goals, needs, and problems of the family unit. In other families, it is assumed that the earner has the control of how or whether the income is shared. Most of these situations occur in family units where they believe being independent is the way to approach daily life. This is often ascribed to in European-American cultures.

Economic problems vary by several factors such as the age of the earner, the responsibilities of the earner, who is dependent on the income (another adult, a child, other people), and how many earners are in the unit. Factors that relate to the economic problems or lack of economic problems are sometimes influenced by the characteristics of the person earning the money. The health (including mental and physical), the education, and skills of the earner all influence the level and stability of the earnings.

People also study the decision-making processes of the family members who have access to the income. What are the decisions around the “how” and under what circumstances can different types of money be used? For instance, is the family unit’s

rule to “never spend more than what is available to use” or “no matter the level of income, one must always save something”? Is it “okay to use the marketplace and credit to get what you want” or it is “only acceptable to use the marketplace and credit when it is an absolute need for the family?” The complexity surrounding these issues varies across the structure of the family organization and within each family type across a life span. These rules along with the level of income can be viewed as contributing to economic problems resulting in economic pressure, especially if not all members of the family agree with the rules. If the rules can’t be followed because of situations beyond the control of the family, this also contributes to problems.

Economic Pressure From External or Internal Economic Problems

Many families have economic problems that occur outside their family context and are often out of their control. These are things like changes in the job market, a natural disaster, a human-made disaster with social unrest, a car accident, or a death. All of these result in the loss or reduction of earning power, or the loss of the earner. However, for many families, economic problems are a result of things inside of their family context. Poor relationships that lead to a divorce, bad judgments around risky behaviors that lead to the earner not being able to earn, or parent-child discord often create added demands on the amount of money available. Another set of internal economic problems come from the dynamics within the family. Individuals and thus families that have built the ability to communicate about daily life, hold the attitude that trying something new and different is okay, have hope for tomorrow, or are creative will be able to weather some of the pressures that come from economic problems. In other words, people who have the ability to use all resources available to them, in addition to money, may have fewer economic pressures. In addition, a family unit that is tightly knit and emotionally connected is generally better able to find solutions, including economic ones, that reduce pressures coming from economic problems.

Influence on the Family Unit

Economic problems influence relationships within the family. Much of the research has been done on small groups of couples. Adverse pressures (high economic pressure) have been documented in middle-income families as well as in low-income families. However, over time the most pressure comes from either the change in the economic situation or change in the relationship. The level of income is not the main source of economic pressures. If the cause of the pressure is external (e.g., economic disaster) and a large economic problem occurs such as bankruptcy, the ultimate impact on relationships depends on age, skills and capabilities, and if earning power is reduced. When the pressure is internal (e.g., poor consumer purchasing, risky behaviors that have financial consequences), the impact on relationships also depends on the age of the earner, the dynamics of the people who helped to create the internal pressure, the recovery ability of people, and whether the earning power has been influenced by health or death. Younger people have better ability to recover whereas older people are less likely to recover. Strong family relationships tend to have the power to withstand the pressures and correct or mitigate the long-term effect of the problems. Children growing up in households that have economic pressures are most influenced when the economic problems are long term. Sometimes the influence leads to problems such as difficulty in learning, school attendance, or behavior problems. It also leads to fewer opportunities for children. Younger children show the least consequences of economic pressures, whereas older children, especially adolescents, show the most. Boys retain the consequence longer into adult life than do girls. When the pressures are great enough to separate the family unit, commonly through divorce, some children show long-term consequences.

Jean W. Bauer

See also Money and Couple Relationships; Resilience; Resource Theory

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EGALITARIAN RELATIONSHIPS

Egalitarian relationships are those in which partners equally share all benefits, burdens, and responsibilities. Although, in theory, the notion of an egalitarian relationship could apply to any dyadic relationship, such as friend, sibling, or coworker, research has focused primarily on married men and women. No good estimates of the percentage of egalitarian marriages exist, but it is widely agreed that gender inequality is the norm in married couples. Egalitarian relationships are in the minority. The purpose of this entry is to define *egalitarian relationships*, to discuss the hypotheses that account for them, and to foretell their future.

Egalitarian relationships are found among couples of varying class backgrounds, albeit in different forms. An egalitarian college professor and dentist might work together to get their kids up, dressed, fed, and off to school; alternate after-school pickups; and share the evening cooking and cleanup, homework help, and bedtime routines. They might rely on some paid household labor. An equally sharing nursing assistant and carpenter, however, are less likely to hire household help, and chances are that they would be among the many dual-earner couples who work different shifts and alternate caring for their children.

Shared power and shared domestic labor are two key aspects of egalitarian marriage. Studies of decision-making power in marriage typically find that husbands and wives whose incomes are relatively similar are more likely than are other couples to have equal say in important decisions. Husbands and wives in egalitarian relationships vary in the extent to which they equally divide the same tasks or specialize in particular tasks, but time in domestic labor is shared equally as is the onerousness of the tasks assumed.

Three hypotheses have spawned a large body of research on the predictors of the division of family labor: relative resources, time availability, and gender ideology.

The relative resource hypothesis starts from the assumption that housework and childcare are unpleasant burdens, which married partners try to avoid. The partner with relatively more resources will use them to negotiate a relatively smaller share of household labor. The time availability hypothesis posits that the distribution of domestic labor reflects who has the time to do the work; the more time either spouse spends in the labor force, the less time she or he will contribute to housework and childcare and the more the spouse will do. The gender ideology approach argues that beliefs about gender equality shape the division of domestic labor; the more husbands and wives believe that men and women should have similar roles in paid work and at home, the more they will share housework and childcare.

Each of these hypotheses has garnered some support, but has also been challenged. For example, income is indisputably a resource associated with a smaller share of household labor, but education is sometimes associated with men doing a larger share of domestic labor, the opposite of what would be predicted if education were used to bargain oneself out of domestic work. The time availability hypothesis begs the question of how decisions are made to allocate each spouse's labor to the market. The biggest problem of all three approaches is that they ignore that gender itself affects each of these proposed influences on the division of family labor. Income may buy spouses out of housework, but in most American families, the reality is that each dollar a woman earns tends to buy less time off than each dollar a man earns. Likewise, time availability for household work depends on gender. Given the same paid work hours, women do more domestic labor than men do. As for gender ideology, some studies show that the division of household labor is more equal when men believe in equality but not when women do. Perhaps most problematic, even when husbands and wives earn equal incomes, spend equal time in the labor force, and believe in gender equality, the division of household labor is still usually unequal.

In response, gender constructionists have argued that the tenacity of the unequal division of domestic

labor stems from its importance for establishing gendered identities for both men and women. In a few studies, women whose income exceeded their husbands' actually increased their housework contribution, presumably to compensate for the threat posed to their own and their husbands' gendered identities. The more egalitarian divisions of labor among gay and lesbian couples also speaks to the centrality of gender in establishing an unequal division of household labor in heterosexual married couples. Some might argue that gender socialization shapes preference and skill, which then makes it simply rational for couples to specialize in what they are good at. However, household skills, such as using a washing machine, can easily be learned. Likewise, many new moms today have little experience with infants, but quickly become skilled because of their intensive experience with their newborns. Men's invoking their lack of skill is more of a strategy for excusing themselves from domestic labor than an explanation for why they are not involved. Specialized trade-offs could be egalitarian when they meet the time/task criteria, but they do not if men's labor is limited to stereotypically male tasks.

Although household labor and decision-making power are the most researched components of egalitarian relationships, the distribution of other benefits, burdens, and responsibilities also go into creating equality in couples. For example, spouses may have unequal and hidden power to bring up issues for discussion; they may differ in doing the emotion work that goes into maintaining their relationship, and even when they equally share time in housework and childcare, they may take unequal responsibility for making sure the job gets done and for the mental labor that goes along with that responsibility (e.g., keeping track of when the next dentist appointment should be made or whether there are diapers in the house). Likewise, even when both spouses work full-time for pay, they may differ in felt responsibility for breadwinning.

Egalitarian relationships have been associated with a variety of positive outcomes, including marital satisfaction, less depression for wives, and less conflict between spouses. Although past studies suggested that these outcomes only obtained for those who believed in gender equality, some recent studies in places as diverse as the United States and Taiwan have found equality to be

generally beneficial, with especially enhanced outcomes for those couples who believe in gender equality. Of course, we do not have data from some of the most traditional gendered societies to know how couples would fare if egalitarian.

Gender is changing. During the past 40 years in a wide range of countries, couples have become increasingly egalitarian. Women have entered the labor force in dramatic numbers. The discrepancy between men's and women's housework and childcare has slowly but steadily decreased. Belief in egalitarian relationships has become commonplace in the United States. Although still in the minority, the percentage of egalitarian relationships is growing. Gender equality in the workplace and egalitarian attitudes have promoted this increase, but the everyday negotiations between spouses over housework, childcare, leisure, and power are also critical. Everyday interaction between spouses is the process by which the ideals of gender equality are translated into the reality of egalitarian relationships.

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See also Cohabitation; Conflict, Marital; Division of Labor in Households; Dual-Earner Couples; Equity Theory; Fairness in Relationships; Gender-Role Attitudes; Gender Roles in Relationships

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ELDER ABUSE AND NEGLECT

In the 2006 national report on elder abuse and neglect by Pamela Teaster and colleagues, Adult

Protective Services (APS) received 381,430 reports on people 60 years of age and older. In most states, APS is the agency to which people first report abuse or neglect of older adults. These forms of mistreatment are highly likely to be underreported for many reasons: Older adult victims may be unable to report because of mental or physical problems, elders fear stigma and retribution by their caretakers, and persons who might report on behalf of an alleged victim (e.g., doctors, nurses, social workers, concerned family or friends) perceive that APS programs have inadequate resources and make inappropriate responses.

Ten years earlier, APS received 293,000 domestic reports of elder abuse. Comparing the number of reports over time suggests a rise of 30 percent over the past decade. Reasons for the increase are unclear. The increase could be attributed to the larger population of older adults, greater awareness of elder abuse and neglect, a higher number of agencies to address these problems, or a combination of these and other factors. This entry facilitates understanding the history and scope of elder abuse and neglect through a historical overview, definition of types of elder abuse and neglect, and an analysis of the scope of the problem.

Elder Abuse and Neglect Situated in Time

Unfortunately, but not surprisingly, accounts of elder abuse and neglect exist early in human history. Ancient Greeks believed that parricide, or the murder of parents, was necessary to ensure that civilization continued. Fairy tales are replete with stories of young persons prevailing over wicked crones who cast evil spells (e.g., *Snow White*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *Rapunzel*). During colonial times in the United States, the treatment of elders was synonymous with the treatment of persons with mental illness. Elders, particularly those persons with mental illness or dementia, were forced to wander from town to town. Even the Salem witch trials of the late 1600s involved an element of elder mistreatment, as many of the people who were burned at the stake or who endured other torture were regarded by the community as “old” or “different.” The issue of elder abuse is mentioned little, however, in the late

19th and early 20th centuries because elders were of little interest to society.

Research on elder abuse and neglect had its genesis in the late 1960s and was conducted to increase public awareness and development of relevant policy, clarify definitions, and provide assessment and screening tools and promising intervention practices. Although we know more about elder abuse and neglect than ever before, we still do not know its scope, which makes action related to the problem difficult to justify. The only U.S. prevalence study ever conducted remains that of Karl Pillemer and David Finkelhor, a study conducted in Boston in 1988 that did not include financial exploitation in its estimate of prevalence. That study suggested that only 1 in every 14 instances of elder abuse is reported, so there may be as many as five million cases of elder abuse occurring in a given year.

The Issue of Definitions

The National Center on Elder Abuse (NCEA) has identified seven types of elder abuse: physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, financial exploitation, neglect (by a caregiver), abandonment, and self-neglect (neglect by the victim of him- or herself). Many different patterns occur. For example, an elder may encounter one type of abuse as a single, distinct incident involving one perpetrator, or he or she may experience multiple types over time that are committed by multiple perpetrators.

Physical abuse, or the use of physical force resulting in bodily injury, physical pain, or impairment, may include acts of violence such as striking (with or without an object), hitting, beating, pushing, shoving, shaking, slapping, kicking, pinching, and burning. It may also include the inappropriate use of drugs and physical restraints, force-feeding, and physical punishment. In the Teaster study mentioned earlier, physical abuse constituted 10.7 percent of all substantiated or confirmed abuse.

Sexual abuse, or any kind of nonconsensual sexual contact, includes unwanted touching and all types of sexual assault or battery, such as rape, sodomy, coerced nudity, and sexually explicit photographing. In the recent national study, sexual abuse constituted 1 percent of all substantiated abuse.

Emotional or psychological abuse, or the infliction of anguish, pain, or distress through verbal or nonverbal acts, may involve verbal assaults, insults, threats, intimidation, humiliation, and harassment. Emotional or psychological abuse constituted 14.8 percent of all abuse substantiated by APS.

Financial or material exploitation is the illegal or improper use of an elder's funds, property, or assets. Exploitation constituted 14.7 percent of substantiated reports.

Neglect is regarded as the refusal or failure to fulfill any part of a person's obligations or duties to an elder. It may also be failure of a person who has money-related responsibilities to provide care for an elder or failure of an in-home service provider to provide necessary care. *Abandonment*, often associated with neglect, is the desertion of an elder by a person who had assumed responsibility for providing his or her care, or by a person with an elder's physical custody. About a fifth of substantiated APS cases (20.4 percent) cases involved caregiver neglect or abandonment.

Self-neglect is behavior of an elder that threatens his or her own health or safety. Some self-neglectors refuse or fail to provide themselves with adequate food, water, clothing, shelter, personal hygiene, medication, and safety precautions.

Many substantiated APS cases involved self-neglect (37.2 percent).

The NCEA definitions remain those predominantly understood by people who work in the field, although many researchers now use those established by the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) in 2003. As explained by Richard Bonnie and Robert Wallace in their 2003 report, the NAS panel of experts helped resolve problems created by inconsistent definitions of types of elder abuse and neglect. They conceptualized elder mistreatment as different from elder abuse by excluding self-neglect and exploitation committed by a person or entity unknown to the victim. The NAS panel defined elder mistreatment as intentional and unintentional acts of harm by a trusted other.

Efforts to establish clear definitions continue as people who work directly with elders and scholars who study elder abuse and neglect seek a commonly held set of definitions to accurately quantify the phenomena. If it is possible to reach consensus on definitions, it will be far easier to justify policies and programs aimed at helping affected elders and their families. While experts pursue agreement on definitions and work to identify prevalence, one fact is certain: Abuse of elders continues. The following specific information about elder abuse and neglect comes from the study by Teaster and colleagues.

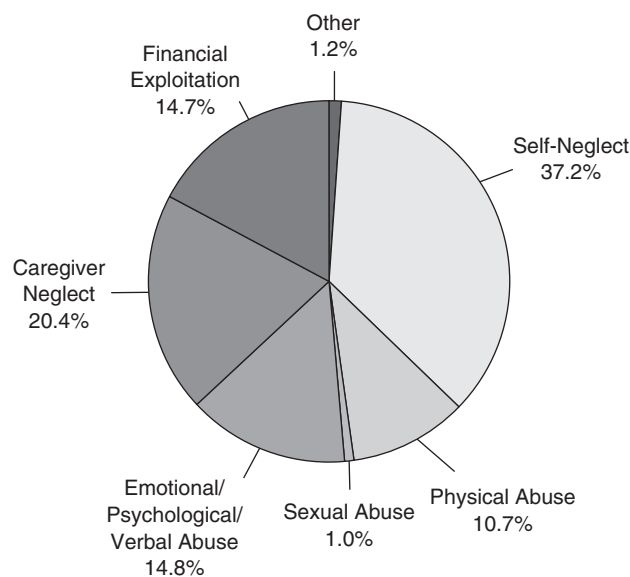


Figure 1 Substantiated Reports by Category for Adults Aged 60+ ($n = 19$ states)

Source: Teaster et al. (2006).

Impact of Abuse

Although our understanding of elder abuse is in its infancy, vulnerability appears to be a risk factor. Elder abuse and neglect typically involve older Caucasian women living alone or with family members. Victims are vulnerable because of physical frailty resulting from multiple chronic illnesses. They are vulnerable because they are often also experiencing depression, dementia, or both. These conditions can be socially isolating and create situations in which elders need others for help.

The affected elders. Findings from the 2006 Teaster study revealed that 65.7 percent of victims were female. More than 20 percent (20.8 percent) of victims were between the ages of 60 and 69, 36.5 percent were 70 to 79, and 42.8 percent were 80 years of age and older. The majority of victims

were Caucasian (77.1 percent), followed by African Americans (21.2 percent), American Indians and Alaskan Natives (0.6 percent each), and persons of Asian descent (0.5 percent).

The settings of abuse. The overwhelming majority of substantiated reports occurred in domestic settings (89.3 percent). Approximately 6.2 percent of substantiated reports occurred in long-term care settings, with 1.8 percent situated in other locations, including hotels or motels, the workplace, and assisted-living facilities. Many APS programs do not investigate abuse in long-term care facilities; therefore, this number is likely lower than the actual incidence. Responsibility for investigating in long-term care facilities is often given to other entities (e.g., local long-term care ombudsman, survey and certification agencies, and Medicare Fraud Units). Entities responsible vary significantly from state to state and by type of facility. This variability makes collecting reliable numbers difficult.

The perpetrators of abuse. More than half (52.7 percent) of alleged perpetrators of abuse of elders aged 60 or older were female (47.3 percent male); 31.0 percent were under 39 years of age, 44.1 percent were between 40 and 59 years of age, and 24.9 percent were ages 60 and older. The most common relationship of perpetrator to victim was that of adult child (32.6 percent), followed by other family member (21.5 percent), unknown relationship (16.3 percent), and spouse or intimate partner (11.3 percent).

Perpetrators abuse for a variety of reasons. Some are poor caretakers who lack the ability and skills necessary to care for a person with mental or physical illnesses. Many abusers are dependent on an elder in some way. They may need a place to live, and the elder can provide that place. Instead of feeling grateful, a perpetrator may resent the elder and try to push her out of her own home or isolate her within it. Abusers may need an elder's money. Initially, they may promise to pay the money back, but over time, they regard the money as something to which they are entitled or will get anyway once the elder dies. Abusers may need the elder for access to alcohol, drugs, sex, or all of these. Some perpetrators mean to swindle older adults out of their possessions through scams.

Finally, some perpetrators, particularly those who are mentally ill, seek power and control over a person they regard as vulnerable.

In summary, elder abuse appears to be a growing phenomenon. Vulnerability is a risk factor for abuse. Abuse appears to involve more older women than older men, but men are also targets of abuse. Abuse tends to involve more non-Hispanic Caucasian women than any other racial or ethnic group. Most perpetrators are family members. Regardless of the reasons that perpetrators abuse, it is a crime in many cases and unethical and immoral in all.

The costs of elder abuse at individual and societal levels are great as elder abuse diminishes us all. Families and friendships are fractured forever. Abused elders may need invasive and expensive health care. Because of physical and emotional injuries, many elders are plunged into despair and experience an untimely and hastened death. Also as a result of abuse, some elders lose all their civil rights through the appointment of a guardian. Many entities that help are funded largely through tax dollars so that they may protect and intervene when vulnerable elders are abused. These interventions often entail assistance involving multiple and costly services that must be provided for the rest of an elder's life. Millions of dollars are taken yearly from vulnerable elders, costs that are then passed on to others through increases in insurance payments and taxes, not to mention the individual and hidden costs to family members and friends who must help out by using their own money and time.

Despite efforts to increase research and public awareness, compared with child abuse and intimate partner violence, funding related to elder abuse is low. An infusion of dollars on local, state, and national levels is critically needed to address the problem comprehensively and successfully.

Pamela B. Teaster

See also Abuse and Violence in Relationships; Batters; Child Abuse and Neglect; Stress and Relationships

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EMBARRASSMENT

Embarrassment is the involuntary, uncomfortable emotion that results when social predicaments increase the threat of undesired evaluations from other people. It usually strikes without warning when people suddenly realize that they are making (or are about to make) an unwelcome impression on others as a result of some misstep. This causes feelings of startled surprise, awkwardness, and sheepish abashment and chagrin; embarrassed people typically feel conspicuous and clumsy, and they are mortified by the unwanted judgments they expect to receive.

Studies of embarrassment are pertinent to human relationships in several ways. First, they delineate fundamental motives that underlie our dealings with others. Second, in describing the diverse ways in which interactions can go awry, studies illustrate the delicate complexity of social life. And third, they provide an intriguing example of the use of an evolutionary perspective to account for modern behavior. This entry discusses all three of these.

Fundamental Motives

Our species exhibits a *need to belong*: We thrive when others accept us, and we suffer when others reject us. As a result, we routinely monitor what others are thinking of us, and we work to maintain desired images of ourselves for those whose judgments we value. The prevailing view of most

theorists is that embarrassment operates as an alarm mechanism that helps us deal with untoward events that might engender social rejection. It occurs automatically to interrupt inept behavior and to promote remedial action when self-presentation fails and we face the dreadful prospect of undesired social evaluation.

Indeed, embarrassment depends on our ability to imagine what others may be thinking of us. People who are unable to comprehend what other people think of them—such as young children, autistic adults, or anyone with certain types of brain damage—are hard to embarrass. They have difficulty understanding others' points of view, so they may remain calmly unruffled in awkward situations that would discombobulate the rest of us. Only when their cognitive abilities are sophisticated enough to allow them to see things from others' perspectives (beginning around 10 years of age) do children begin to be embarrassed by some of the same subtle situations that embarrass adults.

Embarrassment is also rare when people genuinely do not care what a particular audience thinks of them. It is more frequent and more acute when people are especially sensitive to other's opinions. In particular, those who chronically yearn for acceptance and dread social disapproval react more strongly to social predicaments than others do.

Thus, we normally possess hardwired (innate) responses that occur uncontrollably when our motives to maintain desired images for others are thwarted. When embarrassment strikes, a distinguishing pattern of cardiovascular and adrenal arousal unfolds; notably, when dilation of capillaries in the face brings blood closer to the surface of our cheeks, we blush. This is a distinctive physiological reaction that is usually accompanied by a characteristic pattern of nonverbal behavior in which people avert their gazes, touch their faces, bow their heads, and try (but usually fail) to suppress sheepish grins that are recognizably different from smiles of real amusement. All of these reactions typically make a person's embarrassment easy to detect, so embarrassment affects our interactions with others, too.

Interactive Complexities

Most of the events that cause us embarrassment are individual blunders in which, all on our own,

we publicly rip our pants, stall our cars, or forget others' names. However, our relationships with others make a variety of more complex predicaments possible. When we find someone else in a humiliating situation, we can experience *empathic embarrassment* if we envision what that person is feeling. If a relationship partner misbehaves, we can suffer *team embarrassment*—being abashed by our acknowledged association to the wayward partner—even when we have personally done nothing wrong. Intimacy with others also increases the chances that they will accidentally embarrass us by *privacy violations* in which they inadvertently reveal secret or sensitive information about us to others. And on occasion, we may become the unwitting victims of *intentional embarrassment* when others make us the butt of practical jokes.

Intentional embarrassment can make the embarrassed victim angry, but most episodes of embarrassment elicit other reactions. People are sometimes so flustered by their predicaments that they simply run away, but they are more likely to (try to) ignore the incident and pretend that nothing has happened. If embarrassed people do mention the event, they often do so with humor if no harm was done, and if others were inconvenienced, they frequently apologize and take action to repair any damage. Thus, more often than not, embarrassment leaves us contrite, humble, and eager to please. Embarrassed people routinely behave in conciliatory ways that are likely to deflect disapproval from others.

One of the most remarkable things about embarrassment is that once some predicament arises, others will like us and treat us better if we do become obviously embarrassed than if we remain coolly unperturbed. Studies routinely find that people who are obviously chagrined after some maladroit mishap receive more favorable evaluations than do those who implacably stay cool and calm. Embarrassment that is calibrated to one's circumstances, being neither too extreme nor too mild, routinely elicits sympathy and support from bystanders. (This isn't true among children, where goofy mistakes are often met with ridicule and derision; among adults, however, kind responses are the norm.) People who are inconvenienced by our mistakes may be annoyed by our actions, but even then, our embarrassment demonstrates that we recognize and regret our

transgressions, and that portrays us in a favorable light.

An Evolutionary Perspective

When embarrassment occurs, it is usually obvious, and, because a blush cannot be faked, it demonstrates that our abashment is authentic and our contrition sincere. That may be why others then typically respond in a kindly fashion; one's embarrassment reassures observers of one's good intentions. Thus, embarrassed emotion may have evolved as a social communication that helped to forestall social rejection that would have reduced one's chances of survival in harsh ancestral environments. Embarrassment may exist because humans are social animals who thrive only when they can comfortably coexist in close contact with others.

Rowland S. Miller

See also Belonging, Need for; Emotion in Relationships; Self-Presentation; Sociometer Theory

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EMOTIONAL COMMUNICATION

Emotional communication refers to the process of using messages to exchange information about and to influence each other's emotional states. Messages may be direct verbal and nonverbal expressions of emotion (e.g., smiling and saying, "I'm so happy!"), but more often, the messages are complex and subtle, and emotional states are more elusive (e.g., "He seemed kind of fidgety or

worried later in the meeting”). Messages may function to share information (e.g., “I am feeling so sad!” while crying) or to influence the emotions of others, as with warnings (e.g., “Be afraid!”) or advertising (e.g., “Feel good about this product!”). In a sense, all communication is emotional, though by varying degrees.

Being aware of how other people feel and how they are intertwined emotionally is essential to interacting and relating with others effectively. People are more likely to offer support if they see another person in distress or to tread lightly if they know that another is in a bad mood. Mutual emotional attunement is one of the hallmarks of close relationships. In early life, healthy attachment depends on caregivers recognizing and responding to the emotional needs of infants; conversely, unhealthy patterns can develop when infants respond to their caregivers’ depression. For older children and adults, intimacy means, at least in part, emotional sharing and concern for each other’s emotional needs. This entry discusses a number of topics about emotional communication, including the ways in which emotion and conversation are intertwined, distinctions between emotional expression and emotional communication, the accuracy to which emotion is communicated, and emotional competence in a relational context.

Communicating Emotions, Feelings, Moods, or Equanimity

Scholars offer a wide variety of definitions of emotion, and there is no clear dividing line between emotions and related internal states and experiences such as thoughts, judgments, instincts, or bodily states. Some of the best candidates for emotion are love, joy, fear, anger, sadness, shame, and disgust because they represent large linguistic categories or because they are associated with distinctive facial expressions. Sometimes what is communicated is a feeling or mood, both of which are positive or negative emotion-like states but not full-blown emotions. Even the absence of apparent emotion can carry important information, as when someone is described as calm under pressure or numb after hearing devastating news.

Individuals, families, cultures, and historical periods vary in the frequency, intensity, and nature

of emotional expressions. Some individuals are more dramatic in their expressions; others are more subtle. Some families value emotional spontaneity; others value emotional control. Some cultures use a specific emotion term often, but others use it rarely (e.g., *shame* in Mandarin Chinese versus in American English). A word that was in circulation at one time may go extinct (e.g., *accidie*, meaning reluctance to fulfill one’s religious obligations, or *sloth*), or an emotion that was once valued may fall into disrepute (e.g., *jealousy*).

Cues and Channels

Cues to emotion are plentiful and varied. Facial expressions, down to specific muscles, have received a great deal of research attention, but vocal cues such as pitch, volume, and timing have also been studied in depth. Less well understood are bodily cues such as posture, movement, and gestures. Verbal expressions of emotion span a huge range of possibilities including emotion words, epithets, phrases that reveal underlying metaphors, utterances in conversations, poetry and prose, stories, and even patterns of public and private discourse that vary across cultures and historical periods.

Yet emotions are rarely the primary message. Because emotions are almost always *about* something, emotional expressions are nearly always intertwined with the content of the message or the social episode that is unfolding (e.g., “I am angry about what you just said” or “What a fabulous weekend I had!” [which explains why I am so cheery]). In addition, the emotions expressed may or may not be the emotions actually felt (e.g., “I am pretending to be angry about what you just said, but I actually have to hold back my laughter”). Emotion may be a constant subtext in conversations in the sense that people may continuously monitor the other’s feelings as the social interactions unfold, or at least they may be tuned to notice changes or more obvious expressions.

Another way in which emotion and conversation or other forms of discourse are intertwined is that people talk about emotion (e.g., “Could you believe his emotional outburst?”). In private and in public, many aspects of emotion and its expression undergo scrutiny: What was she feeling? Why?

Was it justified? Was it appropriate? What was the purpose? What will be the consequences? In a sense, our emotions are not just our own business, because when they are expressed they can become everybody's business.

Intention and Audience

The terms *emotional expression* and *emotional communication* are used almost interchangeably in the research literature, but the slight difference in meaning underlies a complex view of how emotion works. Early work focused on *emotional expression* and was based on the assumption that facial, vocal, and other expressions directly reflected a covert emotional state that was "pressed out" for others to observe. Darwin believed that emotional expressions evolved from the essential functions of emotions themselves, such as when the disgust facial expression mimics the expulsion of disgusting substances from the mouth. The evolutionary advantage of expression is that when others become aware of emotional states, they may take heed, provide assistance, steer clear, or otherwise adjust. The survival advantage of emotional expression for helpless infants with devoted caregivers is obvious, as is the reproductive advantage of knowing when a potential partner is interested.

Emotional *communication* becomes relevant with three additional properties of human emotional expression. First, most cues are controllable—not all, but nearly all. The muscles that make the corners of the eyes crinkle with felt joy but not fake joy are one exception. Blushing may be another, but common expressions like smiling, yelling, crying, hitting, and hugging certainly are controllable, at least most of the time, although emotional control is a skill that develops with practice and may break down under stress. Because most cues are controllable, the choice not to control emotion is also a kind of control (e.g., "I'm going to really let loose with this tantrum!").

Second, people know others may be observing their emotion and expressions, and often people want others to know how they are feeling. In fact, the show may go on only if there is a sympathetic audience, as when children's distress disappears when a parent leaves the room. This is what is ordinarily meant by emotional communication,

that is, the intentional transmittal of cues meant to inform others of one's actual emotional state. Awareness of impact on others combined with control means people can be emotionally deceptive; they can fake happiness at a wedding and sadness at a funeral, all for the sake of the audience. People even fool themselves in the sense that faking a smile can make them ever so slightly happier or faking a frown a wee bit sadder (a phenomenon known as the *facial feedback hypothesis*).

Third, people have goals, and emotional expressions may be mobilized in their service. Goals may be conscious (e.g., "I will pretend to feel guilty so he won't punish me") or unconscious (as when blushing serves as an automatic apology and appeasement gesture). People usually want others to know about their actual emotional state for a reason, or they want to hide that state for a different reason. Likewise, people receiving an emotional message have their own goals: to help, to resist, to avoid being taken advantage of, or to ignore the others' feelings because they are too upsetting. Thus, emotionally charged interactions may have the subtext of negotiating whose emotions are more important.

Because human beings are fundamentally social creatures, the tendency to adjust emotional expressions to others runs deep. People laugh at funny videos more when they know their friends are in another room laughing too. People tend to wince when they see someone hurt her finger, especially if she sees them, too. Some scholars argue that others are so much a part of the human psyche that humans are never truly alone and are thoroughly in the habit of taking others into account. At a cultural level, emotions and their expressions are deeply socialized so that people follow the patterns and practices of their forebears and contemporaries at a level that is completely taken for granted.

Connecting Emotionally

The question of how accurately emotion is communicated between people has proven to be difficult to answer. Certain carefully chosen facial and vocal expressions of basic emotions can be identified at levels greater than chance, but moving the issue of emotional accuracy into the real world of combinations of cues, blended emotions, subtle

expressions, complex social settings, potential deception, and audience adaptation presents humbling challenges for researchers. It seems, however, that identifying another's emotion with a word or two is not how people relate emotionally; instead, they try to understand how others are feeling in richer ways that may include trying to understand the cause(s), subjective experiences, and implications of the others' emotions. People also "catch" each others' emotions via emotional contagion, such as with contagious laughter or when irritation spreads through a family at the end of the day. People also feel what others feel by imagining their situations, which is called *empathy*. Empathizing with others tends to promote helping, though not always.

Skills, Intelligence, and Competence

Emotional competence or intelligence is widely recognized as a critical factor in friendships, romantic relationships, and work relationships. Simply expressing one's emotions (venting) may require more skill than meets the eye. Evidence suggests that nonverbal expressions of anger such as hitting a pillow do more harm than good by reinforcing destructive behaviors. On the other hand, talking or writing about feelings in appropriate ways may produce personal insight, relief from stress, and stronger social connections. Above all, the receiver of the message must be considered, raising a host of complex concerns for reputation, confidentiality, social norms, possibilities for shared insights, listeners' distress, and effects on intimacy. Thus, there is no simple answer to the simple question of whether expressing emotions is healthy or not.

Even more challenging are the skills involved in regulating or managing the emotions of oneself and others. One way to feel better may be to vent, but more constructive ways may be to rethink the situation, plan constructive action, or seek help and advice. In all relationships, partners must weigh and negotiate both partners' feelings while pursuing joint goals, managing conflict, or simply trying to help one another, and all that requires skillful emotional communication. Skills related to providing sensitive social support, managing stress and conflict, dealing with transgressions,

maintaining feelings of closeness, and handling personal emotional difficulties, such as depression, that affect relationships have received extensive study.

Social, Cultural, and Historical Contexts

Emotional communication does not occur in a social, cultural, or historical vacuum. Social rules and norms, taken-for-granted communication practices, and cultural and historical guidelines and ideals all influence and are influenced by emotional communication. Certainly appropriate emotional communication depends on whether one is a child or adult, male or female, powerful or powerless, Balinese or Inuit, or living in the days of the Vikings or the Internet. Getting it wrong may make people seem to be incompetent, crazy, people who "don't know their place," or people who "aren't one of us." Getting it right can enforce cultural values, increase interpersonal solidarity, and uphold power structures. For these reasons, it is important to recognize that emotional communication is much more than simply letting others know how you feel.

Sally Planalp

See also Emotional Contagion; Emotional Intelligence; Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy; Emotion Regulation in Relationships

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EMOTIONAL CONTAGION

In recent years, scholars from a variety of disciplines—anthropology, neuroscience, biology, social psychology, sociology, life-span psychology, and history—have proposed that the process of primitive emotional contagion is critically important in understanding cognition, emotion, and behavior. Primitive emotional contagion appears to be a basic building block of human interaction—assisting in “mind-reading,” allowing people to understand and to share the feelings of others, as well as coordinate and synchronize their activities with others.

Most social psychologists agree that emotional “packages” comprise many components—including conscious awareness; facial, vocal, and postural expression; neurophysiological and autonomic nervous system activity; and instrumental behaviors. Different portions of the brain process the various aspects of emotion. Yet—because the brain integrates the emotional information it receives—each of the emotional components acts on and is acted upon by the others.

In the 1990s, Elaine Hatfield and her colleagues defined primitive *emotional contagion* as “the tendency to automatically mimic and synchronize facial expressions, vocalizations, postures, and movements with those of another person’s and, consequently, to converge emotionally.”

The Emotional Contagion Scale (ECS) is designed to assess people’s susceptibility to catching joy and happiness, love, fear and anxiety, anger, and sadness and depression, as well as emotions in general. The ECS has been translated into a variety of languages—including Finnish, German, Greek, Telugu, Japanese, Portuguese, and Swedish.

Personality theorists who have administered this scale in a variety of cultures have discovered that there are cultural, personality, gender, and situational differences in people’s susceptibility to emotional contagion. People are most likely to catch others’ emotions in two kinds of relationships—those involving love or power. We are particularly susceptible to contagion in the company of those we like and love and those who possess power over us.

According to scholars, contagion may occur in a number of ways. At first, scholars took it for

granted that conscious reasoning, analysis, and imagination accounted for the ubiquitous phenomenon. Recently, however, social psychologists have concluded that primitive emotional contagion is a far more subtle, automatic, and ubiquitous process than once thought. This entry describes the mechanisms of emotional contagion and the implications of existing research.

Mechanisms of Emotional Contagion

There is considerable evidence that the process of emotional contagion occurs in three stages: Mimicry → Feedback → Contagion.

1. *Mimicry*: People appear to automatically mimic or synchronize their facial expressions, vocal productions, postures, and movements with those around them. Daters, for example, might catch themselves mimicking their date’s silly giggle or angry, sarcastic demeanor. People are capable of doing this with startling rapidity, automatically mimicking or synchronizing a number of emotional characteristics in a single instant.
2. *Feedback*: People tend to feel pale reflections of emotions consistent with the facial, vocal, and postural expressions they adopt. The link between facial, vocal, and postural expression appears to be quite specific. When people mimic expressions of fear, anger, sadness, or disgust, they tend to feel a pale reflection not just of any unpleasant emotion but with those specific expressions (e.g., those who mimic a sad expression feel sadness, not anger or shame). For example, college students assigned to share a room with a deeply troubled roommate may start feeling increasingly anxious and depressed themselves during the semester.
3. *Contagion*: As a consequence, people tend, from moment-to-moment, to “catch” others’ emotions.

Recently, discoveries in neuroscience have provided some insight into why people so readily “catch” the emotions of others and why it is so easy for people to empathize with others’ cognitions, emotions, and behaviors. For example, neuroscientists contend that certain neurons (*canonical neurons*) provide a direct link between perception and action. Other types of neurons (*mirror neurons*) fire when a certain type of action is performed and when primates observe another animal

performing the same kind of action. Scientists propose that such brain structures account for emotional contagion and empathy in primates, including humans.

Other neuroscientists have argued that imagining, observing, or in any way preparing to perform an action excites the same motor programs used to execute that same action. A great deal of recent research demonstrates that, in humans, several brain regions (specifically the pre-motor and parietal cortices) are activated both during action generation and during the observation of others' actions. These scientists argue that this mirror system allows people to plan their own actions and to understand the actions of others.

In the 1950s, primatologists conducted a great deal of research indicating that animals do seem to catch others' emotions. They found, for example, that monkeys often transmit their fears to their peers. The faces, voices, and postures of frightened monkeys serve as warnings; they signal potential trouble. Monkeys catch the fear of others and thus—in kind of a “monkey see, monkey do” fashion—are primed to make appropriate avoidance responses. Ethologists argue that the imitation of emotional expression constitutes a phylogenetically ancient and basic form of intraspecies communication. Such contagion also appears in many other vertebrate species, including mice.

In conclusion, scholars from a variety of disciplines provide compelling evidence that people do catch one another's emotions. They appear to catch the emotions in all societies and in a wide variety of individual and group settings.

Implications of Existing Research

In the Emotional Contagion paradigm, scholars confront a paradox. People seem to be capable of mimicking others' facial, vocal, and postural expressions with stunning rapidity. As a consequence, they are able to feel themselves into those other emotional lives to a surprising extent. And yet, puzzlingly, most people seem oblivious to the importance of mimicry or synchrony in social encounters. They seem unaware of how swiftly and how completely they are able to track the expressive behaviors and emotions of others.

What are some implications of the preceding research for the nature of contagion? The research

on emotional contagion underscores the fact that men and women use multiple means to gain information about others' emotional states. Conscious analytic skills can certainly help people figure out what makes people “tick.” But if people pay careful attention to the emotions they experience in the company of others, they may well gain an extra edge into “feeling themselves” into the emotional states of others. Both of these means provide valuable information. In fact, evidence indicates that both what people think and what they feel may provide valuable, but different, information about others. In one study, for example, social psychologists found that people's conscious assessments of what others “must be” feeling were heavily influenced by what the others said. People's own emotions, however, were more influenced by the others' nonverbal clues about what they were really feeling.

We see then that primitive emotional contagion may provide a solid foundation for helping friends, lovers, and family members communicate their feelings to one another, convey their solidarity, and behave in a smooth and coordinated way.

Elaine Hatfield

See also Accuracy in Communication; Closeness; Emotional Communication; Emotion in Relationships; Empathy; Excitation Transfer Theory

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EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

The term *emotional intelligence* (EI) was introduced to the scholarly literature in 1990 in two

journal articles written by Peter Salovey and John D. Mayer. These researchers proposed a model to explain individual differences in people's ability to use emotion-related information to enhance thinking and problem solving. In 1997, Mayer and Salovey revised their model and published a formal theory that defined EI as a set of four mental abilities pertaining to the perception, use, understanding, and regulation of emotion.

EI was popularized in 1995 by Daniel Goleman in his bestselling book on the topic. Since then, a variety of "mixed" conceptualizations of the construct have emerged. Whereas Mayer and Salovey's ability model includes only mental skills that directly involve the interaction of affect and cognition to facilitate complex problem solving, mixed models incorporate personality traits such as motivation and optimism in addition to the types of emotion-related skills found in the ability model. Research shows that self-report inventories based on mixed model conceptions of EI lack discriminant validity from established measures of personality.

This entry focuses solely on the ability model of EI, the performance measures that have emerged from this perspective, and a review of research on the interpersonal correlates of EI. Emotions are at the heart of human interaction and relationships; thus, it is no surprise that relationship researchers are taking the construct of EI seriously.

The Mayer and Salovey Model of Emotional Intelligence

Mayer and Salovey's model of EI consists of four branches or abilities (i.e., the perception, use, understanding, and regulation of emotion), each of which corresponds to a distinct set of skills. Before emotions can be understood or regulated, they must be interpreted accurately. Thus, the first and most fundamental branch of EI, *perceiving emotion*, includes the abilities to identify, distinguish, and express emotions. Emotions are revealed in artwork, vocal intonations, facial expressions, gestures, and one's own physiological sensations, as well as in numerous other channels. Each of these modes of expression demands keen perception to process and understand them well.

Researchers have long known that emotions alter cognitive processes. The second branch of EI,

using emotion, involves the practical application of this knowledge: the ability to generate emotions in oneself and in others, resulting in different cognitive states. People tend to be more creative, optimistic, and big-picture-oriented when they are happy, for example, and more pessimistic and detail-oriented when they are sad or angry.

The third branch of EI, *understanding emotion*, refers to both crystallized knowledge of emotions as well as to the ability to predict how one's emotional state will evolve as a situation changes. The former subset of understanding emotion includes one's emotion vocabulary, that is, knowledge of emotion-related words, as well as awareness of the adaptive value of emotions. Emotion researchers have posited, for example, that anger helps individuals focus on an obstacle impeding their progress to a goal and energizes them so that they can overcome that obstacle, whereas fear encourages them to flee when met with a situation that seems too dangerous to confront. Another part of understanding emotion, predicting future emotional states based on individuals' current emotions and the surrounding events, demands knowledge of how emotions progress and give way to other emotions. If a situation that elicits irritation continues to stymie an individual, for example, eventually that irritation will turn into anger.

The fourth branch, *managing emotion*, involves the ability to regulate one's own and others' emotions. A distinction must be made between mere emotion suppression and effective emotion regulation. Effective emotion management does not include stifling potentially uncomfortable emotions such as anger. Emotions focus attention on the event that caused the emotion, and suppressing emotions precludes access to the information that can be gained by paying attention to them. Managing emotion instead involves remaining open to these cues and using them to guide attention, for example, to problems that need to be addressed. Effective emotion management occurs by recognizing and, when possible, addressing the problem causing the emotion, rather than by ignoring the emotion itself. Managing emotion is the most advanced of the four branches of EI in that one must draw on the first three branches to manage emotion properly. For example, a person would be unlikely to help a friend manage his sadness if he failed to perceive the sadness or did not

understand what it would take for the sadness to progress to a different emotion. Effective emotion management requires observation of the initial emotion, understanding of what actions might result in the desired change in emotion, implementation of the action, and judgment of the effectiveness of the action.

Measuring Emotional Intelligence

Mayer and Salovey's model of EI is measured with the Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT), a performance test. The MSCEIT assesses the four-branch model of EI with 141 items that are divided among eight tasks (two for each branch). Unlike self-report measures, each task on the MSCEIT requires the test-taker to answer questions in which some responses to each question are objectively more accurate than others.

Perceiving Emotion is measured by asking test-takers to identify the emotions expressed in photographs of people's faces (Faces) as well as the feelings suggested by artistic drawings and landscapes (Pictures). *Using Emotion* is measured by two tasks that assess the ability to describe emotional sensations and their parallels to other sensory modalities (Sensations), and identify feelings that might enhance or hinder the successful performance of various cognitive and behavioral tasks (Facilitation). *Understanding Emotion* is measured by two tasks that pertain to a person's ability to analyze blended or multifaceted emotions (Blends) and to understand how emotional reactions transform over time (Changes). Finally, *Managing Emotion* has two subtests that assess participants' knowledge of the best strategies for managing both their own emotional experiences (Emotion Management) and the emotions of others (Social Management).

On the MSCEIT, the quality of the test-takers' responses is judged by comparing their responses with those given by experts in the field of emotion research (21 members of the International Society for Research on Emotions) or to responses given by a consensus sample of approximately 5,000 individuals. Research shows that these two scoring methods correlate highly and that correlations with various outcomes replicate across the two scoring methods. The MSCEIT also demonstrates

predictive and cross-cultural validity (in its translated versions, which include German, French, Italian, and Spanish). EI scores as measured with the MSCEIT are positively associated with a range of outcomes including academic achievement, life satisfaction, and relationship quality. The scores also negatively predict such outcomes as deviant behaviors (e.g., engaging in physical fights, gambling, and vandalizing) and alcohol and illegal substance use. Finally, the tasks in the MSCEIT yield results that are distinct among the people who take the test, suggesting that the four branches represent separate, though related, abilities.

Emotional Intelligence and Human Relationships

Emotions affect all aspects of human relationships. Emotional states influence whether individuals reach out to their loved ones or push them away, what messages they express when they communicate, and how they go about nurturing their relationships (or not). Each branch of EI as well as the construct as a whole is linked to strong social bonds.

Numerous studies have found associations between people's ability to perceive emotion and the quality of their interpersonal relationships. Students who are better able to recognize emotions in photographs of faces and recordings of voices have been found to report greater relationship well-being. Similarly, husbands in satisfied marriages have been found to be better able to identify the meaning of their wives' vocal tone than have their counterparts in unhappy marriages. No association was found between wives' ability to recognize the meaning of their husbands' vocal tone. Some scientists argue that this gender difference occurred because women tend to have higher EI than men, and that the majority of the wives participating in the study passed some minimum threshold of emotion-related ability that many of their husbands did not.

The second branch of EI, using emotion to facilitate thought, is particularly relevant to human relationships in the form of empathy. The term *empathy* can be applied to a host of distinct definitions ranging from feelings of sympathy and pity to cognitively taking on the perspective of another

person. In this context, however, EI researchers consider empathy to mean the ability to generate in oneself the emotions that another person feels. This “emotional synchrony” and the mimicry that often accompanies it, such as similar posture, vocal tone, and facial expression, are associated with greater fondness between empathic perceivers and the people with whom they empathize. The link between empathy and affinity does not seem to be unidirectional; people are more likely to mimic those whom they like than those whom they do not, and controlled experiments have found that people quickly become more fond of others who mimic their emotional expressions.

A large lexicon of emotion words is necessary to communicate one’s feelings accurately to others. People who are able to express their emotions effectively tend to be more satisfied with their relationships. Even in relationships where both parties are skilled at identifying emotions, frank conversations about emotions are necessary to ensure that each partner in the relationship understands how the other feels and what caused those emotions. This is especially important in situations where one person is distraught or angry over some element of the relationship (as is inevitable in close relationships); talking about the emotions and the causes behind them can inform the other person so that the partners can together address the issue.

After discussing an emotional event or a problem in the relationship, acting to address the issue requires effective emotion management. Constructive responses such as speaking calmly and listening tend to result in greater relationship satisfaction, whereas destructive responses that dismiss and belittle the other person generally lead to dissatisfaction. As discussed earlier, effective emotion management includes remaining open to emotions, even those that may be uncomfortable. The alternative, suppressing emotion, is often linked to greater dissatisfaction in relationships. Forgiveness is also related to emotion management. Not surprisingly, the desire to avoid or seek revenge on someone who has wronged an individual is associated with decreased future relationship quality, whereas expressions of benevolence toward the wrongdoer are associated with greater closeness in the future. Overcoming the urge for revenge or creating distance from the person who committed the wrong requires good emotion management, which often

involves discussing the issue with the offender and coming to an understanding about what is acceptable and desirable to both individuals.

EI researchers at the Health, Emotion, and Behavior Laboratory at Yale University assert that EI allows for easier navigation through the emotionally intense situations that characterize interpersonal relationships. Indeed, several studies suggest that EI, as measured by the MSCEIT, is positively associated with relationship quality and satisfaction among friends, classmates, and romantic partners.

The mechanisms that link EI and relationship quality are still uncertain. The most probable explanation, though, is that each branch of EI contributes to relationship quality in different ways. Perceiving emotion, for example, allows individuals to recognize friends’ and loved ones’ distress, whereas using emotion to facilitate empathy may help them understand the others’ point of view. Understanding emotion may then encourage an open discussion about the emotions, and managing emotions may help them confront the source of the distress. Relationship quality is best achieved with the full range of emotion-related abilities in EI.

Marc A. Brackett and James J. Casey

See also Communication, Nonverbal; Conflict Resolution; Emotional Communication; Emotion in Relationships; Emotion Regulation in Relationships

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EMOTIONALLY FOCUSED COUPLE THERAPY

Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy (EFT), first formulated in the early 1980s, is now accepted as a validated intervention for relationship distress and as appropriate for diverse kinds of distressed couples, including those dealing with traumatic stress, depression, illness, and problems with forgiveness and the renewal of trust. This short-term therapy (8 to 20 sessions) aims to help couples see and reshape the negative cycles of interaction, such as the demand-withdraw pattern, in which one partner's requests for changes are met by withdrawal rather than open consideration, that undermine their emotional bond and to clarify emotional signals so that needs and fears can be addressed. This leads to new positive cycles where each partner can reach for, connect with, and comfort the other. The relationship then becomes a safe haven and secure base, a source of strength and resilience for both partners. The EFT therapist will help partners see the cycle that creates their distress and gradually express and respond to each other's emotions in new ways.

EFT is used with couples from many different cultures and educational levels. Research finds that more than 85 percent of couples that receive EFT are able to significantly improve their relationships. Results appear to be stable over time with little evidence of relapse after treatment. A deeper engagement with key emotions and the open, coherent expression of these emotions and associated needs to the other partner predict positive outcomes.

Research on the nature of relationship distress supports the focus of EFT interventions, namely specific negative emotions, anger, fear, sadness, and shame, and negative self-perpetuating patterns

of interaction such as escalating anger in conflict discussions. For example, John Gottman has found that fear and anger on partner's faces and patterns where one partner criticizes while the other distances predict divorce. On a positive note, EFT attempts to help partners order and clarify their emotional signals and tune into each other's deeper emotions and needs. Ted Huston and colleagues have demonstrated that this emotional responsiveness predicts the quality of newlywed relationships 5 years into their marriage. This entry describes Attachment Theory and EFT in action.

Attachment Theory: A Map for Lovers

EFT is the first couple therapy to be based on a clear, systematic, and well-researched theory of adult love, namely Attachment Theory, as formulated by British psychiatrist John Bowlby. This theory, first applied to adult relationships in the late 1980s, views emotional openness and responsiveness as the bases of a secure attachment bond. Attachment Theory states that the most basic need for human beings is a safe emotional connection with one or two irreplaceable others who will be responsive to our needs when we are vulnerable. The most basic questions in a marriage are then, "Can I count on you? Will you respond to me when I call? Will you put me first and value me and our connection?" Such connections are humankind's most basic survival mechanism and the main and most healthy way of dealing with vulnerability and anxiety. Emotional isolation is traumatizing and disorienting for human beings. Positive love relationships offer a safe haven in times of stress or uncertainty and a secure base from which to explore the world. The more connected we are then to loved ones, the more confident, autonomous, and open to the world we can be. Being able to turn to others for comfort and support and to hold positive images of others in our minds is a source of strength and resilience. In secure relationships, partners can tune into and organize their emotions, accept their need for love and connection, and give clear signals about this need to loved ones. They can accept comfort when it is offered and then, strengthened and supported, cope with the world's challenges. The EFT therapist works with a couple so that, at the end of

therapy, each person can do this and can also respond to the needs of the other.

When partners cannot connect emotionally, an automatic sense of panic, loss, and separation distress is activated. If this panic can be balanced by a sense of trust and connection, it appears as a protest and reaching for the loved one that, at least some of the time, results in reconnection. Margaret says, "When life comes for me, or when I suddenly feel distant from my husband and doubt our relationship, I can get mad or just assert myself and tell him, 'Hey, where are you? I need some cuddles and reassurance here.' And he responds." If the panic becomes overwhelming and there is a sense of helplessness and hopelessness, partners become more and more anxious and angry and try to force their loved one to respond. This can become a habitual emotional response and way of communicating with the loved one. If a partner has learned to block out this panic and deny any need for others, perhaps because past close relationships have been hurtful, the usual response is to become emotionally numb and shut down, thereby shutting out the other person. These negative responses to disconnection can become automatic—a personal style that shapes a person's expectations and so his or her relationships. These styles, which start out as ways of dealing with lack of connection, can then become self-defeating and self-perpetuating. Most often in distressed relationships as a more anxious and controlling partner demands and criticizes, the other avoids more and becomes less responsive. As this partner avoids more and more, the anxious partner's sense of insecurity spirals, and the couple becomes stuck in a demand-withdraw pattern that leaves them both isolated. In EFT, this anxiety and avoidance can be addressed so that more secure bonding moments are created.

Attachment Theory tells us what our basic needs are in love relationships and how our ways of communicating our emotions either help us achieve loving connection or send our relationships spiraling into negative patterns. It helps us make sense of the key moments that shape our relationships. This theory also outlines how love relationships affect us, body and soul. Isolation from loved ones seems to flood us with stress hormones and undermine our immune system, but close connection is calming and allows us to deal with stress and adapt to new situations. Patterns of interaction

also help define our sense of self, how acceptable we believe we are, and our sense of trust in other people. The Israeli psychologist Mario Mikulincer has shown that when we feel more connected to others, we have a clearer, more defined and more positive sense of self. A map and a language for adult love allow a couple to acknowledge emotional needs and move into more open and responsive dialogue. Research indicates that this kind of change is necessary for couples to make satisfying, significant, and lasting changes to their bond.

EFT in Action

The EFT approach to improving relationships focuses on how partners tune into and express their emotions to each other and how they then create a dance—patterns of connection or disconnection. This moment-to-moment dance shapes each person's emotions, and emotional signals then shape the dance. There are three stages in EFT: the de-escalation of negative cycles, the creation of positive cycles of loving responsiveness, the consolidation of positive change.

In the first stage of EFT, the therapist holds a mirror to the negative patterns that have taken over a couple's relationship. The goal is to help the couple see their dance as it evolves and as it traps them both in isolation. Once a couple can see these patterns ("I push and you shut me out. So then I feel more alone and push more. We get stuck here.") and understand their impact, they can empathize with each other as victims of the cycle, rather than blaming and demonizing each other. The attachment framework also helps them begin to articulate and express inner emotions rather than becoming caught in reactive rage or minimizing and dismissing feelings and needs. At the end of Stage 1, a couple can contain conflict behaviors and can come together as a team to restore their relationship. They are better friends, but they are still not close or securely connected.

In Stage 2 of EFT, partners are guided into a deeper awareness of attachment emotions and more explicit sharing of their attachment needs and fears. The therapist creates safety and acts as a consultant to the process of emotional exploration and communication. In general, more anxiously attached partners uncover fears of being abandoned and deserted. They speak of being

alone and unable to count on their partner. More avoidant withdrawn partners usually speak of feeling inadequate, a helpless sense of being unable to please their partner, and a fear of rejection. The goal of the therapist is to help more withdrawn partners fully engage with their own emotions and their loved one and so assert their needs and to help more aggressive critical partners to recognize their fears and ask in a positive way for their attachment needs to be met. In this hypothetical example, Paul might gradually be able to share with his wife Claire the following:

“I have shut you out. I didn’t understand how hard that was for you. I just saw you as demanding and angry. I didn’t see your sadness.

“I am overwhelmed by your anger. When I see that look on your face, I want to run and hide. I freeze up. Everything feels hopeless, like I have already lost you. I feel so small, like I can never make it with you.

“I feel lonely too and I do want to be close, but I need you to step out of the judge’s chair and give me a chance here. I want you to stop monitoring me, waiting for me to make a mistake. I want some sense that we are struggling together and that I am your man, even if I don’t always know how to connect here.”

The EFT therapist will help Claire tune into her husband’s message, defusing any residual hostility and confusion and will also help Claire to reciprocate and open up to her husband. Claire might then offer the following responses:

“I do get critical, anything to get a response from you. I am so scared that you will just turn away. I have never felt so alone as in this relationship. I get scared that I don’t really matter to you at all.

“It’s very hard to show you my fear rather than getting mad. If I ask you and you do not reassure me, I will be even more hurt. I guess I really need that reassurance, that I am precious to you and you need me too. It is very hard to ask for this.

“Some part of me is even ashamed of asking. I was taught that you had to stand alone and be independent. But I want our closeness back. I need to know I matter to you and that you won’t turn away.”

This kind of dialogue creates a new positive cycle of disclosure and safe emotional connection that is deeply rewarding and provides an antidote to negative moments of disconnection. At times, it is also necessary to add a specific focus on healing emotional injuries that, if unresolved, block the creation of trust. The healing of moments of abandonment and betrayal, such as affairs or lack of responsiveness at key moments of need such as in illness or traumatic loss, is also part of Stage 2 of EFT. A recent study suggests that this EFT forgiveness process is effective.

Once couples can connect in the manner described, they can move into Stage 3, Consolidation, where they can formulate new stories of how their problems evolved and how they were able to repair the connection between them. They can also create attachment rituals, perhaps special ways of soothing each other or connecting after time apart, and can easily solve pragmatic problems that are no longer infused with attachment fears and meanings. All through this process, the therapist helps clarify each partner’s emotions and responses and gradually supports couples to interact in more positive and caring ways. Emotion is the music of the couple’s dance; new emotions create a new dance.

Susan Johnson

See also Attachment Theory; Couple Therapy; Emotion in Relationships; Emotion Regulation in Relationships; Repairing Relationships

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EMOTION IN RELATIONSHIPS

Emotions play a large role in relationships and are central to personal and relational health. Emotion signals whether a social situation is pleasant or unpleasant and helps organize personal actions to respond to the social situation. Emotion also communicates information to others about one's current state (positive or negative), informs others about one's relational orientation (e.g., dominance, affiliation) and intentions (e.g., "I want to hug you") toward them, and communicates need of a *socially coordinated response* (e.g., "I need support to manage this situation").

The term *emotion* is often used interchangeably with "feelings"; however, scientists understand emotions as more than just the subjective experience of "feelings." Emotions involve conscious and nonconscious processes that together form the experience of an emotion. To understand emotions, scientists examine self-reports about how people experience emotion and assess neurological and physiological arousal, facial displays, vocalizations (e.g., speech), and gestures in circumstances in which people experience emotion. This entry discusses how scientists define and measure markers of emotion and briefly reviews research to understand the role of emotion in relationships.

Definition

Emotion is a product of a core, "hardwired" system that evaluates the environment for situations that are relevant to personal motives and goals and that may potentially affect the well-being and survival of the person. This coordinated response system calls the mind and body into action. Changes include shifts in perception and attention; physiological functioning, both autonomic (e.g., heart rate, skin conductance) and endocrine (e.g., hormone production); gross motor behaviors (e.g., muscle tone, posture); and expressive behaviors (e.g., facial and vocal

displays, gestures), many of which occur without awareness. However, many conscious processes are also associated with emotion, including awareness of feelings as well as motivated, intentional actions (e.g., disclosing emotions, seeking physical closeness to another). Notably, the emotion system also has an elaborate structure dedicated to emotion regulation, affecting the way social information is appraised as well as how responses to feelings are managed.

Although the emotion system itself is located within the person, emotion by its nature is a process about the social environment. That is, the emotion system is stimulated by changes in environmental circumstances (which is almost invariably about how people are relating to others) and signals the valence (positive or negative) of the experienced relational changes. Further, one's internal states are communicated to others through facial expressions, vocalizations, and gestures, thereby signaling whether one is likely to draw closer to or create greater distance from others. Emotion thereby may dictate personal behavior as well as socially regulate others. Thus, although the architecture of the emotion system may be personal, the function is tethered to the social world, including relationships.

Elicitation and Measurement

To study the experience and expression of emotions, scientists have used many different methods. Some methods involve tasks that are typically performed by the person alone, such as guided imagery, memory recall, or stimulus exposure, whereas other techniques engage participants in actual interactions with others to evoke an emotional response or understand how an emotional response is received by another.

When scientists show stimuli to evoke particular emotions or affective states, these usually take the form of film clips or slides. Film clips typically show social interactions (e.g., a comedian telling jokes to audience) or graphic scenes (e.g., an amputation procedure) and slide sets show pictures of positive and negative objects or scenes (e.g., flowers, a snake eating a frog). Emotions are also elicited unconsciously using a technique called backward masking, which consists of a brief presentation of a target stimulus (e.g., pictures of

spiders, puppies) immediately followed by a masking stimulus (same pictures only cut and reorganized to form new stimuli). This technique allows both stimuli to be perceived yet only the masked one to be consciously recognized, thus allowing researchers to measure the extent to which people show different thresholds for recognition and reactivity to emotionally evocative stimuli.

Studies in which participants interact with others are designed to richly capture the complexities of emotional exchange in the natural world. The “others” can be confederates (people who actually work for the researcher and act in particular ways to elicit reactions in participants) or they may be actual relationship partners who are also participants in the study. When using confederates, social situations are constructed and tightly controlled in the laboratory by the experimenter and participants are led to believe that interactions with confederates are real. Interactions between pairs of actual friends, romantic partners, parents and children, or other dyads may either be naturalistic observations or observations during a semi-structured protocol by which participants are asked to interact (e.g., spouses are asked to engage in conversations about positive topics, such things they enjoy doing together, relationship conflicts, or “neutral” topics such as events from the day).

Tools to assess emotion vary with the kind of information researchers want to capture. Self-reports can take the form of single-item or multiple-item questionnaires (e.g., how much sadness did you experience when watching the film?) or affect dials (e.g., rating intensity of happiness experienced during segments of the film). Surveys can be administered at one point in time, as when the experimenter is assessing participants’ reactions to a specific film clip or feelings about an interaction with another person, but they can also be administered repeatedly, as done in diary studies in which feelings during the day or feelings about interactions with others can be tracked over time. When studies involve dyads such as husband and wife, reports from each partner are gathered to understand each person’s emotional experience, as well as to understand the match (or mismatch) between partner’s feelings and interpretations of and reactions to the other.

When study participants are observed, researchers often use elaborate coding systems—for example,

the Facial Affect Coding System (FACS) or Specific Affect Coding System (SPAFF)—to characterize the quality, timing, and intensity of participants’ emotional experiences and/or expressions. The FACS analyzes facial expressions into the smallest possible facial movements (called action units), specifying combinations of head and eye positions and movements, gross motor behaviors, and other actions that indicate the occurrence of emotion. The SPAFF system analyzes communications in dyads (e.g., couples, peers, parents and children), including facial displays from the FACS as well as information about vocal tone, verbal content, and body movements. When this information is combined, different affective sets are created (e.g., affection [positive], defensiveness [negative]) that capture how each partner is emotionally oriented toward the other. In other laboratories, detailed accounts of vocal acoustics (e.g., amplitude, pitch, tone, speech rate) and language properties are also assessed from observational data.

Heart rate, skin conductance, electroencephalographic activity (EEG; scalp recorded brain electrical activity), and electromyography (EMG; eyeblink startle magnitude measuring muscle tension/contraction) are markers typically used to measure the physiology of emotion. Notably, using these markers, researchers examine whether people are aroused by a particular stimulus, as well as the quality of their arousal. For example, sympathetic neural and adrenal medullary axis (SAM) and hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenocortical axis (HPA) patterns can indicate differences in how a person is oriented toward circumstances in his or her social environment (e.g., challenging versus threatening).

Using neuroimaging (particularly functional Magnetic Resonance Imagery, or fMRI), emotionally evocative stimuli can be presented and even some forms of social interaction can occur (e.g., holding the hand of a romantic partner) while the brain is continuously scanned. These scans allow researchers to look at the momentary unfolding of brain responses to emotional stimuli—including information on which areas of the brain are stimulated, when emotional content is detected and how quickly areas react, and how long areas take to become activated, remain activated, and recover after the stimulus is removed. With these techniques, researchers are also able to construct a model about reciprocity (e.g., feedback loops)

between different brain areas during emotionally evocative situations.

Finally, psychoneuroimmunology (PNI) focuses on how emotion influences cardiovascular, endocrine, immune, and neurosensory functioning, as well as health and disease over the long term. In laboratory studies, researchers create social situations (e.g., evaluation by judges while giving a speech discussing conflict with a spouse) to understand baseline, anticipatory, acute, and recovery response phases to these social stressors. These markers are also assessed repeatedly over time to understand differences between people in activation and habituation of responses to social stress.

Research

The literature on emotion is vast. Although there is no agreed upon number of discrete emotions, basic emotions (e.g., fear, anger, disgust, sadness, joy, interest) have been shown to be similarly experienced and expressed across diverse cultures. Research also suggests that emotional experience and expression are innate. That is, infants experience emotions and show emotional expressions long before they ever “learn” them from other people. The functions of the emotion system are elaborated and extended significantly over early development, and the social environment, including caregivers and peers, plays a large role in optimal development.

Early in infancy and childhood, emotion serves as the primary medium of communication, first as a signaling system to others indicating the child’s physical and psychological discomfort (e.g., hunger, distress when left alone). This signaling system then becomes motivated by goals of attention and comfort seeking and is used to move others to action for the child’s benefit (e.g., infant smiles when the parent helps the child reach a toy). Children use others’ emotional displays as social references to determine their own behaviors (e.g., when mom smiles and provides verbal encouragement, the child is more likely to initiate behaviors), and they also learn about their own and others’ emotional states and behaviors by witnessing and participating in social interactions with others.

Emotion also plays an important role in the construction and organization of the self-concept,

including how the self is regarded in relation to others as well as how one reacts and behaves socially. The social context continues throughout the life span to be a principal source of determining *what* emotions are displayed to *whom* and *when*. Notably, partner’s responses are influenced in part by the child’s temperament (overall disposition, ease of emotional activation, intensity of emotional response, with the nature of the emotional exchange potentially enhancing or undermining emotional development).

Importantly, the emotion system serves a significant social communication and coordination function not only in infancy and childhood, but across the life span. Emotion calls relevant others into action to guide social goals or processes (e.g., mating). For example, emotions such as passionate and companionate love catalyze motivation to approach others and create greater social bonds, and may further provide incentives or reinforce others’ social behavior. Indeed, organized facial and body cues that indicate interest in affiliation signal the other to begin the mating repertoire and reinforce their approach. Intimacy also develops through transactions of self-disclosure of *emotionally* relevant information and partner responsiveness (conveying acceptance, validation, and care for the discloser). Indeed, greater mutuality in such social exchanges is predictive of greater intimacy over time, with intimacy serving as a protective factor for personal well-being. When there are threats to the social bond (e.g., feeling hurt by one’s partner), emotion can also catalyze protective or reparative behaviors within the relationship, and thereby alter (at least temporarily) closeness to relational partners. Research has shown that when partners are less responsive to each other’s needs, the more defensive and less open they are to each other and the less they feel satisfied and vital in their relationship.

Emotional expression further organizes others around common emotional processing (e.g., grieving) such that the load of the emotional experience is shared. For example, in securely attached relationships, when a person perceives threats from the environment, caregivers or other close relational partners are recruited (e.g., through crying, proximity seeking, verbal requests) to help manage emotions. This social coordination of experience and expression of emotion has important implications for well-being. Some neurobiological

evidence even points to the emotion system as essentially *coregulated*, or in other words, at its basic neural level designed to maximize personal energy expenditures by relying on others to reduce risk or harm to one's own well-being and share in the load of managing emotions.

How does the emotion system coordinate all of these functions? First, from neuroscience, it is known that the amygdala, hippocampus, orbital frontal cortex, anterior cingulate cortex, prefrontal cortex, and hypothalamus are all implicated in emotional experience. Research shows pre-attentive processing occurs more rapidly for threat-relevant cues compared with positive or neutral stimuli. Research has also shown that people process faces quite rapidly, with negative facial expressions processed more quickly than are positive facial expressions. Further, some research suggests that the social context matters, such that the personal relevance of facial cues (e.g., mom's angry face vs. a stranger's angry face) can even activate the same brain areas differently. The processing advantage of negative information speaks to an important preparedness to act efficiently in adapting to the social environment when it threatens well-being. Notably, however, beyond this common pattern, individual differences in affective style have also been found, reflecting systematic differences in how people respond emotionally (that is, the relative positivity or negativity with which they react to similar life circumstances).

Cognitively, affect is used as information to shape attitudes and judgments, make decisions, and form and influence memory. People attempt to assess emotional consequences of any given situation in terms of maximizing positive and minimizing negative emotions, and to guide decisions based on their expectations of these emotions. Generally speaking, evidence suggests that positive and negative affect have different consequences for social information processing, such that positive affect is associated with more flexible and less effortful processing, and requires less information to respond, whereas negative affect requires greater attention and vigilance, as well as effortful and systematic processing.

Finally, relational stressors have been shown to be associated with autonomic activation and hormonal activity. Both high-impact stressor events (e.g., divorce) as well as low-grade repeated "hits"

(e.g., ongoing conflict) show links to immune functioning. Overall, research shows that social stressors may increase vulnerability to infectious illness and stress-related alterations in immune functioning can potentially have additional implications for recovery and long-term health.

Adults' emotional system may also change as they age. Age-related differences have been shown (a) in the ways in which situations are appraised (both as a function of learning and as the meaning of the environmental events change in valence, intensity, and relevance to personal goals and motives) and (b) in the extent to which people exert control over or employ others in the regulation of emotions. For example, physiological reactivity has been shown to diminish with age, and attentional biases in older adults favor avoidance of negative information. Older adults also tend to structure their environments to minimize negative experiences (e.g., reduce conflicts) and associated emotions and instead try to amplify opportunities for positive events and emotions. Thus, change in the emotion system may be both a product of maturational change as well as self-selection of social situations.

Current Directions

Several important theoretical and methodological advances are shaping the field's understanding of emotion. First, scientists have begun to study the importance of positive emotion for relational and personal health more rigorously. Second, there is some debate about whether experience and expression of all emotions is healthy. For example, much debate has centered on the extent to which an emotion (e.g., anger) is situationally appropriate and constructive to experience and express. However, given the utility of negative emotion to signal that something is awry in the social environment and to mobilize personal and social resources to address the situation, even anger has a vital adaptive function. Thus, science is now examining how severity, frequency, and persistence of negative emotions affects relational connectedness and thereby imposes costs on well-being. Finally, research examines how the frequency and persistence of positive and negative emotion affects psychological, physical, and relational health in the short term and cumulatively over the long term.

Important methodological trends in studies on emotion include a focus on being more ecologically valid (e.g., incorporating personally relevant pictures, vignettes, or tapes) to richly capture the nature of emotion as it occurs in a person's everyday world. Also, much research has focused on how partners affect each other's emotions and how psychological and physical well-being is affected in the short and long term. New methods, such as virtual reality, have emerged that elicit emotional responses by immersing participants in an evocative situation (e.g., walking across a very high bridge) or interaction with avatars (computer-generated others or real others controlling the avatar's responses). Finally, researchers are assessing the convergence of varied emotion markers in a variety of social circumstances to understand how dissociations between emotional markers (e.g., significant physiological arousal but no facial display) have important implications for personal and relational health.

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See also Display Rules; Emotional Communication; Emotion Regulation, Developmental Influences; Emotion Regulation in Relationships; Temperament

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EMOTION REGULATION, DEVELOPMENTAL INFLUENCES

If you have ever seen a 2-year-old at a party or in a toy store trying to get a particular toy that he or she wants, you might have seen frustration escalate into

a temper tantrum. The child begins to cry or even scream, reaches repeatedly toward the toy, and clutches his or her small fists. You might have smiled or been annoyed, but you also understood that the child had simply not yet learned to regulate his or her emotions. The goal of this entry is to describe the developmental process in emotion regulation. The entry begins with brief definitions of emotion experience and emotion regulation before addressing the developmental influences on emotion regulation.

Emotion Experience

Emotion experience begins when the body feels some type of positive or negative arousal. For a few basic emotions (e.g., fear, anger, sadness, joy, disgust), the body recognizes the emotional state quickly and activates programmed response tendencies, such as certain facial expressions (e.g., frowns or smiles) and certain physical reactions (e.g., rapid heart rate or muscle tension). However, scientists have learned that in many circumstances the link between a state of arousal and recognition of emotional experience is influenced by more conscious levels of thought. For example, most people feel fear immediately if a large dog suddenly jumps toward them with a growl. However, when called to speak in front of a group that same type of arousal might be experienced as anxiety, stage fright, or embarrassment. In addition, because some emotions are complex blends of more basic emotions, they require conscious processing and even reprocessing. Emotions such as romantic love, pride, resentment, disappointment, guilt, jealousy, envy, embarrassment, and shame are understood by reference to the circumstances that elicited the arousal. For example, guilt and shame are experienced after social rules or norms are violated, and embarrassment is experienced after losing face in public by tripping or spilling a soft drink. Sometimes emotions are experienced after a more intense emotion has passed. For example, a person may feel strong anger and respond inappropriately, then later feel lingering guilt for having said something hurtful to another person.

Emotion Regulation

Importantly, experiencing an emotion is only one half of the emotion equation. The other half is

how that experience, its intensity, and its expression are controlled. Scholars call this process *emotion regulation*. More specifically, emotion regulation involves modifications of one's emotions or emotional expressions to accomplish individual goals and adapt to the social environment. At the same time, a person is interpreting the nature of the emotional arousal, he or she is also evaluating or enacting coping strategies.

Emotion regulation decisions are based on appraisals of the social situation and individual and relational goals. People sometimes let themselves feel strong sadness and express it fully in the presence of a close friend to receive emotional support. However, in public, people often subdue the intensity of their sadness and its expression to appear strong and in control. Likewise, in a romantic relationship, partners may express jealousy to let a partner understand that the relationship is valued and that a threat has been perceived. By contrast, if a friend wins an award that one feels more qualified to win, feelings of envy are often subdued and instead congratulations are offered.

Although researchers have studied emotion regulation from several perspectives, Paul Ekman and Wallace Friesen have made one of the most important contributions to our understanding of expression regulation. These authors describe five display rules that govern the expression or suppression of emotional experience. They include *simulation* (showing emotions that we do not actually feel), *inhibition* (not displaying an emotion that we do feel), *intensification* (displaying emotions more intensely than we actually experience them), *minimization* (displaying emotions less intensely than we actually experience them), and *masking* (displaying an emotion that is different from the one that we are actually experiencing). Although adults typically follow these rules with little conscious effort, children must learn how and when to use them. Masking is particularly challenging for young children because it requires both simulation and inhibition at the same time. Imagine a young child who opens a birthday gift with great excitement only to find something that he or she does not want. The knowledge and skill necessary to hide the disappointment and instead display happiness are sophisticated accomplishments that are learned over time.

Developmental Influences

Emotion regulation abilities begin to develop in infancy and expand rapidly during the first 2 years. Among the first emotions that infants experience are the primary emotions of pleasure/joy, anger, sadness, and fear. From birth, infants cry when distressed and smile when contented, often spontaneously in their sleep. However, during the first year, infants learn to use these unfocused displays as meaningful signals to interact with others in the social environment. For example, by about 6 months, infants begin to smile when interacting with their mothers and other family members. In a sense, they have learned that emotional expression is a communication act that can be used symbolically. When a mother smiles as she lifts her baby from the crib, the baby experiences a positive feeling and smiles back; mother continues the caretaking activity and the smile. The interaction reinforces for the infant a reciprocal link between mother's smile, his or her positive feelings, his or her smile, and the continued positive outcomes. Both baby and mother are rewarded. In much the same way, by about 6 months, infants have learned to modify their crying in different ways to signal hunger or discomfort versus anger or frustration when a desired goal is blocked. In short, babies learn early that certain displays help them meet their goals and satisfy their needs.

By 18 months, even more remarkable emotional competence emerges. Toddlers begin to exhibit what scholars call "self-conscious emotions," emotions associated with awareness of a "self" that is judged by others (e.g., guilt, shame, and embarrassment). For example, in one experiment, researchers asked mothers to place rouge on the nose of their toddlers and place them in front of a mirror. Toddlers younger than 18 months seemed to have no emotional response. However, by about 18 months, the toddlers became upset when looking at themselves in the mirror. Although they didn't know the word, they were experiencing embarrassment. By 18 months, children are also beginning to develop the ability to feel empathy for the emotional states of others. This level of development is evident when a 2-year-old offers a hug to another child who is crying, as if to say, "I feel better when mom hugs me so I will hug you."

Emotional development becomes increasingly sophisticated throughout childhood. By 6 years of

age, children understand that emotion experience can be complex. They realize that they can feel two emotions at the same time (e.g., sad and frightened). By about 10 years of age, children even experience contradictory emotions such as being happy about doing well but simultaneously feeling sad that a friend did poorly. Emotion expression also becomes increasingly sophisticated. Researchers have found that children in elementary school report that they would more likely avoid expressing sadness, fear, and physical pain to their classmates than to their parents. These children may be attending more carefully to display rules in front of their peers because they assume that their classmates are more likely than their parents to make negative attributions about their personality.

In sum, the development of emotion regulation knowledge and skills is a complex process that begins in infancy and continues throughout childhood and adolescence, even into puberty. Unfortunately, many parents and other caregivers are not aware of the influences they exert in this process. In general, these influences are analyzed by researchers as *indirect* and *direct* influences.

Indirect influences on the development of emotion regulation arise from two mechanisms that operate when children are in the presence of family members or other care providers. The first is *emotional contagion* and the second is *modeling*. These two processes work together in teaching children, indirectly, how to regulate their emotions. Based on the work of Elaine Hatfield and her colleagues, researchers have begun to study emotional contagion, or the extent to which the emotions experienced by one person are vicariously experienced by others who are in the person's presence. Although empathy is usually a constructive response to the emotions of others, when strong negative emotions are experienced, it can be problematic. Thus, when children experience the positive emotions of their parents, the result is a healthy and satisfying home environment. However, when they experience the negative emotions of their parents, the result is a tense or distressing home environment. Even when parents attempt to suppress their negative emotions, they may be experienced by children who react to leakage cues in a parent's voice, body posture, or facial expressions.

Likewise, when parents have emotionally charged conflict in front of their children, some

children will feel threatened and withdraw, but others will actually experience the anger projected by their parents. The children may suppress these feelings (often leading to depression) or they may model their parents' behavior and openly express their own anger at home or in other situations. Young boys who witness negative parental conflict have difficulty controlling their anger during adolescence and tend to be aggressive toward their dating partners in high school.

Direct influences on children's emotion regulation development are exerted by parents through their communication (or lack of communication) with their children about emotions. John Gottman and his colleague interviewed parents to learn how they deal with their children's negative emotions and then observed them interacting with their children in a laboratory setting. This research offers two important insights into the parents' role in emotion regulation. First, when parents do "emotional coaching" by accepting and respecting a child's negative feelings but also talking with the child about what the emotion means and alternative ways to express it, the child learns how to regulate his or her emotions in other contexts. As a result, the child has good self-esteem, is socially and academically competent at school, and appropriately expresses emotion in varied social contexts.

Second, when parents respond in less thoughtful ways to a child's emotions, the child will be less emotionally and socially competent. These other response styles include (a) accepting the child's emotion but not talking with him or her about how to understand or express it, (b) ignoring the child's emotion as though it were unimportant, and (c) punishing the child for expressing the emotion but not discussing alternative options for expression. Because emotionally dysfunctional or detached parents are less likely to do emotional coaching, their children also tend to be less competent in regulating their emotions as they mature.

The foundation for successful emotion regulation provided by some parents gives their children an advantage during the turbulent years of adolescence. As children enter adolescence, they face new challenges that test their emotion regulation competence. First, as part of their growing sense of autonomy, they explore their behavioral independence from their parents, as well as their emotional independence. This opens adolescents to relatively

stronger influence from their peers than they may have experienced previously. Adolescents with well-developed emotion regulation strategies are better able to understand their emotional experience, manage their anger during conflict with friends, and anticipate the implications of their emotion displays (e.g., prosocial or self-protective).

Second, during the maturation process, adolescents experience hormonal, physical, psychological, and social changes that contribute to greater frequency and intensity of emotion experience. Emotion regulation skills help adolescents cope with these transitions. For example, researchers found that adolescents (Grades 7 and 10) who did not have good emotion regulation skills reported more intense emotions and rapid mood swings over a one-week period and were more likely to display problem behaviors (e.g., lying, swearing, stealing, and destroying property) compared with adolescents with better emotion regulation skills.

In sum, emotion regulation begins to develop during the early months of life and remains a critical aspect of social functioning from infancy through adolescence and into adulthood.

Sandra Metts and Adam Smith

See also Emotional Communication; Emotional Contagion; Emotion Regulation in Relationships; Parenting

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EMOTION REGULATION IN RELATIONSHIPS

Broadly defined, *emotion regulation* refers to the psychological and interpersonal processes through which individuals consciously or unconsciously alter their emotional experiences or expressions. Emotion regulation *in relationships* refers to these processes as they occur during interactions with relationship partners, such as friends, family members, or spouses. Emotion regulation can occur within any relationship, but it has received the most attention within *close* relationships because such relationships have particularly strong influences on our immediate and long-term emotional experiences. Processes of emotion regulation in relationships have received increased scientific attention in recent years because they are thought to explain the well-documented influence of social relationships on mental and physical health. Specifically, it is thought that well-functioning relationships foster physical and mental benefits by regularly heightening positive emotionality and dampening negative emotionality. Poorly functioning relationships, in contrast, are thought to hamper physical and mental health by heightening negative emotionality and dampening positive emotionality. This entry discusses different forms of emotion regulation in relationships, their implications for relationship functioning and overall well-being, the different strategies that have been used to study emotion regulation in relationships, and directions for future research.

Basic Mechanisms

Emotion regulation in relationships can occur through conscious and intentional processes or through unconscious and automatic processes. An example of conscious and intentional emotion regulation is social support. When people feel depressed, stressed, or frightened, social partners can help regulate these negative feelings by providing comfort and support, communicating empathy, providing an alternative perspective on problems, or simply distracting a person from his or her troubles. In some cases, people may benefit from these forms of social support without even

realizing it. For example, research shows that individuals whose romantic partners have offered them support subsequently experience greater positive and less negative emotion, even when they report no awareness of their partners' support attempts. Moreover, other studies have suggested that even in the absence of specifically supportive interactions, the simple presence of a close relationship partner can amplify positive emotions and alleviate distress, even lowering physiological reactivity to psychological stress. These findings are consistent with the extensive body of research indicating that individuals with close supportive relationships live happier, healthier lives, potentially as a direct result of such sustained stress regulating effects.

In other cases, emotion regulation occurs through automatic processes that are regular features of routine social interactions. For example, individuals tend to unconsciously "catch" and mimic the emotions of social partners, especially when these social partners are close and important. Some researchers have suggested that this "emotion contagion" or "emotional convergence" is an adaptive feature of most relationships that promotes general social functioning by allowing individuals to understand and share the experiences of others. For example, *empathic accuracy*, or the ability to detect and respond to another person's emotional state, can promote relationship satisfaction and success when the emotions in question are positive and nonthreatening.

Negative Emotions

The same processes of empathic accuracy, emotion contagion, emotional convergence, and even social support can prove *maladaptive* when the emotions in question are negative (such as anger or sadness), or when they pose a threat to the relationship (such as jealousy or contempt). Studies have found that one of the potentially destructive characteristics of poorly functioning relationships is a tendency for negative emotions to spread from one partner to the other and to rapidly escalate through social interaction. This is particularly likely to occur during conflict, and can make it increasingly difficult for both partners to respond sensitively to each other and to negotiate solutions

to their disagreements. There are also negative physiological consequences to patterns of shared and escalating negative emotions within close relationships. Extreme negative emotions and hostility during marital conflict, for example, have been found to trigger heightened cardiovascular reactivity and heightened production of stress hormones. Over many years, these physiological patterns increase both partners' health risks.

One such pattern that has been widely investigated within heterosexual couples is called "female demand/male withdraw." In this pattern, the wife makes a series of escalating demands of her partner, who then attempts to regulate his own distress by emotionally and behaviorally withdrawing. This exacerbates the female partner's negative emotions, prompting her to intensify her demands and—paradoxically—triggering greater withdrawal by the partner. Such patterns are detrimental and maladaptive on a basic interpersonal level, because they fail to adequately resolve the conflict in question, but can also be conceptualized as fundamental failures of interpersonal emotion regulation. Instead of helping to attenuate their distress, partners are actually *escalating* each other's negative emotions. Studies have found that couples that regularly reciprocate each other's negative emotions, instead of interrupting or alleviating negative emotions, have higher rates of dissolution over time. In contrast, couples who counterbalance routine negative emotional experiences with frequent *positive* emotional interchanges have greater relationship satisfaction and success. An example of such counterbalancing might be the interjection of humor into an otherwise difficult discussion, which can provide a brief respite from negative emotionality, de-escalate tension, and provide a moment of shared pleasure between partners. Much of this research on these dynamics has focused on marital conflict, but similar processes have also been observed between parents and children. For example, parent-adolescent dyads that tend to reciprocate each other's negative affect during conflict discussions end up falling into detrimental "cascades" of ever-increasing negative emotion.

Positive Emotions

The majority of research on emotion regulation within relationships has focused on negative

emotions, either by examining the ability of social partners to alleviate distress or by examining processes through which partners inadvertently escalate each other's distress during conflict. In recent years, greater attention has turned to the regulation (and specifically, the amplification) of *positive* emotions and relationships. Studies have increasingly demonstrated that well-functioning relationships are characterized by the absence of unregulated negative affect and by specific *presence and amplification* of positive affect. In particular, the most beneficial and satisfying interpersonal interactions appear to be those in which positive affect is expressed, validated, and mirrored by a relationship partner. For example, the simple process of sharing good news with another individual magnifies the event's positive emotional impact, a phenomenon called *capitalization*. These processes of mutual positive emotion regulation reinforce and prolong one's positive feelings and indicate the partner's engagement and responsiveness, enhancing the rewarding nature of the interaction itself and of the relationship as a whole.

Studies have found that positive emotions can counteract the negative interpersonal, psychological, and physiological consequences of negative emotions, and can contribute to effective coping. For example, positive emotions have been theorized to broaden individuals' thought-action repertoires and build their intrapsychic and interpersonal resources, partly through facilitating creative and flexible cognition and adaptive problem solving. Hence, researchers interested in emotion regulation processes within close relationships have begun to increasingly investigate how couples can strategically use shared—and amplified—positive emotional experiences to help one another regulate negative emotions, and to prevent negative emotional interactions (such as conflicts) from escalating to a dysfunctional level.

Individual Differences

Not all individuals go about regulating their emotions in the same way, and this is particularly true with regard to emotion regulation within relationships. The most widely studied form of variability in interpersonal emotion regulation is *attachment style*. Attachment styles are stable expectations

regarding the availability and responsiveness of romantic partners that are thought to develop from early interactions with caregivers. In recent years, researchers have come to conceptualize these styles as also providing an organizing framework for affective experience, expression, and regulation.

Specifically, it is theorized that individuals with *secure* attachment styles are confident of the availability of social partners to assist them in times of distress and tend to appraise external demands as manageable challenges rather than as unmanageable threats. In contrast, individuals with *anxious* or *avoidant* attachment styles adopt more negative, threat-based appraisals of environmental demands and adopt ineffective emotion regulation strategies. For example, individuals with high attachment anxiety tend to be hypervigilant to cues of threat, increasing their day-to-day negative emotional reactivity. Once they experience negative emotions, they tend to focus on and ruminate about these feelings, which has the effect of heightening and magnifying them. Finally, they show patterns of spreading emotional reactivity such that one negative thought or memory triggers many others, and such that distress experienced in one area of life spills over to other areas. Anxious individuals' tendency to experience heightened negative and reduced positive affect also extends to their romantic relationships. Those high in attachment anxiety tend to interpret their partners' negative or even ambiguous behaviors in more threatening ways and their positive behaviors in less positive ways. This negative attributional bias also appears to account in part for anxious persons' lower reports of relationship satisfaction.

Attachment avoidance, on the other hand, is conceptualized as involving *minimization* and suppression of emotional experience. These individuals tend to report distancing themselves from others during times of distress, and typically show few outward signs of distress. Avoidant individuals also show low levels of support-seeking behaviors, especially in stressful circumstances, and they report low levels of subjective distress even when physiological markers of distress are evident. Thus, both attachment anxiety and avoidance are consistently associated with deficits in the regulation of both negative and positive affect, and both patterns are associated with the inability to derive

emotion-regulating benefits from contact with attachment figure as well as lower empathy and lower responsiveness to partners' emotional needs.

Research has also detected stable individual differences in capacities for *physiological* regulation of emotional states, which has implications for interpersonal processes of emotion regulation. For example, research on both infants and adults has found that individuals with robust parasympathetic nervous system functioning (typically described as *vagal tone*) show more rapid and flexible cardiovascular responses to environmental challenges, which is thought to provide an important substrate for efficient and effective regulation of negative emotions. Other studies have focused on individual differences in stress-related activity in the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenocortical (HPA) axis of the endocrine system (typically assessed through the release of *cortisol*, a stress hormone). As with the parasympathetic nervous system, flexible and efficient reactivity and recovery in the HPA axis is thought to provide an index of flexible and effective emotion regulation across the life course. The integration of cognitive and behavioral perspectives on individual differences in emotion regulation with *physiological* perspectives is a promising direction for new research in this area.

Research Strategies

The many different manifestations of emotion regulation within relationships call for different research strategies. Researchers have used a variety of creative methods to capture these processes. Most of these methods rely—at least to some extent—on individuals' self-reports of their positive and negative emotional states. There is considerable variation, however, in the periods over which such reports are made. For example, some studies might ask individuals to describe how they “generally” feel when interacting with different social partners, under different circumstances. Other studies have attempted to capture more specific linkages between social interactions and emotional experiences by asking participants to keep brief diaries (sometimes once a day, sometimes multiple times within the same day) of social experiences and their immediate affective consequences. In some cases, for example, individuals

might be signaled by an electronic pager to describe their most recent interpersonal interaction and the resulting emotional state. In other cases, assessments of physiological reactivity (such as blood pressure, which can be measured with ambulatory monitors that individuals wear throughout the day and even overnight) are timed to correspond with such reports to provide an additional measure of interpersonally triggered emotional reactivity. These designs are particularly adept at capturing “emotion regulation in action,” as it unfolds during routine (and not-so-routine) social exchanges.

Other widely used methods attempt to capture this process by bringing individuals into controlled laboratory settings, exposing them to emotion-eliciting events, and examining how their interpersonal interactions modulate their affective states. For example, couples might watch an emotion-eliciting film together and be observed during their conversation afterward. Alternatively, one member of a dyad might undergo a stressful performance task, and the other member might be instructed to provide comfort and support in whatever manner he or she deems appropriate. The benefit of these approaches is experimental control: Researchers can precisely calibrate the emotion-eliciting stimuli, permitting direct comparisons between the different strategies that dyads might employ to mutually regulate their responses to these experiences, and the effectiveness of these strategies. In other cases, researchers attempt to “re-create” naturalistic emotional experiences within a controlled laboratory setting. For example, many studies of romantic couples ask partners to discuss a topic of frequent and heated conflict with each other, to trigger the types of emotion regulation strategies that they might typically use at home together.

A key advantage of such laboratory-based studies is the capacity to collect observational and physiological data on dyads' emotional reactivity. Hence, in addition to testing whether a spouse's supportive behavior elicits *reports* of greater positive emotion, researchers can examine whether such reports are borne out by an individual's facial expressions, posture, and physiological responses. Such multifaceted assessments provide a more complete portrait of individuals' emotional experiences and help determine whether certain forms of

emotion regulation within relationships have stronger effects on one dimension of emotion (for example, self-reported happiness) than others (cardiovascular reactivity).

Future Directions

New theoretical and empirical approaches to emotion regulation have been emerging within various research traditions, ranging from experimental social psychology to affective neuroscience. Researchers are increasingly pursuing interdisciplinary approaches involving the simultaneous collection of data across multiple levels of emotional activation, such as brain activity (assessed through functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging, or fMRI), hormonal changes, and autonomic nervous system reactivity. Researchers are also increasingly investigating whether individual differences in capacities and strategies for emotion regulation in relationships correspond to physiological predispositions for different types of regulation. For example, many studies have begun to investigate whether individuals who have consistently high levels of stress hormones in response to day-to-day challenges, or consistently high blood pressure reactivity, end up pursuing consistent forms of emotion regulation within the context of their close relationships.

Another important emerging trend in research on emotion regulation within relationships involves the collection of detailed, “real-time” diary reports of emotional experience and regulation from *both* interaction partners simultaneously. Methods for analyzing such dyadic data have also become more sophisticated, making it possible to analyze data sequentially to determine how relationship partners’ emotional responses to one another unfold, build, escalate, and de-escalate during an interaction. This is particularly important for identifying whether there are “optimal” forms of coregulation in relationships. Some researchers, for example, have suggested that most adaptive “outcome” of effective emotion regulation within a relationship might *not* be a high and stable level of positive emotion, but rather a flexible give-and-take between partners involving loose coupling of oscillations in positive and negative mood, and efficient transitions between moments of self-regulation

(i.e., “I manage my *own* negative emotions to avoid burdening you”) and moments of interactive regulation (i.e., “I take advantage of opportunities to boost *your* positive affect through enthusiastic responses to your positive emotional displays and expressions”). From this perspective, the goal is *not* a perfect matching between partners’ states, but an intermediate degree of emotional coordination and interdependency.

In summary, research on emotion regulation in relationships is an active, thriving area of inquiry that has much to offer designed to human relationships. Researchers are increasingly coming to understand that processes of mutual cognitive and emotional linkage between members of a dyad may be a fundamental component of all human relationships and may play a key role in determining whether these relationships are experienced as rewarding or stressful, growth promoting or constraining, and how they influence relationship partners’ long-term mental and physical health.

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See also Attachment Theory; Capitalization; Emotional Contagion; Emotion Regulation; Developmental Influences; Empathic Accuracy and Inaccuracy

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EMPATHIC ACCURACY AND INACCURACY

Empathic accuracy refers to the degree to which one person can accurately infer the specific content of another person's thoughts and feelings. During the past two decades, psychologist William Ickes and his colleagues have extensively studied this phenomenon in the context of close relationships. The results of their research suggest that relationship partners are often motivated to “manage” their empathic accuracy—usually seeking to know, but occasionally seeking to avoid knowing, what their partner is thinking or feeling.

The standard method for measuring empathic accuracy in relationship partners is the unstructured dyadic interaction paradigm. In this paradigm, the partners are left alone together in a

waiting-room situation for several minutes, while the experimenter is presumably completing a necessary errand. During this brief observation period, the partners' spontaneous interaction is covertly audio- and videotaped. At the conclusion of this interaction, the partners are seated in separate cubicles, where they individually view a copy of the videotaped interaction and stop the tape at each point where they remember experiencing a particular thought or feeling. The partners also write down the specific content of these thoughts and feelings, noting the times when they occurred. Then they view the tape again, this time for the purpose of writing down their inferences about the content of their partner's reported thoughts and feelings at each of the partner's “tape stops.” People who can accurately infer the specific content of their partner's thoughts and feelings, based on the comparative judgments of trained raters, are considered to be high in their empathic accuracy. This entry describes several aspects of research into empathetic accuracy and inaccuracy.

Individual Differences in Empathic Accuracy

Although people with severe autism seem unable to infer the content of other people's thoughts and feelings, this ability is evident in all normally developing individuals by the time they reach adolescence. The overall level of empathic accuracy varies from one individual to another, however, and these individual differences (typically in the range of 0 to 60 percent accuracy) have important effects on people's social lives and their personal adjustment. For example, researchers have found that adolescents with low empathic accuracy experience greater peer victimization and report a range of personal adjustment problems that are less likely to afflict their more empathically accurate counterparts.

Despite the popular stereotype of “women's intuition,” which presumes that women are, on average, more empathically accurate than men, reviews of the relevant research findings suggest that the average woman in our society does not have more empathic ability than the average man. On the other hand, evidence indicates that women will display more motivation to accurately “read” other people's thoughts and feelings in situations

where they are reminded that women are supposed to excel in this regard.

Temporal Changes in Empathic Accuracy Within Close Relationships

Are friends more accurate than strangers in their ability to infer the specific content of each other's thoughts and feelings? The answer, not surprisingly, is yes. Friends do, indeed, infer each other's thoughts and feelings more accurately than strangers do, but friends' performance is typically in the 30–40 percent range—far short of 100 percent accuracy. The available research suggests that friends achieve their greater accuracy by making use of relevant background knowledge they have acquired about each other's interests, values, feelings, and life experiences through previous discussions.

Although the empathic accuracy of same-sex friends appears to develop rapidly during the first few months of their acquaintance and then to increase only slightly after that, the empathic accuracy of married couples seems to peak within 2 years after the marriage and then to decline somewhat. This decline may occur because the husband and wife are now preoccupied with different roles and concerns that make it more difficult for them to “stay on the same page” and share a common cognitive focus. They may also have acquired a false sense of confidence that they already understand each other so well that they no longer have to pay close attention to what the other person is saying and doing. Research findings indicate that attentiveness is important no matter how well the partners think they know each other.

Empathic Accuracy and Inaccuracy

The association between empathic accuracy and relationship satisfaction was initially assumed to be a simple one: The more accurately relationship partners can “read” each other's thoughts and feelings, the more satisfied they should be with their relationship. Although several studies (for example, a study of newlywed couples conducted by Shelley Kilpatrick, Caryl Rusbult, and Victor Bissonnette) have revealed the expected positive relationship between these two variables, other studies have not. Indeed, some studies have

revealed a negative relationship between empathic accuracy and relationship satisfaction, particularly in situations where partners are dealing with high-conflict issues that they find difficult to resolve. The link between empathic accuracy and relationship satisfaction has proved to be more complicated than early researchers assumed.

To account for these more complex relationships, William Ickes and Jeffry Simpson proposed a theoretical model of how empathic accuracy is “managed” in relationships. According to this model, greater empathic accuracy usually helps improve relationships in situations where the partners' actual thoughts and feelings are benign and nonthreatening. On the other hand, greater empathic accuracy can actually harm relationships in “danger zone” situations in which the partner's actual thoughts and feelings are potentially threatening to the relationship (for example, accurate inferences about a partner's dislike of one's faults or a partner's sexual attraction to others will often damage the relationship more than less accurate inferences will). Consistent with these propositions, the results of a study of married couples revealed that greater accuracy in inferring a partner's nonthreatening thoughts and feelings was associated with feeling closer to the partner, whereas greater accuracy in inferring a partner's relationship-threatening thoughts and feelings was associated with feeling less close to the partner.

When perceivers find themselves in a “danger zone” situation in which it is likely that their partner is harboring relationship-threatening thoughts and feelings, they may be motivated to be empathically inaccurate, rather than accurate, to avoid having to confront and deal with the partner's potentially hurtful and destabilizing thoughts and feelings. In these instances, motivated inaccuracy may actually help to keep the relationship stable and intact in the face of a short-term threat. Motivated inaccuracy is likely only a short-term solution that will be increasingly less effective over time. Individuals who repeatedly “turn a blind eye” and ignore their partner's potentially relationship-damaging behavior may successfully avoid an unpleasant confrontation now, but set themselves up for an even more unpleasant and consequential confrontation later on.

Several studies have shown that individuals vary in the strength of their motive to learn about their

relationship partners' potentially threatening thoughts and feelings. At one extreme are men and women who have an avoidant attachment style that leads them to minimize any potential negative contact with their partners. These individuals often decline to attempt to infer their partner's relationship-threatening thoughts and feelings, even when instructed to do so. At the other extreme are women who have an anxious-ambivalent attachment style that leads them to become highly vigilant at the first sign of a potential threat to their relationship. These anxious-ambivalent women tend to be quite accurate in inferring their male partners' relationship-threatening thoughts and feelings, even though they pay a price for this knowledge in their subsequent feelings of jealousy and perceived threat. (For reasons that aren't yet clear, anxious-ambivalent men are less likely to do this.)

Similar individual differences have been identified on a measure of the motive to acquire relationship-threatening information (often referred to by its acronym—MARTI). People with high MARTI scores have "suspicious minds" and usually want to know their partners' relationship-threatening thoughts and feelings, even if it might hurt the relationship. In contrast, people with low MARTI scores are less suspicious of their partners and are less likely to "go out of their way to look for trouble." People with moderate MARTI scores probably seek to find a balance between being overly suspicious and not being sufficiently sensitive to potential problems in their relationships.

Empathic Inaccuracy of Maritally Aggressive Men

An interesting example of empathic inaccuracy is provided by maritally aggressive men. These men, when compared with their less aggressive counterparts, are biased to believe that women harbor critical and rejecting thoughts and feelings about their male partners. The strength of this bias is related to the inaccuracy of the men's empathic inferences and to the degree of wife-directed aggression they report.

Maritally aggressive men appear to sustain this biased way of thinking by employing two independent strategies: (1) "tuning out" when their female partner is talking (so that they don't have to learn

what she is actually thinking and feeling) and (2) reacting to her attempts to express herself with feelings of contempt rather than sympathy. Both strategies keep aggressive/abusive men from learning how their wives actually feel, thereby enabling them to sustain the biased perception that their wives are harboring critical and rejecting feelings about them. They can then, quite unfairly, use these perceived critical and rejecting feelings as a justification for the aggression they direct toward their wives.

Interestingly, the empathic accuracy of maritally violent men is significantly lower for their own wives than for female strangers. This finding contributes to the growing evidence that maritally violent men have an "empathic deficit" that is expressly directed toward their own spouse's thoughts and feelings as a way of maintaining control within the relationship. These men appear to be motivated not to want to know their wives' actual thoughts and feelings, because this knowledge might require the men to understand their wives better and perhaps even sympathize with them. By making themselves relatively insensitive to their wives' actual thoughts and feelings, maritally violent men can perpetuate the biased attributions that enable them to continue to abuse their female partners.

Clinical Implications of Research on Empathic Accuracy and Inaccuracy

The research on empathic accuracy and inaccuracy suggests some pitfalls that psychotherapists should avoid when treating partners in distressed relationships. These pitfalls include (a) the hazards of forcing partners to infer each other's relationship-threatening thoughts and feelings more accurately before the therapy has prepared them to do so; (b) the instability of relationships involving partners who have an anxious attachment orientation, a pervasive bias to "see" criticism and rejection where none is intended, or a strong motive to acquire relationship-threatening information; and (c) misinterpreting the reluctance of avoidantly attached partners to confront the danger-zone issues in their relationship.

To avoid the first pitfall, the therapist must accept the fact that many relationships are predicated on the partners' routine *avoidance* of

each other's relationship-threatening thoughts and feelings. For many couples, the implicit agreement to follow the policy of "don't ask, don't tell" may be the primary reason why their relationship has worked as well as it has. If the therapist fails to appreciate this fact, more harm than good can be accomplished when the partners are pressed to confront their most relationship-threatening issues before they feel that they have made sufficient progress in their therapy to do so.

To avoid the second pitfall, the therapist must realize that some people are predisposed to "look for trouble" in their intimate relationships, and that their readiness to confront relationship-threatening issues may be part of the problem rather than part of the solution. People in this category can include suspicious partners who have a strong motive to acquire relationship-threatening information; aggressive-abusive men who have a pervasive bias to "see" criticism and rejection in their wives' thoughts and feelings; and women with an anxious attachment orientation, who act as if they are compelled to know their husbands' relationship-threatening thoughts and feelings. Although different interventions may be required in each case, the therapist should learn to recognize these predispositions to "look for trouble" and make them a focus of the therapy.

To avoid the third pitfall, the therapist must realize that some people are so motivated to *avoid* confronting the danger-zone issues in their relationships that they will appear not to care about a relationship that they actually value greatly. Perceiving such clients as stubborn, uncooperative, or uncaring can blind the therapist to the reality of what is often an anxious and withdrawn person who needs continued reassurance rather than blunt confrontation.

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See also Abuse and Violence in Relationships; Attribution Processes in Relationships; Cognitive Processes in Relationships; Empathy; Gender Stereotypes; Interpersonal Sensitivity; Marital Satisfaction and Quality

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EMPATHY

In the broadest sense, *empathy* refers to the reactions that one person has to the observed experiences of another. Beyond this general definition, however, psychologists have conceived of this phenomenon in a number of more specific ways. Disagreements over the "proper" definition of empathy have been a long-running feature of this field. However, underlying all of these definitional approaches is one core assumption: that empathy in some way involves the transformation of the observed experiences of another person into a response within the self. Thus, empathy is a psychological phenomenon that at least temporarily *unites* the separate social entities of self and other. Because of this, empathy can affect relationships in a variety of ways. This entry reviews the differing definitions of empathy that have dominated this literature. It also discusses the implications of empathy for relationships.

The most fundamental definitional distinction has been between viewing empathy as an essentially cognitive phenomenon or as a fundamentally emotional one. The cognitive view sees empathy as an intellectual process in which one person attempts to understand the internal state of another person—thoughts, feelings, or intentions. The term *perspective taking* (or *role taking*) is often used to describe this process. Some versions of this

approach consider perspective taking to be the *attempt* to infer others' internal states; other versions equate perspective taking only with *successful* attempts that result in an accurate inference.

Such inferences could be made in several ways. An observer might start with the assumption that a target's reaction in a given situation is probably similar to what the observer's would be in a comparable situation—the observer might then “project” his or her own likely responses to the target. Alternatively, an observer might use other sources of information to make such inferences. The target's words, facial expressions, and body language can all provide information about the target's emotional state. Prior knowledge about the target might also be used to infer a current internal state, and knowledge about groups to which the target belongs can be used to determine the target's likely attitudes or values.

The emotional view of empathy, in contrast, defines *empathy* as some kind of affective reaction in the observer that results from observing the target. However, no clear consensus exists regarding the precise nature of this emotional response. Some have argued that empathy consists of the observer and target experiencing the same or similar emotions—a phenomenon sometimes known as emotional contagion. Others have argued that empathy occurs when the observer comes to have feelings of sympathy and compassion for the target. Other affective states that have been nominated include empathic anger (when a target has been mistreated), empathic joy (when a target has experienced success), and even “contrast empathy” in which the target's misfortune produces enjoyment in the observer. However, the most common contemporary view is probably that emotional empathy is an affective response to another's experience that is congruent with, but not necessarily identical to, that other's own experience.

In recent years, there has been growing acceptance of the view that empathy can best be considered a multidimensional phenomenon that encompasses both cognitive and affective elements. One such view holds that it is useful to distinguish between empathy-related processes (such as motor mimicry, associative learning, and perspective taking) and empathy-related outcomes, both cognitive (e.g., accurate perceptions) and affective (e.g., feelings of sympathy). Moreover, these cognitive and emotional responses

in turn contribute to interpersonal outcomes such as aggression and helping behavior.

One consequence of this approach is the growing use of multidimensional measurement techniques. For example, one widely used measure of dispositional empathy (the Interpersonal Reactivity Index) assesses four different facets of empathy. Two of these are clearly affective: empathic concern (the tendency to feel sympathy for those in distress) and personal distress (the tendency to feel personal discomfort when faced with distressed others). Another is clearly cognitive in nature: perspective taking (the tendency to imagine the point of view of other people). The final scale is more difficult to characterize: the fantasy scale measures the level of identification with characters in books, movies, and plays.

To reiterate, in a variety of ways empathy creates cognitive and emotional connections between people, and as a result often influences social behavior. Although it is not an exhaustive list, empathy can shape interactions through at least six broad avenues.

Empathic Accuracy

As previously noted, one school of thought regarding empathy has placed primary emphasis on attempts to determine the internal states of other people. Thus, *empathic accuracy* refers to our ability to accurately infer others' internal states without regard to whether we experience any affective response while doing so. This view of empathy has a long history, and empirical attempts to study empathic accuracy have been made for more than 50 years. However, methodological difficulties plagued the early research, and only relatively recently has significant progress been made. Much of this more recent work has been conducted or inspired by William Ickes.

It now appears that humans are capable of accurately inferring the moment-by-moment internal states of other people, both thoughts and feelings. For example, if Harry and Susan are talking, Harry may be able to infer something about Susan's current mood even if she does not announce it. He may do so by using facial expressions and vocal cues, or by using his prior knowledge about Susan to interpret what she says.

Although we can be accurate even with strangers, the best performance typically occurs when we attempt to “read the minds” of our friends and romantic partners. The shared knowledge and experience that friends possess is a considerable aid in the inference process. In addition, it appears that empathic accuracy is more likely when we are motivated to be accurate. That is, if there is a real value to us for making correct inferences, then we try harder and perform better.

How important is such empathic accuracy? Interestingly, the relationship between empathic accuracy and overall relationship satisfaction is not clear. Sometimes greater accuracy is associated with happier relationships, but not always. In fact, if there is reason to believe that an accurate inference about one’s partner might be painful or threatening—perhaps if Harry correctly perceives how attractive Susan finds another man—then intimate couples sometimes display less accuracy. Thus, although empathic accuracy would seem to offer some obvious relationship benefits, especially in improved communication, it also appears that the value of accuracy may have some clear limits.

Emotional Synchrony

Another way that empathy influences social relationships is by creating an *emotional synchrony* between people—that is, a match between the observer and target in the quality or intensity of their emotional states. This synchrony in turn has positive effects on the quality of the interaction and the relationship. Recent theory and research have tended to focus on one particular mechanism by which these parallel emotions are created: the tendency of observers to mimic the target’s facial expressions, vocal intonations, posture, and movements. Considerable evidence suggests that observers often engage in a veritable symphony of unconscious mimicry during social interaction, imitating the facial expressions, bodily movements, posture, speech rate, and vocal intensity of their interaction partners. Moreover, evidence indicates that mimicry in each of these channels can contribute to the creation of parallel emotional responding in the observer. Thus, when we see an unhappy friend, we may unconsciously mimic her frown, slumped posture, and subdued

tone of voice—and this physical mirroring may reinforce the sadness created in us by knowledge of her plight.

What is the effect of this emotional synchrony between observer and target? One socially important outcome seems to be greater feelings of rapport between the target and observer. Synchrony leads the interaction partners to feel more “in step,” involved, or compatible with each other. Thus, when Harry mimics Susan (almost always without awareness) as they talk, both parties are likely to feel that the interaction has gone more smoothly. In addition, evidence indicates that being mimicked leads us to be more helpful and generous to the mimicker. Thus, the net effect of emotional synchrony is to increase our feelings of closeness and connectedness with others and to lead us to act accordingly toward them.

Constructive Relationship Behaviors

Empathy can also influence relationships by fostering specific kinds of behavior that help maintain relationship health. This can happen in different ways. For example, routinely trying to imagine a social partner’s perspective will tend to produce more constructive behaviors—whether or not these perspective-taking efforts actually produce accurate inferences. If Susan genuinely tries to adopt Harry’s point of view, she is likely to treat him in a more tolerant, considerate, and tactful fashion.

Another major way in which this happens is through the feelings of compassion that empathizing evokes and the relationship between such feelings and constructive relationship behaviors. One beneficial outcome of sympathy is an increased willingness to offer help. Having compassionate feelings for another person is strongly related to offering help, whether that person is friend or stranger, whether it is easy to avoid helping or not, and even if doing so is costly for the helper. In addition, sympathy leads to several other constructive actions. For example, people high in a sympathetic disposition tend to disclose more openly to romantic partners and to invite such disclosure as well. In addition, people high in dispositional sympathy tend to display a pleasing social style. They are more considerate of their social partners, less

self-centered, and more even-tempered. They are also more likely to be supportive of their partners in times of stress.

What determines whether sympathetic feelings for social partners will occur? One answer is that some people are simply more prone to experience sympathy than others. In addition to such individual differences, certain situational characteristics influence the amount of sympathy that an observer is likely to experience. One of these is perceived similarity between observer and target; more similar targets tend to evoke more sympathy than dissimilar ones do. Another factor is whether the observer attempts to take the target's perspective; doing so makes sympathetic reactions more likely. In addition, we are especially likely to feel sympathy for others when we believe that they are not to blame for their difficulties. If Susan believes Harry failed an exam because he had the flu, she is likely to sympathize; if she believes he was playing video games instead of studying, sympathy will not be her first response.

Responding to Partner Misbehavior

Another important way in which empathy influences social relationships is evident when someone acts in a way that is hurtful to the partner. Such instances of misbehavior create short-term distress, but can also serve to create longer-term resentments and frustrations. In at least two ways, empathy can play a role in minimizing the impact of such events. First, empathizing with the misbehaving partner makes it more likely that an individual will respond to the provocation not with retaliation but with a more constructive, accommodating response—one that is less retaliatory and more understanding. For example, romantic partners who are high in dispositional perspective taking are more likely to respond to a partner's bad behavior by overlooking it, or by trying to understand it: They are less likely to respond in kind or to verbally lash out at the offending party.

Second, empathy for one's partner is associated with a greater likelihood of ultimately forgiving the partner for a transgression. This is important because such forgiveness makes it possible for partners to restore the relationship closeness that is

damaged when one partner transgresses. Forgiveness also helps release bitterness and anger and aids in emotional healing. Feelings of empathic concern are especially important here. In general, the more sympathy we experience for a transgressor, the greater is our willingness to forgive. In turn, such feelings of forgiveness lead to a reduced desire for revenge and a diminished desire to simply avoid the transgressor.

Reducing Aggression

Another way in which empathy can influence social life lies in its inhibiting effect on aggression. Although it has not been studied as extensively as the empathy-helping link, the association between empathy and aggressive behavior has received substantial interest, with two major mechanisms hypothesized to operate. The first is largely affective in nature. Witnessing the distress cues of another person (fearful expressions; crying) can produce sympathy or distress in the observer. Such feelings in turn may make the observer less likely to aggress against the victim because doing so tends to reduce the distress cues, and as a result, minimizes the observer's own discomfort. Another mechanism is more cognitive in nature. By taking the perspective of others, we may come to have more understanding and tolerance, and as a result become less likely to act aggressively toward them when provoked.

Some evidence exists for both mechanisms. For example, studies of delinquent and nondelinquent youth consistently find lower levels of dispositional perspective taking among the delinquents, and comparisons of abusive and nonabusive mothers display similarly lower levels of cognitive empathy among the abusive samples. The relation between perspective taking and aggressive behavior in the more general population is not as consistent, but is often found. Investigations of the link between emotional empathy and aggression in adults have fairly consistently found such a connection, with higher empathy associated with lower aggression; the evidence from studies of children has been more spotty. It seems likely that one reason for the somewhat inconsistent association between empathy and aggression is that it is often difficult to empathize with a potential target of

aggression—someone who by definition has frustrated or provoked you. Susan may find it difficult to feel sorry for Harry, and thus inhibit her verbal attack on him, when she is also angry at his thoughtless behavior. As a general rule, empathy is more likely to reduce aggressive responding when the provocation is not too extreme.

Cognitive Representations

A final way that empathy may influence relationships is a bit less obvious—by altering the way that we construct and store mental representations of other people. In particular, empathy can influence the degree to which our cognitive representations of self and other overlap or “merge.” Seeing the self and other as being connected rather than separate is something that frequently and naturally occurs in close relationships, and in collectivist cultures in which value is placed on the individual being integrated into larger social groups. Even in individualistic cultures, however, deliberately imagining the perspective of other people may increase the degree to which our mental representations of self and other overlap.

Such merging is associated with at least two important social outcomes. First, it leads to a diminished use of stereotypes when perceiving other people. That is, when our cognitive representations of self and other are more intertwined, we are less likely to see the other as simply possessing the stereotypical features of the social categories to which he or she belongs. Thus, if Harry empathizes with Susan and as a result represents her mentally in a way that resembles how he sees himself, then he is less likely to attribute characteristics to her that are stereotypical of her gender, age, or ethnicity. Second, self-other merging is also associated with greater liking for others and more positive treatment of them. For example, we are more likely to offer help to needy targets when we perceive a greater degree of self-other overlap with them.

In a sense, what happens in these cases is an expansion of the usual boundary that separates the self from others. Our “circle of moral regard” is increased, and as a result we come to value and care about the welfare of individuals who are ordinarily outside this circle. Although this process is probably more common when the other

person is not *too* dissimilar, it can occur even when the other is clearly a member of some identifiable outgroup.

Conclusion

Empathy has a generally positive effect on relationships, and this influence takes two broad forms. One is the beneficial impact that empathy has on the mundane details of everyday life. Unconscious and nearly constant mimicking of interaction partners produces an emotional synchrony that makes us feel closer and more attuned to those with whom we spend time. Dispositional empathic concern leads us to communicate more openly and to act in more considerate ways. The creation of overlapping cognitive structures corresponding to self and other produces greater feelings of similarity and liking. Thus, in a host of small and nearly invisible ways, empathy smoothes the rough edges of social intercourse and makes for more satisfying relationships.

But there is another way in which empathy makes its positive contribution to social life: It also operates during less routine, more dramatic moments—times of provocation, bad behavior, and betrayal by others. Perspective taking reduces the tendency to respond immediately and destructively to bad behavior by relationship partners, and thus helps avoid the escalatory cycles that often result from provocation. Perhaps even more important, feeling empathic concern for transgressors contributes strongly to a willingness to forgive, and with this, a readiness to forgo retaliation and embrace reconciliation. Empathy may therefore be said to have at least two important functions in social life—a *maintenance* function that operates all the time to keep relationships running smoothly, and *reparative* function that is apparent during times of relationship strain. Which of the two is more important is probably impossible to determine; a case might be made for either. What does seem clear is this: Because both are undeniably important to the long-term viability of relationships, empathy’s importance for the ongoing vitality of relationships is substantial.

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See also Cognitive Processes in Relationships; Emotional Contagion; Emotion in Relationships; Empathic Accuracy and Inaccuracy; Helping Behaviors in Relationships; Interpersonal Sensitivity; Perspective Taking

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EMPLOYMENT EFFECTS ON RELATIONSHIPS

A consideration of how employment affects relationships is broad because employment itself varies considerably (by hours, occupational prestige, physical location, and other conditions of the workplace including supervision, flexibility, and financial remuneration) and the effects of employment vary by the type of relationship under consideration (i.e., romantic, parental). Since the advent of industrialization and the consequent separation of domestic spaces and work spaces, work life and personal life have often been seen as separate spheres that did not affect each other. However, employment and personal life (including intimate partnerships such as marriage, romantic relationships, friendships, kin, and extended networks) affect each other in a variety of ways. This entry considers how the boundaries between

work and personal life are permeable and posits that they affect each other and how they vary according to gender, age (or life course), social class, and other aspects of context.

Boundaries Between Employment and Personal Life

Though workers have been socialized to “act as though” they had no other commitments, indeed work and personal life have always affected each other, if for no other reason than that paid work provides income for personal life, to be used by those in a worker’s household. Also, it has long been assumed that time in paid work represents time away from home. To work or not to work has been considered differentially problematic depending on gender: Men’s work has been seen as fulfilling a traditional relationship role of provider, whereas women’s work has been seen as competing for her time, attention, and commitment in fulfilling relationship roles such as care provider. Two frequently studied phenomena include relationship problems associated with men’s unemployment and problems posited as resulting from maternal employment (such as mother/infant attachment disorders). Joseph Pleck coined the term *asymmetrically permeable boundaries* to refer to how women are thought to bring their relationship concerns and statuses into the workplace (e.g., working mother), whereas men are thought to bring their work home (in actual work performed at home and in their financial rewards from work affecting the family’s social status).

How work affects relationships varies according to a person’s place in the life course and the relationships that are prominent in the person’s life at that time. A life course perspective applied to the work and family fields suggests that children and youth are affected by parental work. Youth can be affected by their own work in ways that may constrain their close relationships. Adults’ work can also shape their opportunities and time for relationships with family members.

The work and personal life field of study had its genesis in Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) at large corporations that were faced with employees coping with childcare concerns. But a growing number of men and women in the labor force

today are from the baby boomer generation and may be faced with issues concerning care of aging parents. These workers are also faced with a labor market in which traditional retirement pathways are disappearing, and the literature shows that couples tend to plan joint or sequential retirement transitions together and that spouses and partners strongly influence retirement decisions.

Gender, life course, and context interact in determining the connections between employment and personal life. Women are active in the paid labor force fewer years than are men (29 years and 39 years, respectively), and women experience more work interruptions to full-time work than men. For example, women average 11.5 years away from the labor force to men's average of 1.3 years out of the market. Women often work part-time in the labor force, severely reducing their access to benefits. Women also earn less than men in wages and salaries, leading to financial disadvantages throughout their lives. By the age 65, only one in four women have gained the right to their Social Security earnings because of the requirements related to continuous employment.

Personal relationships provide a context for women and men in decisions they make about paid work. For example, women who can afford it reduce their paid work to care for young children, though they typically do not remain outside of the labor force for more than a few years per child. Couple dynamics such as power and consensus on gender role dynamics affect decisions about paid work. Care for an ill or disabled parent or spouse has a dramatic effect on employment. Wives who care for their husbands are much more likely to retire than are noncaregivers.

Processes of Connection Between Employment and Personal Life

Rosabeth Moss Kanter was the first scholar to attempt to articulate how work employment may affect family life via five processes. *Absorption* is a process in which work absorbs a person's time and attention even when they are home. Absorbing occupations can make demands on relationship partners, can make workers unavailable to relationship partners or children, or can even prevent the formation of satisfying relationships.

Time and timing processes concern the total time individuals spend at work and the way work hours are configured. Mothers in middle-class households often configure their paid work schedule around children's care and schooling, in this way promoting a certain type of relationship with their children, and maintaining a social appearance of being "at home." Some scholars have moved the concept of time absorption into a couple level by constructing measures of the family workday, in which both relationship partners are unavailable for couple interaction or interaction with children. Analyses of large national data sets have revealed a "time divide," partly because of work hours: Increasingly, workers in the same household exhibit profiles in which both adults either converge in not having access to enough paid work hours (underemployment), or else they converge in working large numbers of hours, especially in salaried positions (resulting in situations with both relationship partners averaging more than 50 hours per week).

The third process, *rewards and resources*, includes financial rewards from work, as well as benefits (including health care and pension) and symbolic assets that accrue through employment. Such rewards and resources can be of assistance to relationship partners because human capital (educational and occupational attainment) builds assets for individuals and families.

The fourth process is termed *occupational subculture*. It concerns the extent to which belonging to an occupation carries with it a subculture that includes coworker or colleague norms and involves an occupational identity held by individuals, which then interacts with identities held toward the worker by relationship partners and multiple identities held by workers. Individuals are thought to be socialized into certain occupations, often through social interaction with significant others. These occupations are associated with particular skill levels, educational requirements, and financial rewards, all of which combine to construct the social class of the worker, which in turn have been connected to living conditions and interaction patterns in marriages and with children. Annette Lareau, following Mel Kohn's *Class and Conformity*, documented via ethnographic methods the processes parents used to interact with their children, preparing children to take their parents'

places in society. For example, middle-class parents negotiated and explained rules, coached their children to interact with professionals, and carefully guided their development, whereas working-class parents used more authoritarian strategies in which their children submitted to authority and spent time in unstructured ways.

The final process is termed *emotional spillover*, and it addresses how emotional experiences at work can be carried into the worker's after-work relationships. Emotional spillover can be divided into positive carryover, negative carryover, and energy deficit. Spillover between work and personal life, as well as between personal life and work, can be positive (facilitation) in some domains and negative in others (conflict). Stress at work has been associated with men's withdrawal from spousal interaction and is an example of negative carryover from work to personal life. Scholars have attended to the bidirectional connections between paid work and personal relationships, articulating a nuanced set of four potential patterns: work-to-family facilitation, family-to-work facilitation, work-to-family conflict, and family-to-work conflict. Finally, energy deficit refers to situations when work is a boring or monotonous experience, leading the worker to feel lazy and depleted, which in turn can result in not engaging others at home.

Relational Consequences of Employment Processes

Researchers have moved beyond an initial focus on status regarding employment and personal life (i.e., employed or unemployed, married or unmarried, partnered or single, parent or nonparent) toward specifying how work is configured for a family and how it is experienced. Ann Crouter wrote in 1994 about the tendency of scholars to focus on one particular side of the "work-family equation": that is, focusing on aspects of work such as work hours or shift (e.g., night shift or part time), workplace (e.g., telework, commuting, work travel), or focusing on aspects of family life (e.g., transition to parenthood in a particular ecological niche such as working class or youth transitioning to adulthood in view of their developing romantic relationships in the context of poverty). Crouter endorsed the concept and the difficulty of

attending to both sides of the work-family equation simultaneously.

Theoretical underpinning can provide students and researchers with fruitful ways of inquiring about how employment might affect personal life. Theory has traditionally considered commitment to work as taking away from commitment to personal relationships. Early role theory notions regarded multiple roles as threats to strong commitments and involvements in relationships. Stephen Marks challenged this conceptualization with the expansion hypothesis that human time, energy, and commitment are not necessarily limited. Building energy into personal relationships can create a synergistic effect that enhances job performance. How people feel and enact their work roles can have positive connections to their personal lives and relationships as well as negative. Coworkers, for example, can provide an excellent source of supportive relationships (e.g., camaraderie, friendship) that can benefit personal life. Likewise, work relations that are problematic or conflict ridden may create tensions that are carried into the home or into other personal relationships.

Future work concerning employment and personal life will benefit from the gender, life course, and contextual perspectives. The gender perspective forces us to question assumptions underlying roles in families and at work related to men and women. A life course perspective compels us to consider historical and social trends and policies, particularly in birth rates, childbearing, and aging. A recognition of context guides us to consider the complexity of work experiences and personal and family life, including the problem of bidirectionality, such that employment and personal relationships provide contexts for each other. Individuals face decisions and challenges around securing rewarding work and meaningful relationships. Although some situations can be modified through active construction of solutions and partnerships (e.g., sharing family work and responsibilities), other situations are structurally embedded and cannot be easily changed, if at all (i.e., gender, age, social class). The demands of work often require workers' time, energy, and commitment, but at the same time, workers' personal relationships may make similar demands. Flexibility at work and in personal relationships in the face of potential conflicts is useful, but not available to

everyone at every point in their lives. Because individuals and work organizations may be highly invested in maintaining and enhancing satisfaction in employment and relationships, increased scholarship and growth in programs to improve work-life balance are likely.

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See also Job Stress, Relationship Effects; Work-Family Conflict; Work-Family Spillover

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EMPTY NEST, EFFECTS ON MARRIAGE

The empty nest occurs when the last child leaves home and parents no longer have coresident children. The transition often is not permanent. About 40 percent of young adults return to live with their parents. Most often, these returns are short-lived, for 1 or 2 years. Parents' housing and financial support helps children negotiate the transition to adulthood as they launch careers, change jobs, or acquire more training. For many couples, the nest-leaving stage entails a process during which children leave, return, and leave home again. This entry describes how transitions into and out of the empty nest affect marital interaction and happiness.

Research on the "U-shaped curve" of marital satisfaction has suggested a linkage between the empty nest and marriage. The key notion in this research is that raising children is stressful and thus detrimental to marital happiness. Researchers assume that certain stages of childhood are more stressful for parents than are others, especially adolescence. Thus, marital satisfaction is expected to decline with the birth of children and to reach its lowest level when couples are parenting teenagers. In numerous cross-sectional studies, declining happiness in the early years of marriage has been attributed to the demands of parenting minor

children. Increases in happiness later in marriage (the upturn in the “U”) are linked to lessening parental responsibilities as children leave home. Longitudinal studies also suggest that the empty nest leads to increases in marital happiness, perceived marital equity (the balance between what each spouse gives to and receives from the marriage), and in women’s well-being. Data from a long-term study of married couples showed that, after the initial sharp decline from the newlywed stage, marital happiness declined slowly until 40 years of marriage, then declined steeply again. The presence of children in the household had negative effects on marital happiness across the life cycle. Children’s home-leaving and the empty-nest transition slowed the general decline over time in marital happiness.

The empty nest may alter the risk of divorce. This effect depends on marital duration. National survey data in the United States suggest that the risk of divorce increases after the transition to empty nest, but only for couples who reached this phase before 20 years of marriage. The effect of the last child’s departure on the risk of divorce is negative for couples married more than 30 years. Thus, the impact of nest-emptying on marital stability may depend on earlier family events, including the timing of the birth of the first child and the spacing of subsequent children. These events will influence whether the empty nest occurs earlier or later in the marriage.

Coreidence With Adult Children

Most of what is known about the impact of children on marriage concerns the influence of parenting young children, which has detrimental effects on marriage. Research has shown that the effects of the empty-nest on marriage are strongest when the last child to leave is relatively young (age 18 or 19) and the transition marks an end to the active parenting of minor children. Less is known about the consequences for married couples of coresiding with their grown children.

The likelihood of parents having a coresiding adult son or daughter is high. U.S. Census data show that about half of men and women aged 18 to 24 years live in the home of one or both parents. Sharing a home with adult children may be

harmful to marriage. Privacy may suffer. Research shows that coresidence exerts a negative effect on marital intimacy and sexual activity. The issue of “Whose home is it?” may loom large. Do parents have the right to make rules for their adult children, impose a curfew, monitor children’s whereabouts, or forbid a dating partner to sleep over? Parents and adult children may dispute the children’s financial contributions to the household and their responsibility for housework. Nonetheless, recent longitudinal research suggests that satisfaction or dissatisfaction with coresidence may actually have few implications for marriage. Russell Ward and Glenna Spitze examined the degree to which the burdens of parenting affected married couples as adult children moved into and out of the parental home. Although children’s home-leaving led to more time together for married couples, the presence of adult children was unrelated to marital happiness and the frequency of marital disagreements. The long duration of the marriages in this study may have protected spouses from the potentially negative effects of continued or resumed residence with adult children.

Parental perceptions of how well adult sons and daughters are doing in life may be more important to parents’ well-being than living arrangements are. Regardless of where their adult children live, parents feel better about themselves when they perceive their offspring as doing well in life, both in terms of achievements and social-emotional well-being. Adult children’s problems (e.g., with finances, illness, career, or marriage) have been linked to poorer well-being for parents and increased strain in family relationships. Having difficult relationships with adult children may itself lower parents’ marital quality. Parents’ satisfaction with having coresident adult children tends to be higher when they perceive their sons and daughters are making progress toward self-sufficiency. Parents grow unhappy with the coresident living arrangement when adult children appear to be floundering in their education, career, or relationships.

Gaps in Research

Many questions concerning the empty nest and marriage remain unanswered. Long-term studies

are needed to disentangle empty-nest effects from changes related to marital duration. The removal because of divorce of poorer quality marriages from the population of couples may account for the differences in marital happiness observed when comparing empty-nest couples (representing surviving, long-term marriages) with marriages with shorter durations. Little is known about the effects of the empty-nest transition in stepfamilies and blended families, or in extended family living arrangements where married couples coreside with relatives or nonrelatives. Almost nothing is known about racial and ethnic variation in response to the empty nest. A growing variant of the "refilled nest" is having coresident grandchildren. The number of grandparents raising grandchildren has increased dramatically since the 1990s. According to U.S. Census data, 5.6 million children lived with a grandparent in 2002, including 10 percent of children under 6 years old. The few studies in this area suggest that taking responsibility for rearing grandchildren may have substantial negative effects on the marriages of elderly and midlife parents.

William S. Aquilino

See also Couples in Later Life; Couples in Middle Age; Family Relationships in Late Adulthood; Family Relationships in Middle Adulthood; Family Relationships in Young Adulthood

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END OF LIFE, RELATIONSHIP ISSUES DURING

At the *end of life*, everything drops away except that which is most important: for most people, it is the relationships that have made up their lives. As death approaches, relationship issues that have developed throughout people's lifetimes may be magnified and examined more closely for reflection and consideration. What is important relationally at the end of life can often be identified by the messages conveyed during final conversations. The five primary themes that emerge in final conversations are love, identity, religion/spirituality, everyday activities, and difficult relationship issues. The purpose of this entry is to describe these five message types as they reflect what occurs in conversations at the end of life.

One thing to consider as these messages are reviewed is the encouraging and empowering nature of the conversations that occur while people face the reality of death and loss of someone with whom they are close. These interactions often arise in the midst of strong and frequently negative emotions that accompany death such as grief, fear, sadness, and anger. Impending death brings with it cognitive reactions that include a loss of control, denial, uncertainty, and even avoidance.

At the end of life, relationships also have to coexist with three pervasive challenges: The first challenge is the chronic physical pain that frequently accompanies death. To manage the pain, the dying often must take powerful medications that can leave them in psychologically altered states (i.e., hallucinations, mental confusion, or sleeping for longer periods). The second challenge is the chronic stress that is commonly experienced by both individuals in the close relationship. It is difficult to behave normally in the midst of constant worry and strain. The third challenge is the cultural expectations that have made death unnatural, morbid, and a taboo topic.

In addition to the challenges that surround relationships at the end of life, awareness that death is near also gives people in relationships many valuable and irreplaceable opportunities. An impending death gives people permission to say no to less important, although seemingly more demanding, parts of their lives. People (both those who are

dying and their loved ones) tend to slow down their active lives and, for a brief time, focus intently on their relationships. Whereas unexpected sudden death limits many of the choices and opportunities for the resolution of issues in close relationships, foreknowledge of impending death gives the gift of time to communicate in ways that may have a profound impact on the relationship as well as on the individuals. Final conversations provide opportunities to create new memories, cherish old ones, and find closure where needed.

Final Conversations Themes

Love expressed in conversations at the end of life emphasizes the importance of connecting and expressing affection in relationships. The clarity accompanying impending death reveals the importance of relationships and love for many people. The need for experiencing and expressing love is a constant throughout life and is magnified at the end of life. Love is communicated through verbal messages and nonverbal actions.

Identity is a conversational theme that highlights the importance of relationships for discovering and confirming information about the self. Only those individuals who are a part of the dying one's inner circle are typically allowed time to talk and visit with him or her. Thus, at the end of life, each party to the relationship is considered an important mirror for the other in that they have a final opportunity and often the genuine motivation to reflect the most honest likeness of who they really are or who they could become. Communication at the end of life can serve as a reminder of the impact relational partners' have on each other's self-concept and self-esteem.

The appearance of *spirituality/religious* messages at the end of life is consistent with research that suggests that, when people are confronted with death, they often search for meaning by exploring religious and spiritual belief systems. When medical science can no longer provide any answers or hope, spiritual/religious messages frequently offer the only consolation available in the face of impending death. Thus, talking about issues pertaining to faith at the end of life can ease the suffering for both the dying and the living.

Everyday talk at the end of life encompasses ordinary and mundane conversations and routine

actions. Relationships are typically made up of the routine and ordinary, rather than constant turning points or momentous events, so why should communication at the end of life be any different? It is far too difficult for both the dying and the living to have deep conversations all of the time. Everyday talk gives people at the end of life moments of normalcy within their relationship and allows people to continue their relationship with one another until the moment of death.

The theme of *difficult relationship issues* brought up in end of life conversations focuses primarily on people "cleaning up" their relationships so that they are not left with, or do not leave with, regrets. If there had been a difficult relationship before the terminal diagnosis, relational partners may have a strong desire to search for healing and reconciliation. Letting go of anger and recognizing that people are flawed are often necessary to healing at the end of life. Interestingly, loved ones frequently seek ways to reconcile without threatening the face of the person who is dying.

These five messages reflect the importance that relationships take on for people at the end of life. The memorable talk is not about things but, rather, about the people and the relationships in their lives. The finality of endings, such as the one that comes with death, is often a catalyst for people to reflect, reframe, and reprioritize their lives. The Socio-emotional Selectivity Theory suggests that endings, such as that of an impending death, gives people permission to choose and prioritize events in their lives in such a way as to intensify their emotional commitment, to strengthen their relational ties, and to create an urgency regarding the most important things in life—their close relationships. For instance, at the end of life, individuals have the ability to affect their relationship with one another in potentially profound ways: through sharing important moments; by becoming more open, honest, and revealing to one another; by acknowledging their thoughts, fears, and concerns about death; and by talking about how to go on living after the death. Relationships can be made stronger because people finally deal with things that have been difficult or impossible to cope with in the past. Individuals can resolve differences, as well as ask for or offer forgiveness to one another.

Ultimately, taking care of relationship concerns, as well as contemplating and embracing their

relationship at the end of life, helps emotionally prepare all of the relational partners for the impending loss and allows people to let go of one another in ways that may be easier than originally thought possible. Death is usually still followed by grief and relational loss, but the loss is somehow more endurable and regret is often reduced when care and attention are given to relationships at the end of life. Finally, through the awareness that death and the end of their relationship is near, people have an opportunity to say a meaningful and heartfelt goodbye. Closure and completion of a life and its relationships is a communicative accomplishment.

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See also Communication, Nonverbal; Communication Processes, Verbal; Facework; Families Coping With Cancer; Family Life Cycle; Family Relationships in Late Adulthood; Fear of Death, Relational Implications; Forgiveness; Life-Span Development and Relationships; Loss

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contrast, enemyship does not figure prominently in the experience of people whose lives tend to inform scientific imagination; as a result, relationship researchers have devoted little attention to the topic. Against this background, the most important contribution of research on enemyship may be what it reveals about the broader cultural grounding of relationship in general. This entry describes the broader contextual forces that underlie (a) the prominent experience of enemyship in diverse West African worlds, (b) the sense of freedom from enemyship in diverse North American worlds, and (c) the relative absence of enemyship as a topic in relationship science.

Prominence of Enemyship in West African Worlds

To understand the concept of *enemy*, it is useful to begin with the prominence of enemyship in many West African worlds. To say that enemyship is prominent in these worlds does not mean that overt acts or explicit declarations of malice are necessarily common or severe. Instead, enemyship is prominent as a collective representation that people appropriate when relevant—for example, an urban migrant wondering about resentment of rural relatives because of perceived insufficiency of remittances, a student worried about sabotage (by classmate competitors or envious relatives) in preparation for an examination or contest, a prosperous farmer or business owner concerned about malicious envy of neighbors, or people suffering from illness or misfortune—to make sense of everyday events. As such, enemyship is evident in cultural products (e.g., stickers that proclaim “let my enemy live long and see what I will be in the future”) and cultural practices such as *sorcery*, a set of techniques for sending harm to enemies or defending oneself against such harm; *divination*, a technique for analysis of misfortune that frequently produces accusations of interpersonal sabotage; and *infant seclusion*, a practice whereby mother and child remain indoors for several days after birth to protect against malicious envy.

Besides observable representations, the prominent concern with personal enemies also extends to private experience. Across diverse West African worlds (but especially rural areas and other spaces

ENEMIES

Enemyship refers to a *personal* relationship of hatred and malice in which one person desires another person's downfall and tries to sabotage the person's progress. This definition emerges from field research in various West African worlds, where enemyship is a prominent concept that informs experience of intimate relationship. In

that promote embeddedness in dense, overlapping networks of relationship), the majority of people—sometimes as high as 90 percent—report that they are the targets of personal enemies. A typical response goes something like this: “I don’t know my enemies, but I know that I have them. One day something will happen to me, and then I will know that this person has been after me all along.” Although most people in most circumstances do not suffer undue anxiety from the possibility of enemyship, they may become acutely concerned about potential malice from hidden enemies in certain situations. Likewise, although people may not identify a specific person who bears malice toward them (and typically deny that they bear malice toward anyone else), they have in mind certain interpersonal locations—including such intimate relationships as friends and relatives—from whom they anticipate malicious harm. In general, responses suggest that the prominent concern with personal enemies in West African worlds is a collective representation. People base their expectations of malice not on personal experience of an enemy relationship but on default assumptions about the relative “stickiness” of relationship in worlds that promote a sense of inherent connection, interdependence, and embeddedness in context.

Freedom From Enemyship in North American Worlds

The implicit contrast is with the relative absence of enemyship from experience of people in North American worlds and other spaces of globalized affluence. Across diverse North American settings (but especially urban areas, university campuses, and other spaces that promote mobility across non-overlapping networks of relationship), the majority of people—again, sometimes as high as 90 percent—*deny* that they are the targets of personal enemies. Although they recognize potential for enemyship in special situations (e.g., competitors in business, politicians in an election, litigants in a court case), the default assumption in these settings is that normal people in normal circumstances do *not* have enemies—especially not from intimate spaces like friends or relatives. A typical response goes something like this: “I don’t think I have enemies. I haven’t done anything to make

people hate me. There may be dislikes and conflicts, but I choose to ignore them. Why create that kind of situation? It takes too much work.” As this response suggests, many people report cases of interpersonal dislike that might otherwise qualify as relationships of malice, but they base their denial of enemyship on default assumptions about the relatively frictionless nature of relationship in worlds that promote a sense of inherent insulation, independence, or abstraction from context.

Even in the relatively infrequent cases in which people in North American settings *do* claim enemies, their responses diverge from claims about enemyship in West African settings in ways that reveal broader constructions of relationship. First, people in North American settings are more likely than are people in West African settings to refer to intergroup rather than interpersonal enemies, a pattern that suggests a propensity to experience belongingness in collective rather than relational forms. Second, people in North American settings who do claim personal enemies are more likely than are people in West African settings to claim a mutual relationship of hatred, thereby implying that they somehow *choose* to participate in this relationship. Third, research suggests that people in North American settings who discover that they are the target of enemyship often express surprise and dismay that they have somehow provoked hatred, but eventually interpret this hatred in terms of the enemy’s abnormality and pathological obsession.

In general, responses such as these suggest that the sense of freedom from enemies in North American worlds is not a natural or default state; instead, it reflects particular constructions of reality—specifically, a “free market” of relationship in which people are at liberty (but also compelled) to create their own connections. The frictionless quality of relationships in these settings not only provides few opportunities for interpersonal conflict, but also provides ample opportunities to avoid relationships in which conflict does develop.

Absence of Enemyship as a Topic in Relationship Science

Reflecting the cultural worlds that disproportionately inform scientific imagination, enemyship is

nearly absent as a research topic in relationship science. A PsycINFO search in April 2008 using the root *enem**, returned 5,085 items, compared with 57,880 items for the root *friend**. (Similarly, searches of *hate* or *hatred* compared with *love* returned 7,521 and 39,612 items, respectively.) Of these items, many described behavior of non-human animals (e.g., the concept of *dear enemy*, which refers to a territorial animal's ability to discriminate between distant strangers and familiar neighbors). Another large set of items referred to ethnic prejudice and other forms of intergroup hatred (e.g., war, terrorism, hate crimes, and genocide). In the end, only 51 items remained in a search limited to entries for *enem** that matched the descriptor field *interpersonal relationships*. (Similar limitations on searches of *friend**, *love*, and *hate* or *hatred* retained 1,133, 1,010, and 86 items respectively.)

Moreover, the cultural grounding of relationship is evident in features of research that do consider personal enemyship, as well as in the relative absence of research about personal enemyship. A common form in which the topic of enemyship appears is in the context of research on *paranoid cognition*: the irrational or exaggerated perception—often associated with delusions of grandeur—that one is the target of others' harassment, harm, or malicious scrutiny. The cultural grounding of relationship is evident in this formulation to the extent that the paranoid label constructs the experience of enemyship as a delusional deviation from default reality in which normal people in normal circumstances do not have enemies.

Similarly, the broader cultural grounding of relationship is evident in studies focused on the need for enemies. Why do people need enemies? Research suggests that interpersonal enemies serve as both (a) a stimulus to individuation by helping people define their physical and psychological boundaries and (b) a self-protective tool in times of threat by contributing to the maintenance and regulation of a favorable self-image or superiority. However, the broader cultural grounding of relationship is as much evident in the question of why people need enemies as it is in particular answers to the question. Specifically, the question itself implies a “free-market” construction of relationship as voluntary association in which development and maintenance of enemyship are the products of personal choice.

From this perspective, the idea of a “need for enemies” provides a motivation for the otherwise puzzling choice to create and maintain an otherwise destructive relationship. This set of assumptions starkly contrasts with responses of people in West African worlds, who experience personal enemyship as the default product of embedded interdependence rather than a need or choice.

Another set of studies about personal enemies that reveal the broader cultural grounding of relationship concerns *mutual antipathy*: relationships of reciprocated, strong dislike among interaction partners. Again, the notion of *mutual* antipathy resonates with a construction of relationship as voluntary association to the extent that it implies some degree of willful participation in the relationship (rather than being the unwilling target of another person's hatred). Research on mutual antipathy is most prominent in the context of peer relations, which typically links these tendencies to negative developmental outcomes and externalizing behaviors such as aggression.

A particular interest of research has been the relationship between mutual antipathy and overt forms of aggression, such as physical violence and bullying, that popular understandings depict as typically male expressions of enemyship. However, researchers have recently shown increased interest in the topic of *relational aggression*: more subtle acts of violence, such as spreading rumors or gossip and ignoring or excluding others from peer groups, that popular understandings depict as typically female expressions of enemyship. For present purposes, there are two noteworthy features of relational aggression.

The first point concerns the extent to which the concept of relational aggression resonates with West African conceptions of enemyship. When people in West African settings talk about the harm that enemies do, they typically mention the sort of gossip and exclusion behaviors that researchers have identified as relational aggression. Together with the association of relational aggression with women and girls (at least in North American settings), this confluence suggests the extent to which relational aggression is a gendered and culturally grounded phenomenon rooted in interpersonal connection and interdependence.

The second point concerns the status of enemyship as a relational phenomenon. A “free-market”

construction of relationship as a product of voluntary choice promotes an asymmetry in experience of positive and negative relationship; that is, people feel free to create and maintain rewarding relationships and to avoid unrewarding relationships. In turn, this asymmetry promotes both an understanding of relational connection as prosocial behavior and, by extension, an understanding of antisocial behavior as something antithetical to relationship. One manifestation of this understanding is the tendency to conceive of conflict as part of a dissolution stage of relationship—a signal that connection and relationship are giving way to autonomy and individuation—rather than something inherently relational in its own right.

In contrast, research on relational aggression—and the topic of enemies in West Africa—highlights the extent to which enemyship is a relational phenomenon. Many West African languages have sayings—such as “Hatred comes from the house” or “An insect that bites you comes from inside your cloth[es]”—that explicitly recognize the association of enemies with close or intimate relationship. From this perspective, enemies are typically not strangers, acquaintances, or other people whom one barely knows. Instead, enemies are often people who inhabit intimate spaces of close relationship. In short, enemyship is not the antithesis of relationship but, instead, is itself the product of intimate connection.

Glenn Adams and Tuğçe Kurtiş

See also Culture and Relationships; Dark Side of Relationships; Hostility; Relational Aggression

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ENGAGEMENT AS A RELATIONSHIP STAGE

This entry discusses the history, contents, and functions of engagement as a premarital phenomenon. Engagement means that the basic courtship is over, and the couple plans to marry at some future time. Engagement indicates that a private love relationship has become public. As a formal period between courtship and marriage, the term *engagement* is not used worldwide. However, there are preparations for marriage in all societies, such as the paying of bridewealth or dowry. And although formal engagement is primarily Western European, it is found in a variety of cultures. As an example, among the Hopi Indians of the southwestern United States, the family of a potential bride prepares food and takes it to the family of the potential groom. If the food is accepted and the marriage approved, his family reciprocates with food for her family, and the couple is engaged.

History

In Europe, the announcement of the intention to marry can be traced to Pope Innocent III's 1215 decree: “Marriages are to be . . . announced publicly in the churches by the priests during a suitable and fixed time, so that if legitimate impediments exist, they may be made known.” In some places, this was called “the reading of the banns” and was one way of preparing for and

legalizing marriage. Innocent's decree is the best-known and most historically visible basis for formal engagement. The state of being formally engaged is "betrothal." In the United States, the average length of an engagement is 16 months.

The engagement ring can be traced as far back as the 15th century among high-status couples. It is worn on the woman's fourth finger of the left hand in English-speaking countries, with that finger considered to contain the *vena amoris*, or the "vein of love." In Continental Europe, the ring is worn on the right hand. In the United States, some 75 percent of brides-to-be receive an engagement ring. Though much less frequent, during the 20th century in Canada and the United States, engagement rings also began being given by the woman to the man. Some formal engagements include an engagement party, hosted by the bride-to-be's family. It usually takes place from 6 months to a year before the wedding.

In the United States, one-third of engaged couples hire a wedding consultant—though this is more likely in upper-income families. Recent U.S. statistics show that during the engagement period, couples and their families spend some \$4 billion on furniture, \$3 billion on housewares, and \$400 million on tableware in preparation for the marriage and setting up the household.

The sexual revolution and an increase in middle-class cohabitation during the second half of the 20th century had a substantial effect on the practice of formal engagement. Though Alfred Kinsey's samples were hardly representative, his 1950 report showed that half of premarital sex was considered "engagement sex" among women—that is, it was almost exclusively with one's fiancé, and often took place just before the wedding. But by the early 21st century, sexual activity and formal engagement have become separated factors in relationships. Also, cohabitation has caused a reduction in the frequency of formal engagement because the transition may simply be from cohabitation into marriage.

Engagement Characteristics

What takes place during engagement depends on the type of engagement. In a short, romantic engagement, the couple prepares for marriage,

and often engages in intense physical contact. The engagement may involve a social event or party and the purchase of items for the marriage—as noted previously.

A long, separated engagement may occur when one partner is away in college, or working, or in the military. There are two distinct and seemingly contradictory aphorisms regarding the effect of separation: "absence makes the heart grow fonder" and "out of sight, out of mind." However, under conditions of separation, a couple may drift apart, or may at least question whether exclusivity is either desirable or possible. The marital equivalent of the separated engagement is the commuter marriage, where couple members live in separate communities for some period.

Third is the inconclusive engagement. Here, the couple postpones marriage because of economic considerations, deference to parental demands, or indecisiveness and uncertainty. According to the *Guinness World Records*, the longest recorded engagement was between Octavio Guillen and Adriana Martinez of Mexico, who took 67 years to make sure they were "right for each other." Most engagements are at least 65 years shorter. Many lengthy engagements simply do not survive until marriage, though there are no data showing that they are less likely to survive than are short engagements.

About a quarter of engaged couples break up temporarily, and some break up permanently. The causes of breakups may be simple loss of interest, recognition of an incompatible relationship, or the desire to change or "reform" the prospective mate. A fourth reason for breakup is that the parents of one or both engaged persons actively intervene to forestall the marriage or break up the engaged couple. A result of premarital sexual activity may be that the engaged couple loses sexual interest in each other during engagement.

Functions of Engagement

In some societies, the exchange of gifts between kin groups signals the intention of a couple to marry and obligates the families to each other. In the Western World, formal engagement gives the families of the couple the opportunity to become acquainted.

Even today, engagement usually sends a “hands-off” message to others. It also gives the opportunity to strengthen their couple identity and to become acquainted with future in-laws. Though not required, a premarital medical exam, especially one involving genetic testing, can provide information about potential health problems. Knowing about health conditions may even presage the eventual necessity for one party to care for the other—as in the case of diabetes. The medical exam may also prepare a couple for both pregnancy prevention and for pregnancy. Each partner is given the opportunity to talk over questions about the coming marriage with the physician.

Engagement frequently includes premarital counseling, religious or not. This is especially useful when the partners are of different religious, ethnic, or racial backgrounds. Such differences may seem inconsequential during courtship, but may be found to matter when marriage and parenting are considered with a counselor. Counseling may help illuminate the “blindness” that comes from being in love. Various instruments are available for assessing a couple’s relationship compatibility, such as the “Prepare” program by David Olsen from the University of Minnesota. Finally, even if a couple has been living together, engagement signals to families and friends the intent to legalize their life together.

Though formal engagement is less prevalent and functional than it was in Western societies 50 years ago, it is still a prelude to many marriages.

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See also Courtship, Models and Processes of; Courtship and Dating, Cross-Cultural Differences in; Honeymoon; Initiation of Relationships; Intimacy; Marital Stability, Prediction of; Marriage, Transition to; Newlyweds; Romanticism

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ENVY

Envy is a negative, unpleasant, and often-painful emotion that is elicited by comparison with another person or group that has something that one either desires or wishes that the others lacked. This might include an attribute, a possession, a social position, an achievement, luck, or quality of being. The experience of envy consists of a blend of (a) sadness or distress over one’s shortcomings or one’s inferiority to the envied person, (b) admiration for the envied person, (c) longing for what the envied person has, (d) anger and displeasure over the envied person’s superiority, and (e) resentment of the inequitable situation. Compared with more basic emotions (e.g., fear, anger, joy, sadness, surprise, and disgust), envy can be considered to be a more complex emotion involving a high degree of cognitive appraisal or cognitive elaboration. Like other cognitive emotions (such as disappointment, guilt, or regret), envy is associated with areas of the neocortex—the part of the brain that supports the majority of our most complex cognitive abilities. As such, envy is more influenced by conscious thoughts than basic emotions are. This entry first addresses the relation of envy with jealousy, then describes the most important source of the envy, that is, comparisons with others and addresses the hostile nature of envy. The entry concludes with discussion of the possible functions of envy.

The emotion of envy is often confused with that of jealousy. One important reason for this is the semantic overlap in the common language use of the term jealousy. Whereas *envy* will almost always have a single meaning (i.e., an unfavorable comparison with another person), *jealousy* is commonly used to mean both jealousy (i.e., a threat of losing someone to a rival) and envy (e.g., “I’m jealous of his house”). An additional reason for the confusion is the tendency for both emotions to co-occur. For example, a rival can be threatening and

evoke jealousy precisely because he or she has enviable qualities. Despite the semantic overlap in the use of the term *jealousy* and the frequent co-occurrence of the two emotions, envy and jealousy are quite different emotions. They are elicited by distinct appraisals and produce distinctive emotional experiences. Envy typically involves two people and occurs when one lacks something enjoyed by another. In contrast, jealousy typically involves three people and occurs when one is threatened by a (feared or actual) loss of an important relationship to another. Furthermore, unlike envy, the experience of jealousy involves fear of loss, anxiety, suspiciousness, and anger about betrayal.

Envy tends to arise because the advantages enjoyed by others have important consequences for how people feel about themselves. Being confronted with another person's relative superiority reflects badly on the self and usually results in envy and the accompanying painful blend of feelings of inferiority, hostility, and resentment. Thus, unfavorable social comparisons are at the heart of envy. Social comparisons that involve someone who is psychologically close (e.g., someone who is similar in background, age, and social class, or shares similar interests, aspirations, values, work, and status) are both more likely and have more impact than do social comparisons with others who are less close. As such, social comparisons with proximate others are more likely to elicit envy. In addition to the impact of psychological closeness, the emotion of envy is also affected by the self-relevance (i.e., personal importance) of the comparative issue. For social comparisons such as these, the threat to people's self-esteem is especially strong and results in an intensified experience of envy. Thus, people envy others who are emotionally significant to them and are perceived to have outperformed them on issues that are important to their self-worth.

Throughout history, envy has been regarded as a moral wrong and a feeling to be avoided. For example, Christianity regards envy as one of the seven deadly sins, and Buddhism characterizes it as one of the six types of poison. The seemingly negative nature of envy is apparent under several conditions. For example, when people experience envy, their relative outcomes seem to be more important than absolute ones. Envious people seem willing to deprive others of what they have

or to destroy a desired advantage if they themselves cannot have it. In doing so, this might even involve sacrificing some of their own strengths, advantages, or resources. The hostile nature of envy also sets the stage for the experience of *schadenfreude* (pleasure derived from another's misfortune). A misfortune befalling an envied other can be pleasing because it removes the basis of envy. It transforms an invidious social comparison into a more favorable one, providing a relative advantage in comparison with the envied other. Thus, envy can be regarded as a hostile emotion that often prompts aggressive behaviors and establishes an antagonistic relationship to the more fortunate other. For these reasons, envy can be harmful and destructive to social relations.

Higher cognitive emotions such as envy seem to have been designed by natural selection to help our ancestors cope with an increasingly complex social environment. Envy may be viewed as an important marker or signal for those social comparisons that reflect poorly on the self in ways that are personally important. Less extreme experiences of envy may be valuable in motivating individuals to identify or search for opportunities for self-improvement (e.g., the development of competence and the acquisition of skills). Furthermore, envy emphasizes certain egalitarian principles in human relations and may promote an individual's self-assertion. Envy may also motivate people to derogate others whose favorable status is unjustified, thereby preserving equal relations. In this sense, envy may help solve problems related to group governance, problems that arise in several important contexts, including the allocation of resources and distribution of work.

Wilco W. van Dijk

See also Hostility; Jealousy; Self-Esteem, Effects on Relationships; Self-Evaluation Maintenance Model; Social Comparison, Effects on Relationships

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EQUITY THEORY

In the 11th century, St. Anselm of Canterbury argued that the will possesses two competing inclinations: an affection for what is to a person's own advantage *and* an affection for justice; the first inclination is stronger, but the second matters too. Equity Theory, too, posits that in personal relationships, two concerns stand out: first, how rewarding are people's societal, family, and work relationships? Second, how fair, just, and equitable are those relationships? According to Equity Theory (as postulated by Elaine Hatfield, G. William Walster, and Ellen Berscheid), people define a relationship as equitable when "the rewards they reap from a relationship are commensurate with their contributions to that relationship." (In contrasting profit vs. equity, profit [i.e., rewards minus costs] is generally found to be a more important determinant of satisfaction than is equity.) According to the theory, couples feel most comfortable when their relationships are maximally profitable and they are getting exactly what they deserve from their relationships—no more and certainly no less. In this entry, we will discuss the logic behind Equity Theory, discuss techniques for assessing how equitable a relationship is, and discuss the consequences of fairness (or unfairness) in dating, newlywed, and long-term marital relationships.

During the past 25 years or so, social psychologists have become interested in the cognitive and emotional underpinnings of humanity's concern with social justice, fairness, and equity. Evolutionary theorists, for example, argue that for at least several million years, our ancestors engaged in complex social exchange. Thus, theorists contend, a concern with both reward and fairness is ancient and universal—"wired in" as part of the architecture of the human mind. Currently, most cross-cultural investigators, neuroscientists, primatologists, ethologists, and evolutionary psychologists generally agree that although social

definitions of equity may vary, a concern with profit, fairness, and equity may, indeed, be common in the animal kingdom.

Equity Theory (as articulated by Hatfield and her colleagues) consists of four propositions:

Proposition I: Men and women are "wired up" to try to maximize pleasure and minimize pain. (No surprise, then, that people are concerned with the rewards and punishments they receive in their close relationships.)

Proposition II: Society, however, has a vested interest in persuading people to behave fairly and equitably. Groups will generally reward members who treat others equitably and punish those who treat others inequitably.

Proposition III: Given societal pressures, people are most comfortable when they perceive that they are getting roughly what they deserve from life and love. If people feel overbenefited, they may experience pity, guilt, and shame; if underbenefited, they may experience anger, sadness, and resentment.

Proposition IV: People in inequitable relationships will attempt to reduce their distress via a variety of techniques—by restoring psychological equity (convincing themselves that an inequitable relationship is indeed fair), by restoring actual equity, or by abandoning the relationship.

A wife who feels guilty about "cheating" on her husband may, for example, restore *psychological equity* by convincing herself that her husband has probably been cheating on her for years; her wayward behavior is simply a case of "tit for tat." A woman who feels guilty about the fact that convention dictates that her poverty-stricken date ought to pay for dinner, concerts, and transportation may attempt to set things right by inviting him to dinner or pretending someone has given her free tickets to a play—thus restoring *actual equity*. Finally, a husband who feels with his wife it's all give (on his part) and all take (on hers) may elect to leave the marriage.

Historically, different cultures and societies have possessed different visions about what constitutes social justice, fairness, and equity. Participants may not always agree about the equity of their relationships; outsider observers might have yet another view about who is getting more from a

given relationship. In defining *equity*, people may focus on a wide variety of decision rules and inputs and outcomes. Some dominant views: “All men are created equal” (equality). “The more people invest in a project, the more profit they deserve to reap” (capitalism). “To each according to his need” (Communism). “Winner take all” (dog-eat-dog capitalism). “It’s a man’s world” (traditional hierarchy). Nonetheless—whatever the cultural rules—in all cultures, social justice, fairness, and equity are deemed important.

Social psychologists have developed a variety of measures to assess how fair and equitable people perceive a given relationship to be. In practice, however, people’s perceptions are often assessed by asking, “Considering what you put into your dating relationship or marriage (compared with what you get out of it) and what your partner puts in (compared with what he or she gets out of it), how does your dating relationship or marriage ‘stack up’?” On the basis of their answers, persons are classified as perceiving themselves as overbenefited (receiving more than they deserve), equitably treated (receiving exactly what they deserve), or underbenefited (receiving less than they deserve) from their close relationships. Other measures of equity exist. In one detailed measure, Hatfield and her colleagues asked men and women who were dating, living together, and married to indicate how fair and equitable they considered their relationships to be via a 22-item scale: The areas of interest included such *personal qualities* as appearance, intelligence, and social grace; *emotional concerns*, such as physical affection and understanding and concern; and *day-to-day concerns*, such as contributing to household expenses and helping around the house.

Some researchers, such as Susan Sprecher, have developed “Exchange Orientation” scales, designed to assess the concern of individuals with justice, fairness, and equity. She argues that some people are especially concerned about giving their partners all that they deserve, whereas others are primarily concerned with “Am I getting my fair share?”

Regardless of societal definitions or one’s own concern with equity, consideration of equity has been found to be important in a wide variety of cultures and relationships—social relationships, romantic and family relationships, friendships, helping relationships, and work relationships.

Equity in Love Relationships

Scholars have discovered that how concerned couples are with reward and equity depends on relationship stage. When couples are first dating, they participate in a kind of “dating and marriage marketplace,” in which considerations of reward, fairness, and equity loom large. Once men and women are deeply committed, however, they become less concerned about day-to-day reward and equity. Should a relationship deteriorate, however, couples—knowing (perhaps) that they will soon be back on the market—may begin to worry about “What’s in it for me?” and ask, “Do I deserve better?”

In the Beginning

In fairy tales, Prince Charming often falls in love with the scullery maid. In real life, however, people generally search for “suitable” partners. Considerable evidence indicates that when people are attempting to decide whether or not to date or mate, potential reward and equity matter. Specifically, researchers find the following: (1) The more socially desirable men and women are—be they gay, lesbian, or heterosexual—the more social assets they will demand in a “suitable” potential date or mate. (2) Men and women tend to fall in love with partners who possess similar assets and liabilities. Dating couples generally end up with partners similar to themselves in self-esteem, attractiveness, intelligence, education, and mental and physical health (or disability), among other things. (3) Market considerations have been found to affect men and women’s romantic and sexual choices, the amount prostitutes charge for “risky” sex, and the sexual bargains men and women craft in prison. (4) Profitable and equitable dating relationships are satisfying and comfortable relationships; inequity is associated with distress, guilt, anger, and anxiety. (5) Profitable and equitable dating relationships appear to be more stable (and more likely to lead to more serious relationships) than are inequitable relationships.

Thus, research indicates that in the early stages of a dating relationship, considerations of the marketplace prevail. Men and women will attempt to attract a socially attractive partner; they are profoundly concerned with how rewarding and

how equitable their budding relationships appear to be.

In Close, Intimate Relationships

Theorists agree that casual and intimate relationships are different. In *Equity: Theory and Research*, Elaine Hatfield and her colleagues pointed out that casual relationships differ in a number of ways from intimate connections. In close, intimate relationships, for example, couples feel more intensely about one another, share more of their lives, have (and expect to have) a longer time to spend together than do couples in fleeting affairs. Married and other committed couples, who assume they will be together for a lifetime, are likely to be sanguine about momentary injustices, confident that “it will all work out in the end.” Then, too, it may be difficult for married couples to calculate whether or not relationships are fair and rewarding. (They may settle for a rough and ready definition of “fair outcomes.”) Only the most egregious injustices will be noticed.

Margaret Clark argues that people participate in two kinds of relationships—exchange relationships and communal relationships—and that social norms differ markedly in these relationships. In casual acquaintance or business relationships, exchange norms prevail. People need not feel special responsibility for the other’s welfare. They may invest ideas, time, and money, but with the expectation of receiving their fair share in return. In close, committed, intimate relationships, on the other hand, communal norms prevail. Ideally, men and women are committed to the other’s welfare. They wish to please their partners, to care for and nurture their partners, and to reject such crass considerations as “score-keeping” or a concern with *quid pro quo*. Such differences suggest that couples in close, intimate relationships will be less concerned about day-to-day rewards, costs, and equity than they would be in more casual friendships and work relationships.

Yet, in the end, reward (and costs) and equity do seem to matter in even the closest of relationships. This is the case for most couples—be they single, living together, or married; affluent or poor; married for a few weeks or for a half-century or more. As we have said, people are generally far more concerned with how rewarding their

relationships are than with how fair and equitable they are. Yet, in all of these groups, the degree of reward, fairness, and equity have been found to be linked to marital happiness, contentment, satisfaction, sexual satisfaction, and marital stability. Couples in fair and equitable relationships are also less likely to risk extramarital affairs than are their underbenefited peers and are more confident that their marriages will last. Their relationships actually *are* longer lasting than are those of couples who feel less fairly treated.

In recent years, social scientists have begun to explore the perceptions of women and men regarding who does the most household work (such as preparing meals, shopping for groceries, cleaning the house, caring for children, and caring for needy or elderly relatives). They have also investigated the impact of “fair” or “unfair” divisions of labor on marital satisfaction and stability. Scholars find that for many couples, perceived fairness (in the division of housework) has a positive impact on psychological well-being and relationship happiness and stability. When there is perceived unfairness, the opposite is also true.

Endings

Scholars agree that perceived unfairness and misery are linked. They disagree, however, about the nature of the causal relationship: Does perceived injustice cause dissatisfaction or is the causal order reversed? Equity theorists point out that men and women who are unfairly treated for a prolonged period will begin to wonder: “Does my partner love me? If so, why would he (she) treat me so unfairly?” They begin to ask, “What’s in it for me?” and “Am I getting all I deserve in this relationship?” Clark takes the opposite view: She argues that in communal relationships, couples do not “keep score”; they simply do not think in terms of reward and justice. Thus, if couples *are* concerned with such issues, it is a sure sign that their marriages are in trouble. Misery, then, is the *cause*, rather than the consequence of perceived injustice. All would agree that when men and women are at the point of separation or divorce, they sometimes become consumed with issues of fairness and equity.

In a yearlong longitudinal study, Nico Van Yperen and Bram Buunk set out to answer this question. They interviewed Dutch couples who had

been married for various lengths of time. At Time 1, those who rated their marriages as inequitable were more dissatisfied than their peers. By Time 2 (a year later), these inequitable relationships were often faltering. Thus, the researchers concluded that inequity leads to relationship dissatisfaction and dissolution—rather than the reverse.

It is possible that in failing marriages appraisal might lead to loss of commitment, separation, and then reappraisal . . . the two spiraling down together. In any case, when marriages end, people often become preoccupied with the pain and marital injustices they have endured.

In recent times, scientists have continued to explore the impact of perceived equity on men and women's marital happiness and stability. It appears that although the concern with fairness may wax and wane during a marriage, such concerns always remain there, sometimes just beneath the surface, guiding people's perceptions, happiness, and marital choices.

Elaine Hatfield

See also Communal Relationships; Exchange Orientation; Exchange Processes; Fairness in Relationships; Justice Norms Applied to Relationships

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EQUIVOCATION

Equivocation is communication that is ambiguous, indirect, contradictory, or evasive. One dramatic example has come down through the centuries: In 1170, at the height of a dispute with Archbishop Thomas à Becket, King Henry II exclaimed, “Who will rid me of this meddlesome priest?” Then, when four of his knights murdered Becket, Henry denied responsibility. The king's question has remained equivocal to this day. Was it simply a cry of frustration? A deadly serious request for an assassination? Or a skillful hint to his followers to solve his political problem while providing him with deniability? This entry describes how equivocation occurs frequently in everyday life as a result of situations that make direct communication undesirable.

The more ordinary examples of equivocation occur in virtually every kind of relationship. Imagine that a colleague makes a poor presentation and then asks you how you thought it was. You might say “Not bad!” or “It's much better than I would have done.” Both are equivocal because they do not express a clear opinion. Your colleague will probably infer that the presentation was poor, but you would have avoided saying that directly. It is important to point out that equivocation is not the same as lying, which actively misrepresents information. Janet Bavelas and her colleagues have shown empirically that equivocal messages present information indirectly but do not misrepresent it. Instead, equivocation is closely related to other forms of indirect speech, such as polite requests (e.g., we understand “Do you have a watch?” to mean “Tell me the time”).

The Bavelas group proposed a situational theory in which equivocation is not an attempt to lie, an inability to communicate clearly, or any other inadequacy of the speaker. When a situational dilemma drastically restricts the direct communicative options available, equivocation is a skillful solution. These situational dilemmas include the previous example, which presents a choice between lying (“It was good”) or a hurtful truth (“It was poor”). Lying is a bad option, whether for ethical reasons or concern about being caught. The brutal truth is not good either, because it would hurt the other person and your relationship. Ronny Turner

and his colleagues pointed out that telling a hurtful truth to someone you care about is a relationship lie; it implies that you do not care about that person's feelings or about your relationship, which is not true. It is preferable to avoid both of these options, and most people spontaneously and creatively use equivocation to do so. Equivocation avoids lying but also avoids or at least buffers the hurt by being indirect.

The technical term for any situation that presents competing bad alternatives is an *avoidance-avoidance conflict*. There are many common metaphors for these dilemmas, such as between "a rock and a hard place" or "the frying pan and the fire." Equivocation arises in communicative avoidance-avoidance conflicts, where all direct messages would lead to bad consequences. In such dilemmas, equivocation is a good solution to a bad situation.

Bavelas and colleagues stressed that avoidance-avoidance conflicts are a diverse class of situations with many different specific forms. One familiar subset is the conflict between lying and hurting someone (e.g., having to comment on the colleague's poor presentation, an unsuitable gift, or a friend's awful haircut). Another subset of avoidance-avoidance conflicts occurs when two relationships make conflicting demands (e.g., two friends or neighbors who disagree with each other, a club or organization divided on an important issue, an employer whose demands are not good for the customers). In yet another subset, the truth would harm one's own self-interest (e.g., telling a superior about a bad or embarrassing mistake, losing face by telling the truth, or lying in an election). These are only a few of the often unique relationship dilemmas that can lead to equivocation. A program of laboratory experiments by Bavelas and her colleagues strongly confirmed that a wide variety of communicative dilemmas consistently elicit equivocation. The researchers concluded that the necessary and sufficient antecedent of equivocation is a communicative avoidance-avoidance conflict. Other researchers have applied the theory both in and outside the lab (e.g., with British or Japanese politicians).

The Bavelas group has also studied equivocation outside the lab. The first study examined formal trial judgments, in which judges must write a summary of events that are often repugnant or offensive, such as sexual offenses. As a matter of duty,

the judge cannot avoid these descriptions, yet the graphic details are incongruent with the formal and dignified legal setting. A close examination of the language of trial judgments revealed that judges were significantly more likely to use passive voice, replace verbs with nouns, or omit the agent of the crime when describing the crime than when they were describing neutral or positive parts of the same judgment. For example, one judge wrote, "He [the abuser] feels great remorse for the offense." The positive part was in active voice with the convicted individual as agent ("he feels"), but the negative part became just "the offense," instead of "the rape he committed." Similarly, when Canadian churches chose to apologize for their historic treatment of native people, they used indirect grammatical structures when describing actions that carried legal liability; for example, they consistently referred to "individuals who were abused," without mentioning who abused them. Such "non-apologies" also occur frequently in personal relationships.

A third study used a role-played medical interview in which experienced physicians delivered bad or good news to volunteers acting as patients. The bad-news dilemma is one of the hardest that a physician faces: being honest without crushing the patient. These skillful physicians used more indirect language when delivering bad news, while still remaining truthful. For example, they would say the news was "not great" instead of "bad" and the cancer was "in *the* liver" rather than "in *your* liver."

Is equivocation good or bad? These studies and examples show that evaluative judgments depend on the particulars of the situation. For example, using equivocation to be kind is desirable; being evasive to avoid responsibility is not. Like equivocation itself, it all depends on the situation.

Janet Beavin Bavelas

See also Deception and Lying; Discourse Analysis; Language Usage in Relationships

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ETHICAL ISSUES IN RELATIONSHIP RESEARCH

To advance the human sciences, researchers invariably need human subjects or participants. However, a balance must exist between the rewards in knowledge gained from the research and the potential costs to the research participants. To minimize these costs, researchers must attend to ethical issues related to research using human beings. This has not always been the case, however; only in the last 60 years has there been an ongoing commitment by researchers using human beings to treat their participants ethically. And the burgeoning interest in scientific research on human relationships brings new ethical challenges. This entry describes the history of ethics in human research, identifies the fundamental principles that guide research involving human participants, and discusses some specific ethical issues of which relationship researchers need to be particularly aware.

Several specific historical events, involving both human medical research and social science research have led to the more ethical treatment of human subjects. The Nazi medical experiments involved research by German doctors on concentration camp prisoners during World War II that was so extreme and detrimental to the participants that the experiments were depicted as crimes against humanity at the Nuremberg Military Tribunals. Subjects in the Tuskegee Syphilis Study, the Jewish Chronic Disease Hospital Study, and the Willowbrook Study were either infected with disease or denied treatment, all with detrimental effects on their health. The Stanford Prison Experiment and the Obedience to Authority Studies were psychological science research examining authority issues. In both studies, the participants were placed in situations involving behaviors that led, for some, to extreme emotional distress during the experiment, as well as to long-term trauma.

As a result of these and other studies, changes occurred in the way in which human experimentation could proceed. In 1979, the Belmont Report, written by a commission established by the U.S. Congress, established three basic ethical research principles: (1) autonomy/respect (people have the right to decide whether to participate in a study as well as to withdraw without penalty), (2) beneficence (participants should understand the risks of participation and any harm should be minimized), and (3) justice (people will not be unfairly singled out to participate because of race, sex, age, or other factors without good reason). To successfully address these principles, researchers also needed to (a) receive informed consent, (b) conduct risk-benefit assessment, and (c) establish fair procedures in the selection of research subjects. Following the Belmont Report, the American Psychological Association provided specific ethical principles and codes of conduct for psychological experiments, including how to plan research, the responsibility of the experimenter, compliance with laws and standards, informed consent, the proper use of deception in research, minimizing invasiveness, and providing participants with information about the study. As such, most, if not all, colleges and universities currently have institutional review boards that provide guidance, as well as approval, for all research involving human subjects.

Ensuring ethics in relationship research poses particular challenges because of the difference between studying human relationships and studying human beings. For example, relationship research, by its very nature, involves studying multiple persons rather than single individuals; as such, the relational system must be taken into account. As defined by the Belmont Report, however, it is individuals who are treated as autonomous agents and who give their informed consent to participate. The principle of autonomy and respect and the requirement of informed consent become problematic when one is studying families, couples, or friendships rather than single persons. For example, when doing research on family relationships, how does one protect the autonomy, and respect the privacy, of persons not involved in the research (e.g., family members, spouses, or friends) about whom participants might disclose to the researcher sensitive or damaging information? Similarly, because the relationship itself is of

interest, how does one negate, or account for, the impact that any one person participating in the research might have on the overall family or marriage? It is not just the benefits and costs of the individual that must be weighed in a risk-benefit assessment, but the impact of the research on other people involved in the relationship, whether or not they are research participants.

The actions of people within relationships also pose unique ethical challenges. Their behaviors do not exist in a vacuum; rather, they exist within the context of the relationships in which the individuals reside. According to the principle of beneficence, research participants should be protected from harm, treated in an ethical manner, and have their decisions respected. How, therefore, does the principle of beneficence protect a spouse, family member, or friend when something is revealed during the research by the other spouse, another family member, or friend? Similarly, how is the marriage protected (or respected) if couple issues arise during the context of the study that might affect the relationship itself?

Ethical issues can also extend to the researcher in relationship studies. For example, what decision does the researcher make if problematic, if not illegal, behaviors such as child abuse or domestic violence are encountered or discovered during the research? In such cases, there may be conflicts regarding issues of confidentiality with issues of safety. In addition, the researcher may need to be aware of laws or regulations regarding whether such information should be reported. In many states, for example, clinicians are required to report suspected child abuse, but this obligation may not apply to researchers.

Finally, researchers grapple with ethics when designing research. For example, studies of marital or family interventions designed to promote positive relationship development require both a treatment group, those that participate in the intervention, and a control group, those that do not. This research design is necessary to measure the effect of the intervention and consequently requires that one group does not receive the potentially beneficial intervention. Employing ethical participant selection strategies can ensure that every participant has an equal chance of being assigned to either the treatment or control group and thus evenly distributes the chance of potential risks and

benefits. In addition, careful monitoring of the study results enables researchers to document intervention benefits and risks and make timely, informed decisions about when to halt the intervention if the results actually indicate a decline in relationship outcomes, or offer the intervention to those in the control group if the intervention is shown to significantly enhance relationships.

These are but some of the ethical issues that the new world of relationship research struggles with. When one moves from the study of individuals to the study of relationships, the boundaries of what can be understood about human beings is greatly extended. However, with this movement into relationship research, different ethical issues must also be considered for the individuals involved and for the greater relationship of which they are a part.

Glen H. Stamp

See also Couple Therapy; Qualitative Methods in Relationship Research; Quantitative Methods in Relationship Research

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EVOLUTIONARY PERSPECTIVES ON WOMEN'S ROMANTIC INTERESTS

"I should say that the majority of women (happily for them) are not very much troubled with sexual feeling of any kind." So concluded William Acton, a physician of Victorian England, in *Functions and Disorders of the Reproductive Organs in*

Youth, in Adult Age, and in Advanced Life, which appeared in eight editions in the 19th century. Two years after Acton's first edition was published, in 1859, Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* appeared. A dozen years later, in 1871, Darwin authored *The Descent of Man*. In the latter, Darwin elaborated his theory of evolution driven by female choice, as pushed along by female sexual preferences. Aside from a few notable exceptions, this idea was largely ignored by evolutionary biologists for the century that followed. Robert Trivers's highly influential paper of 1971 revived interest in it. Currently, this concept of "sexual selection" is widely regarded as one of the most important forces giving rise to evolution and, hence, one of the fundamental subjects within evolutionary biology.

More particularly, female "sexual feeling"—patterns of sexual interest, preference, and motivation—is considered central to an understanding of the social nature of a species. Specifically with respect to human sexuality, evolutionary biologists and psychologists have documented a variety of patterns of women's sexual interests and preferences. Though much more work is needed, the field now offers an outline of what selective pressures shaped these patterns as well as the impact of these patterns on broader relationship phenomena. Perhaps not surprisingly, the idea that humans have evolved as a pair-bonding species in which males and females cooperatively care for offspring (though not without conflicts between them) has been a central thesis. Views about how a history of pair-bonding and care of offspring by two parents (rather than almost exclusively mothers, as is characteristic of most species of mammals) is revealed by patterns of female romantic interests, however, have varied across time. This entry discusses evolutionary perspectives on women's romantic interests, their historical roots, and their current status.

The Search for Women's Estrus

From a historical perspective, evolutionary perspectives of women's sexual and romantic interests arose in three distinguishable waves of theory and research. The first began in the late 1800s, when reproductive biology became a serious scientific field. A key concept introduced at that time

was *estrus*. Estrus was defined as a period of relatively intense mammalian female sexual motivation as well as attractivity to males. It is largely confined to a phase of female reproductive cycles around the time of ovulation, when females are fertile (that is, when sex can potentially lead to conception and, ultimately, birth of an offspring). The term derives from the Greek word for *botfly*. When botflies lay eggs on the hides of cows, cows become excited and, accordingly, even in classical times Greeks used the term for botflies to describe a frenzied state. Reproductive biologists co-opted the term to refer to the frenzied state of a fertile mammalian female (also referred to as "heat").

In the 1920s, reproductive biologists began discovering hormones that play important roles in the regulation of reproductive function, the first of which was estrogen. In most all mammalian females, estrogen levels peak just before ovulation, and, indeed, this rise plays key roles in orchestrating changes in reproductive physiology that, for a few days of the reproductive cycle, permit conception. The name *estrogen* was derived from the term *estrus*: Estrogen is purportedly the "gen" or generator of estrus. (Other reproductive hormones, notably progesterone and testosterone, play important roles as well.)

Women possess estrogen and, just like most other mammalian females, their estrogen levels surge just before ovulation. When reproductive biologists discovered estrogen, then, it made sense to look for evidence of estrus in women. Beginning in the 1930s, many studies looked for evidence that women exhibit marked sexual desire (as well as greater attractivity to men) when fertile in their cycles. Though evidence has been mixed, researchers have not found consistent evidence of these changes across women's cycles. For instance, in a 2005 study, Alexandra Brewis and Mary Meyer analyzed reports of recent sex intercourse with a primary partner provided by about 20,000 normally ovulating women in 13 developing countries. No evidence was found that the frequency with which women have sex with their primary partners changes across the cycle, aside from a drop during menses. Although this study is limited because intercourse is hardly a straightforward measure of sexual desire, studies using other measures (self-reported desire, female-initiated intercourse) have yielded mixed results as well.

Even by about 1960, then, a number of scholars concluded that, evolutionarily, women had “lost” estrus—any marked changes in sexual or romantic interests across the cycle. It was replaced by continuous sexual receptivity across the cycle. As women’s hormones change in ways similar to other primate species, this conclusion was tantamount to the claim that hormonal control of women’s sexual and romantic interests had, over the course of human evolution, been relaxed.

The Search for Why Women “Lost” Estrus

This conclusion having been drawn, a second wave of scientific investigation into women’s sexuality attempted to address the question of *why* women had lost estrus. What selective forces led to the disappearance, in humans, of marked female sexual motivation and attractivity to males during the fertile phase of women’s cycles? By the late 1970s, this question became a salient one for scholars interested in understanding the unique social nature of the human species. Indeed, in 1979 alone, at least four major papers proposing answers to this question appeared (though the answers offered by these papers are but a subset of all that have been offered).

One particularly prominent and influential view was offered, separately by Donald Symons and by Richard Alexander and Elizabeth Noonan. It proposed that loss of estrus and the purportedly crucial feature that resulted, the concealment of ovulation (lack of signs of ovulation evident to either females themselves or to observers), played an important role leading to pair-bonding in humans. As long as a male can discriminate females who are fertile from those who are infertile in their cycles, it may benefit him to attend particularly to those who are fertile—that is, to those females who are able to conceive an offspring at that point in time. If a male cannot discriminate fertile from infertile females, however, it may benefit him to attend particularly to one female whose offspring he has high probability of having sired, particularly if the assistance he offers to care for those offspring can substantively contribute to their well-being and fitness. Loss of estrus and concealed ovulation, in this view, was not the sole reason why human males invest in offspring and why males and females pair-bond. But in the

context of other factors facilitating biparental care (care of offspring by both parents) in humans, loss of estrus and concealed ovulation arose in females as tactics to enhance the care that their offspring received from putative fathers.

One contrasting theory was proposed by Lee Benshoof and Randy Thornhill (and mentioned by Symons as well). They argued that loss of estrus and concealed ovulation evolved after pair-bonding in humans had already arisen. Rather than functioning to facilitate pair-bonding, concealed ovulation in this view functioned to facilitate female choice of sires of their offspring. Sometimes, it may not pay a female (in the currency of her evolutionary fitness) to have her offspring fathered by her primary mate. Rather, for a variety of reasons (better genes, genes more compatible with hers, other material advantages), it may be best for her to choose a sire of her offspring other than her primary partner. By hiding the period she is fertile and can potentially conceive, concealed ovulation, in this view, interferes with the ability of her partner to prevent “extra-pair copulation” (sex with a partner other than a primary partner in a pair-bonding species) through “mate-guarding” and thereby fosters female sire choice.

No one theory of concealed ovulation clearly won out over all competitors through the 1980s and 1990s. Much research during this period, however, did provide evidence for the importance of pair-bonding in shaping human mating and romantic preferences.

Women’s Estrus Found?

The third phase of research speaking to the evolution of women’s sexuality began in the mid-1990s. Though it didn’t begin with this intention, viewed in retrospect a major thrust of this most recent phase has been to question the conclusion reached almost half a century ago, that women have lost estrus. A wealth of research now indicates that women’s sexual interests and motivations do systematically change across their cycles. When fertile in their cycles, normally ovulating women particularly prefer a variety of masculine male traits perceived through multiple sensory modalities (e.g., men whose scent is associated with social dominance, facially masculine men, men whose bodies are masculine, masculine vocal qualities,

masculine behavioral displays, relatively tall men). As well, women prefer traits associated with body symmetry (an indicator of developmental instability), more so when fertile than when infertile in their cycles (e.g., scents associated with symmetry, facial features associated with body symmetry). Masculine traits and traits associated with symmetry may have been indicators, in harsh ancestral environments, that males could pass onto offspring genes that would promote fitness and success. Women don't particularly prefer all positive male features when fertile (e.g., those particularly favored in long-term mates, such as kindness or faithfulness, are not particularly preferred then). And even with respect to traits women do prefer more when fertile, they only find these traits more sexually attractive; women do not rate these traits as being particularly attractive in their long-term mates.

Although the evidence that women's preferences do shift across their cycles is now compelling, it is worth noting that women may not be conscious of these preference shifts. The methodology used in these studies has not typically asked women to report how much they desire or prefer various partner qualities in mate. Rather, women in these studies typically have been asked to rate a series of men who differ on various qualities (as manipulated by researchers, or as a function of variation in representative samples of men). By examining how male features predict women's stated attraction to men (their sexual attraction or their attraction to men as long-term mates), researchers infer the features that women find particularly attractive, and then compare the inferred preferences across phases of women's cycles. It is quite possible that most women are not aware of how their preferences, as assessed in these studies, vary across their cycles.

One interpretation of this evidence is that estrus was never lost during women's evolution, and that women's sexual motivations and interests have never become fully divorced from hormonal influence. Rather, women retain a distinctive phase of sexual interests and pattern of attraction when fertile in their cycles, one influenced by hormones such as estrogen. This phase may have been modified during human evolution. For instance, overt signs of women's fertile phase appear to have become suppressed during human evolution, even if not fully eliminated and even if women do retain

distinct patterns of interest when fertile. "Concealed estrus"—a lack of overt signs of women's estrus to observers—may have been selected in the context of pair-bonding, along lines similar to earlier theories of concealed ovulation. In particular, concealed estrus may have permitted ancestral women to maintain support from pair-bond partners while increasing their latitude for choosing sires for offspring. Moreover, women may have evolved a phase of "extended sexuality"—sexual receptivity and interests outside of the fertile phase—in combination with estrus. The primary benefits that may have led this sexuality across the cycle purportedly would have been derived through pair-bonding, which it could have promoted along lines suggested by Symons, Alexander, and Noonan (albeit regarding concealed ovulation rather than extended sexuality per se).

In this view, features of women's sexual motivations and their changes across the cycle constitute telltale signs of ancestral selection pressures that forged patterns of human mating. In particular, patterns do contain signatures of humans having evolved as a pair-bonded species. At the same time, however, they also reveal that conflicts of interest between male and female pair-bonded partners (e.g., those surrounding sexual fidelity to the relationship) have played a hand in shaping female sexuality as well.

It should nonetheless be emphasized that these recent views of female estrus, though garnering a good deal of empirical support, have not been fully vetted by a scientific process. Current views of the evolution of women's sexuality markedly differ from dominant views of half a century ago. Quite possibly, future generations of scholars will view current interpretations of the extant literature as incomplete or flawed in important ways.

Steven W. Gangestad

See also Evolutionary Psychology and Human Relationships; Hormones Related to Relationships; Kin Selection; Mate Guarding and Poaching; Mate Preferences; Parental Investment Theory

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EVOLUTIONARY PSYCHOLOGY AND HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS

An evolutionary approach to human relationships presumes that interactions between parents, children, siblings, friends, lovers, and enemies are better understood by viewing them within the perspective of comparative biology. On the one hand, the approach assumes deep commonalities among social behaviors of animal species ranging from ants and bees to chimpanzees and human beings. On the other hand, the approach makes important distinctions—presuming that there might be unique features characterizing human relationships, and that different types of human relationships might operate according to different functional rules. This entry includes a brief summary of several basic ideas connecting evolutionary biology and psychology and a review of some research applying those ideas to human relationships.

What Is Evolutionary Psychology?

Evolutionary psychology is the study of behavior, thought, and feeling through the lens of evolutionary biology. Modern evolutionary psychology is a synthesis of developments in several fields, including zoology, ecology, cognitive neuroscience, anthropology, and social psychology. Central to this synthesis is Charles Darwin's theory of evolution by natural selection. Following Darwin, evolutionary psychologists presume that human behaviors reflect the influence of physical and psychological predispositions that helped our ancestors survive and reproduce.

The first question an evolutionary theorist asks about any feature of a living organism is this: What is its adaptive function? How does this feature help the organism survive and, more importantly,

reproduce? Why do hawks, but not moles, have excellent vision? Why do peacocks, but not peahens, have bright feathers? Evolutionary psychologists examining human relationships consider the functional implications of human evolutionary history (e.g., living in omnivorous hierarchical primate groups populated by kin) for relationships with friends, lovers, enemies, and kin. Although we humans may take romantic relationships, friendships, and status hierarchies for granted, many of our mammalian relatives never concern themselves with the questions that often consume our days. As discussed later, the adaptive function of a particular feature can take different forms depending whether the human being in question is a male or a female, young or old, and currently mated or not.

Domain-Specific Mechanisms

People must make important decisions within several different domains—some are nonsocial (what to eat, how to keep warm, for example); others are social (who to trust as a friend, whom to make a romantic overture toward, etc.). A key assumption of an evolutionary approach is that different problems cannot be solved using one single-domain general rule. Although it is generally true to say that people interact with others to get rewards, or to maximize benefits and minimize costs, such explanations fail to explain why and when some things are pleasant and others are unpleasant. A kiss may be a reward or a punishment, depending on who is kissing whom (a lover vs. a panhandler, for instance). Likewise, winning a competition may feel bad or good, depending on who is being beaten (one's 5-year-old daughter vs. an arrogant coworker, for example). From an evolutionary perspective, different relationships are assumed to be controlled by different psychological mechanisms, each characterized by different decision rules.

This assumption is supported by a broad literature suggesting that animal's brains are composed of a number of specialized "modular" mechanisms. For example, birds use different memory systems and different rules for remembering song, tastes of poisonous food, and locations of food caches. Likewise, humans inherit different memory

systems for dealing with different, sometimes conceptually incompatible tasks, including learning language, learning to avoid poisonous foods, and remembering other people's faces. Researchers interested in human relationships have begun to apply the concept of domain specificity to understanding the differences between friendships, status hierarchies, family relationships, and short- and long-term romantic relationships, all of which seem to operate according to slightly different rules.

Life History, Parental Investment, and Sexual Selection

Studying the array of unique adaptations found across the animal kingdom has uncovered several general principles governing the evolution of diverse traits. One powerful set of principles is embodied in *life history theory*—which assumes all organisms must resolve a key set of trade-offs throughout their lives. Central trade-offs involve allocating energy to development versus mating versus parenting (effort spent on attracting mates is effort that cannot be spent on caring for young, for example). Depending on ecological factors, different animals allocate effort differently across their life spans. Some fish, for instance, change from small drab females into large colorful males if a territory becomes available. Some small mammals start reproducing weeks after they are born, others wait decades. Some animals (such as salmon) reproduce in a single grand effort; others (such as elephants) reproduce repeatedly over their life spans. Human life history involves a long period of somatic development, earlier sexual maturity in females than in males, and more life-span mating effort by males than by females.

Why do females and males within species often have different life histories? Part of the answer has to do with *differential parental investment*—which usually involves greater amounts of offspring care by females. In mammals, for example, females carry the young inside their bodies and nurse them after they are born. Within a species, the sex investing less in offspring tends to compete for mating opportunities with the higher-investing sex. Because mammalian females always pay a high price for reproduction, whereas males may contribute little or nothing to offspring care, females

are relatively more selective in their choice of mates. This is linked to *sexual selection*—which refers to the relative success of traits that assist in mating (by helping either to attract the opposite sex or to compete with one's own sex). Darwin developed the idea of sexual selection to address the fact that one sex is often larger, more colorful, and more competitive than the other. A peacock's bright feathers increase his chances of attracting peahens as mates. Ostentatious feathers are found in males and not females because the females make a higher investment in the offspring and are therefore choosier about their mating partners (who must consequently compete to be chosen).

Evolutionary History and Human Relationships

For most of human evolution, our ancestors lived in groups of less than a hundred people who were typically related to one another. Thus, human cognitive mechanisms were designed not for life on the freeways and malls of modern Los Angeles, but for coexistence in small hunter-gatherer groups. Because hunter-gatherers everywhere faced some similar problems and opportunities, evolutionary theorists expect to find a number of human universals beneath the surface diversity of modern cultures. Evolutionary psychologists consider some of the functions relationships might have served in these ancestral human groups, focusing on six domains of social interaction: affiliation, status, self-protection, mate search, mate retention, and kin care. Each domain is characterized by different problems and opportunities, and each is likely to operate according to slightly different arrays of decision biases.

Affiliation

Research on hunter-gatherers suggests that social alliances may have been critical to our ancestors' survival and reproduction. Anthropologists studying modern hunter-gatherers, such as the Aché of South America, find that the likelihood of capturing game is often quite low on any given occasion for any given individual. If one individual catches a large fish or a deer, however, it is too much to consume alone and will rot if not shared. By sharing, individuals help other

members of the group survive, and accrue credit for the future when their own luck is down. Furthermore, people in cooperative networks can accomplish tasks none of them could easily do alone (such as hunting large game).

There are costs as well as benefits to alliances: It takes time and resources to help other people, and those people might want to take more than they give in return. Group members also compete with one another for food, status, or mates. How much to cooperate, and with whom, is influenced by two powerful evolutionary principles—*inclusive fitness* and *reciprocity*.

Inclusive fitness refers roughly to an organism's success in getting its genes into future generations. The term *inclusive* refers to the fact that fitness is measured not simply by the number of offspring an organism produces, but also by contributing to the success of relatives. Hence, all living organisms, including humans, are expected to cooperate more readily with close relatives. In hunter-gatherer societies, individuals tended to be closely related, and even in modern societies, people spend most of their lives in close contact with kin.

Human beings are also cooperative and generous with people who are not related to them. *Reciprocity* involves kindness toward nonrelatives whom one expects to be beneficial to oneself in the future. Unlike relationships with kin, people are more sensitive to violations of reciprocity when unrelated individuals are involved. Indeed, research by Leda Cosmides and John Tooby has demonstrated that people are exquisitely sensitive to other people's violations of social contracts, to the extent of being able to solve difficult logical problems if those problems are framed as involving potential cheating. Evolutionary psychologists assume that this sensitivity to reciprocity is at least partly innate because it helped our ancestors survive and reproduce.

Status

Human beings everywhere, like many but not all mammalian species, arrange themselves into status hierarchies. There are costs associated with achieving status, but high status individuals, both men and women, are typically compensated with greater access to resources. For males, there are additional benefits to gaining status because

females are more likely to mate with higher status males. In line with our earlier discussion of parental investment and sexual selection, females may place relatively more value on status for two reasons: (1) high status men can acquire more of the indirect resources males provide for their offspring, and (2) high status males have demonstrated their relative superiority over other males. Consistently, men around the world are more likely to compete for status, sometimes violently. Such competition is most pronounced among young unmated males and tends to diminish once a male gains social position and a mate.

Self-Protection

Ancestral humans frequently confronted dangers from members of other groups and occasionally from members of their own groups. A number of cognitive biases suggest that people are especially alert to possible threats from others. Males posed, and continue to pose, greater threats of physical violence. Consistently, people are especially rapid at detecting angry facial expressions on men's, as opposed to women's, faces. People are also biased to perceive intentions of threat more readily in members of outgroups, and surprisingly good at remembering angry males from threatening outgroups. Consistent with the fact that our ancestors were more defenseless in the dark, research by Mark Schaller and his colleagues has demonstrated that ambient darkness increases threat-related prejudices against stereotypically dangerous groups. When feeling threatened, people are more likely to band together with ingroup members. Thus, conditions that were relevant in the ancestral past continue to influence relationships with strangers in the modern world.

Mate Search

Differential reproduction is the central driving force of evolution. We are here today because our ancestors were successful at mating. For most mammals, courtship mostly involves males competing for the attention of females. This is because mammalian males usually contribute little beyond sperm to their offspring, making female parental investment (and consequent choosiness) much higher. Humans are mammals, which means

(a) women are physiologically equipped to raise offspring without help from men, and (b) men could, conversely, father offspring with no investment beyond sperm. Unlike most mammals, however, human offspring are born helpless and require more than the usual amount of parental care. In species with helpless young (such as most birds), a common pattern is for males to contribute to offspring care. Although there are many instances of human females raising offspring without male help (the typical mammalian pattern), more common across human cultures is some degree of paternal investment in the offspring.

When males contribute to offspring, they tend to become more selective in choosing mates. Human beings adopt different mating strategies that seem to be sensitive to levels of parental investment. For casual sexual relationships, males are relatively unselective about mating, whereas females favor especially symmetrical and healthy males. For longer-term monogamous relationships, in which men make a high investment, men become more similar to women in being relatively more selective about their mates. Nevertheless, because mothers and fathers contribute different resources to the offspring, each sex seeks slightly different characteristics in a mate. Men seek traits that have been associated with fertility (such as relative youthfulness and low waist-to-hip ratios). Women, on the other hand, are attracted to men demonstrating dominance and social status. Because both men and women contribute heavily to their offspring, both sexes are choosy about long-term relationships and prefer their mate to possess as many good qualities as possible (e.g., attractiveness, high status, kindness, friendliness). Hence, although there are still sex differences in mate selection criteria, men and women differ much less in relative choosiness for long-term relationships.

Mate Retention

Keeping mates involves a different set of challenges and opportunities than does choosing them. Both sexes are expected to be alert to other members of their own sex who might disrupt their relationships. Women are attentive to other women who are highly attractive, men to other men who are socially dominant. Because fertilization occurs inside the female's body, mothers are always

certain their children are their own, whereas men risk investing resources in other men's offspring. Women are at risk for losing their partner's investment of resources and ought to be relatively more concerned that interloping females might establish a long-term relationship with their partners. Consistently, research by David Buss and others has demonstrated that women are, compared with men, more jealous of their partners' deep affectionate relationships with other women and relatively less jealous about casual sexual contacts. These sex differences are relative rather than absolute—neither sex welcomes either sex or love between their partners and others. Again, because both sexes invest heavily in long-term relationships, both have much to lose if their partners form romantic bonds with others.

Kin Care

Following principles of inclusive fitness, one expects to find relatively less tit-for-tat exchange and more communal sharing of benefits among close relatives. People are indeed more willing to help others with whom they share genes, and research by Eugene Burnstein and his colleagues found that such aid takes into account their relatives' reproductive potential. Whereas a 40-year-old woman is equally related to her 17-year-old daughter and her 70-year-old mother, she would be expected to invest more resources in her daughter (whose reproductive potential is high) than in her elderly mother (who, though capable of providing indirect benefits of grandmothering, has no direct reproductive potential remaining). A study by Simon Laham and colleagues examined the impact of such considerations on grandparental effort, finding relatively more investment by mother's mothers, for whom there are no uncertain paternal links involved. On the other hand, investments in sons' children were relatively high if a grandmother did not have (more certain) grandchildren via a daughter.

Conclusion

Several decades ago, an evolutionary perspective on human social behavior was considered quite controversial. In the intervening years, the perspective

has generated a number of insights about human relationships and many novel research findings. Because the perspective is still relatively new, many implications remain to be identified and tested. There has been much more research on sex differences related to mate selection than on other types of relationships, for instance. The perspective can provide a number of insights about human relationships. It highlights connections that are not otherwise obvious, for example, how competition for status within one sex is connected to romantic relationships. The perspective can also help clarify distinctions by focusing on different functional constraints on relationships between friends, mates, and family members and between men and women. A more broadly appealing feature of the evolutionary perspective is its interdisciplinary nature, connecting research on human behavior in Western societies with cross-cultural findings from anthropology and biological findings about other species. The approach has also contributed to, and been informed by, new developments in economics and cognitive neuroscience. As these fields continue to exchange information, we can look forward to new discoveries, and to novel and more complete theoretical insights.

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See also Attachment Theory; Jealousy; Mate Guarding and Poaching; Mate Preferences; Waist-to-Hip Ratio and Attraction

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EXCHANGE ORIENTATION

Exchange orientation, as originally defined by Bernard Murstein, refers to the tendency to believe that one's relationships with others should be governed by a principle of reciprocity such that favors and gifts should be exchanged equally among the parties involved in those relationships. That is, when one person in a relationship receives a gift or favor from the other, he or she should repay that person with an approximately equivalent gift or favor. Moreover, when one party in a relationship incurs a cost related to the relationship, the

other party should incur a similar cost. One implication of holding an exchange orientation in one's relationships is that a person experiences discomfort when he or she is unable to reciprocate and feels let down when another person fails to reciprocate. The concept of exchange orientation has important implications for human relationships of all types—including business partners, friends, and romantic partners. This entry explores different conceptions of exchange orientation, distinguishes it from alternative ways of thinking about allocation of costs and benefits in relationships, explores the correlates of exchange orientation, and concludes with a discussion of the universality of this way of thinking in relationships.

Conceptual Overview

The concept of *distributive justice* refers to the transfer of benefits and costs in relationships and perceptions of that transfer. Exchange orientation is one approach to thinking about distributive justice and, as stated earlier, reflects a tendency to prefer and seek equal allocation of costs and benefits among parties in relationships. More specifically, when Murstein first wrote about exchange orientation, he described a person high in such an orientation as being concerned with making sure that there was a balance among the parties involved in a relationship in costs and benefits. That is, every cost incurred by one person in the relationship should be met with a similar cost for the other party and every benefit gained by one person in the relationship should be reciprocated by the other with a similar benefit.

A natural implication of such an orientation is that a person would be upset whenever an imbalance was present in the relationship, whether he or she believed the self to be overbenefited or underbenefited. He or she would be dissatisfied whenever believing that the self incurred more costs than the other party in a relationship or whenever believing that the self received more benefits than the other. Murstein initially proposed that this orientation would be harmful to marital satisfaction because people generally are more aware of what they do for others than they are of what others do for them. So, all things being equal, people will generally perceive themselves to be underbenefited relative to

others with whom they have relationships. If people generally perceive this to be the case, then it makes sense that a high exchange orientation would be associated with less satisfaction in marital relations. In contrast, he proposed that high exchange orientation would actually be beneficial for relatively new friendships. Because new friendships are comparatively much easier to get out of, people who perceive a great deal of inequity in a friendship would simply leave that relationship.

Murstein found support for these ideas in a study of married couples and college friends. Because exchange orientation is an internal attitude, he assessed this orientation with self-report items such as "If I do dishes three times a week, I expect my spouse to do them three times a week," with which participants indicated their level of agreement. He found that spouses with higher levels of exchange orientation reported lower levels of marital adjustment. In contrast, he found that friends who reported higher levels of exchange orientation reported higher levels of friendship intensity, particularly when paired with a friend who also reported higher exchange orientation. Subsequent research has found a similar pattern of results in marital relationships; however, several studies have, in contrast to Murstein's, found that higher exchange orientation is associated with *less* satisfaction in friendships.

Several years later, Susan Sprecher refined Murstein's initial conceptualization of exchange orientation. More specifically, she introduced the idea that people could be concerned by two different kinds of exchange considerations. First, they could be concerned that they are not receiving as much from a particular partner as they are giving to that partner. She termed this *underbenefiting exchange orientation*. Alternatively, they could be concerned that they are not giving as much to a partner as they are getting from him or her. She termed this *overbenefiting exchange orientation*. These orientations are conceptually quite distinct and do not necessarily overlap. A person could be, for example, high in underbenefiting exchange orientation but low in overbenefiting exchange orientation, or vice versa. Sprecher argued that whereas underbenefiting exchange orientation would be negatively associated with good relationship outcomes, the overbenefiting exchange orientation might actually be associated with *good*

outcomes because it could lead people to behave in especially giving ways. She found evidence consistent with this idea in a study of romantically involved college students. Having a partner high in overbenefiting exchange orientation was associated with more relationship satisfaction, commitment, and love. One's own overbenefiting exchange orientation was generally unassociated with one's own outcomes, however. Moreover, being higher in underbenefiting exchange orientation was associated with worse relationships outcomes. This suggests that the two types of exchange orientation are indeed distinct and that they have different implications for relationships.

Margaret Clark, Judson Mills, and their colleagues have described a different approach to distributive justice in relationships. They have argued that some people have more of a *communal orientation* than an exchange orientation. This means that people are guided not as much by equality of benefit exchange in a relationship as by equality of attention to and responsiveness to needs. That is, provided both partners are equally caring and attentive, it is not problematic for there to be inequity in cost and benefit allocation in a relationship. This is especially true when one party in the relationship has substantially greater needs because of, for example, a disability or financial woes. It is also true when one person is more able to provide to the other such as is typically the case in relationships between parents and young children. The inequity would largely disappear, however, if there was no longer a difference in needs or ability.

Exchange Orientation: A Personality Variable or Relationship Specific?

Both Murstein and Sprecher have discussed exchange orientation as an individual difference or personality variable. That is, they have described people as being chronically higher or lower in exchange orientation. Clark and her colleagues agree with this conception of exchange orientation but also have suggested that some relationships are normatively more exchange in nature. Business relationships and casual acquaintanceships, for example, are much more likely to be characterized by an exchange norm than are close

friendships or romantic relationships. Instead, these latter relationships are more likely to be governed by a communal norm. In support of this idea, Clark has found that individuals actually prefer it when somebody with whom they desire a close relationship or with whom they already have such a relationship *do not* immediately pay them back for a favor. In contrast, people prefer it when a stranger immediately repays them for a favor. Moreover, people believe that an exchange norm is not ideal for close relationships such as marriages and close friendships. Such exchange concerns are more prominent in certain kinds of relationships than in others.

Correlates of Exchange Orientation

Research has established a number of important correlates of exchange orientation. People high in exchange orientation are especially likely to feel lonely. Relatedly, they are more likely to think of themselves as highly individuated such that close others in their lives are not important components of their self-concepts. These findings suggest that people high in exchange orientation perceive more of a barrier between themselves and others.

Research has also indicated numerous implications of exchange orientation for relationships. People high in exchange orientation tend to be less satisfied with and less trusting of spouses and friends. People lower in exchange orientation report greater friendship intensity with others and more satisfaction with friends, spouses, and coworkers. They experience less negative emotion when faced with inequity in their relationships and are less likely to behave in ways that maintain or restore equity of benefit allocation in their relationships.

How Universal Are Beliefs About Exchange in Relationships?

Generally speaking, all societies have norms about how costs and benefits should be distributed in relationships. It has been suggested that exchange norms developed as a function of stable food supplies and trade economies because people needed explicit means of making sure that they were not taking advantage of others or being taken advantage of themselves. In contrast, communal norms

would develop from irregular food supplies. Irregularities in food supplies would lead people to share their bounty with others when they had procured a large supply of food with the expectation that others in their group would do the same for them if situations were reversed. That being said, it appears that people of all cultures have some sensitivity to exchange concerns.

Not all people are equally sensitive to such concerns, however. For instance, people in the United States, a highly individualistic country, tend to be more exchange-oriented than do people in the Netherlands. People from more collectivist cultures tend to be lower in exchange orientation than do people from more individualistic societies. Despite these differences, people from all cultures are sensitive to exchange concerns and there is considerable variability within cultures regarding how exchange-orientated individuals are.

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See also Communal Relationships; Equity Theory; Justice Norms Applied to Relationships; Norms About Relationships

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EXCHANGE PROCESSES

Social exchange theory has been used to explain individuals' behavior across a broad range of interpersonal relationships. First proposed by sociologist George Homans in 1958, social exchange theory posits that all interpersonal interactions (e.g., romantic relationships, friendships, job relationships, interactions with strangers) are based on an exchange of goods or resources. This entry discusses the basic principles of social exchange theory, explores several exchange-based theories, and examines the application of exchange principles to sexual behavior.

Exchange Theory

When Homans first proposed that social interactions might be viewed from an exchange perspective, his thinking was influenced by research in economics. He proposed that social interactions are based on an exchange of goods. These goods might be material, for example money, gifts, or material possessions, or more symbolic (e.g., prestige, approval). The motivation for our interactions with others is that those interactions provide us with desired goods (rewards). Others interact with us because we also possess the ability to provide those individuals with rewards. Thus, our social interactions are based on an exchange of rewards with others.

Homans also noted that rewards are also accompanied by costs. Some costs are encountered when we provide others with desirable resources. For example, it is costly to provide others with monetary rewards and takes time to provide another with information.

Another type of cost (opportunity costs) is incurred when individuals are faced with multiple situations that provide opportunities for obtaining rewards. For example, individuals involved in

romantic relationships receive rewards by spending time with their partners. The opportunity cost of doing so, however, is that spending time with their partners prevents them from engaging in rewarding activities with other individuals such as friends or family members.

In applying economic theory to social interactions, Homans proposed that individuals seek to maximize their profit from social interactions, such that $\text{Profit} = \text{Rewards} - \text{Costs}$. It has also been noted that when individuals encounter high costs, they typically expect high rewards in return.

Although the notion of individuals exchanging rewards is, on the surface, a simple one, several points deserve mention. First, rewards are subjective. A good is rewarding only if another individual values it. Many individuals find attention from others to be rewarding but an individual suffering from social anxiety may find that attention aversive. Second, scarce resources tend to be valued more highly than do those that are plentiful. Third, satiation can occur if a reward is received too often. That is, if an individual receives the same reward repeatedly, that reward tends to lose some or all of its value.

To this point, rewards have been discussed in a rather general context. Research by Uriel and Edna Foa, however, suggests that most rewards exchanged in social interactions can be divided into six categories: love, status, information, money, goods, and services. Further, these categories differ along two dimensions. First, some rewards are more concrete whereas others are relatively abstract. Goods and services are generally the most concrete, but love and money are considered to be more abstract. Status and information are the most abstract.

The second dimension concerns how particularistic each reward is. Particularistic refers to the extent to which the source of the reward is important in the exchange. Money is generally the least particularistic. Most individuals value money regardless of its source (with some exceptions—drug money may be one example of money that has little value to many). Information and services are considered to be somewhat more particularistic, followed by status and goods. Love is the most particularistic reward; most individuals are selective regarding from whom they are willing to accept love.

Finally, it has been proposed that these dimensions influence the exchange of resources. As a rule, it is easier to exchange rewards that are more similar to one another. For example, if one individual borrows money from another, the easiest and most acceptable form of restitution is to simply repay the money. Most individuals, however, find the notion of exchanging money for love to be difficult to comprehend.

Exchange-Based Theories

Several important theories of interpersonal relationships are based on social exchange including Equity Theory, the Investment Model, and Margaret Clark's work on communal and exchange relationships. Social exchange has also been proposed as a theoretical explanation for some aspects of gender differences in sexual interactions. Each of these areas will be briefly examined.

Equity Theory

According to Equity Theory, individuals put resources into their relationships (inputs) and in return receive rewards (outcomes) from those relationships. Rather than attempting to maximize their profit (as proposed by Homans), however, other researchers, including J. Stacy Adams and Elaine Hatfield and colleagues, have proposed that individuals value equity in their social exchanges. That is, individuals are concerned with getting what they feel they deserve out of their social relationships. One means that individuals have of determining whether their interactions are equitable is to compare their interactions with those of similar others. For example, an employee concerned about the fairness of her or his salary may attempt to determine the salaries of coworkers. Another means of determining equity, particularly in more intimate relationships, is to compare one's inputs and outcomes obtained in the relationship with the inputs and outcomes of one's partner. That is, is one individual's profit from the relationship greater than, less than, or equal to that of her or his partner? Inequity can occur in two forms. If an individual's outcomes are greater than they should be given the individual's input into that relationship, the individual is being overbenefited.

Essentially, overbenefited individuals are getting more than they should. Adams proposed that individuals may feel guilt for overbenefiting from their relationship, but research also indicates that individuals may find satisfaction in this situation.

The other form of inequity occurs when individuals receive fewer outcomes than they feel they should be given their inputs into the relationship. In this case, they are being underbenefited and are receiving less than they deserve. Those who are underbenefited typically experience anger, frustration, and feelings of being exploited.

Given that individuals value equity, Adams proposed that when faced with inequity, there would be attempts at restoration. This might be done psychologically. Overbenefited individuals may attempt to convince either themselves (or their partners) that they are putting more into the relationship or that they are getting less out of it. Conversely, underbenefited individuals may persuade themselves (or be persuaded by their partners) that they really are not putting that much into the relationship or that they are actually getting a great deal out of it. Essentially, people are often skilled at rationalizing both their own and their partner's behavior.

Another means of restoring equity is to do so behaviorally. On the one hand, if individuals perceive themselves to be underbenefited, they may reduce their inputs into the relationship or try to convince their partners to increase theirs. On the other hand, overbenefited individuals might increase their inputs or encourage their partners to decrease theirs. One interesting aspect to Equity Theory is the recognition that if one member of a dyad alters her or his inputs, this is likely to affect the outcomes of the other member.

A third means of responding to an inequitable relationship is to end the relationship. Rather than exerting time and energy attempting to restore equity an individual may simply choose to simply leave an involvement that is perceived to be unfair. Typically, however, this is a course of action that is taken only after other attempts to restore equity have failed.

The Investment Model

Caryl Rusbult's Investment Model provides another perspective on how social exchanges may

be evaluated. This model predicts that relationship satisfaction is a function of the rewards and costs associated with the relationship. Rusbult proposes that individuals evaluate their relationships by comparing their rewards and costs with their comparison level. The comparison level consists of expectations individuals hold about various types of interpersonal relationships. The comparison level can include, among other things, expectation for benefits anticipated from the relationship, beliefs about how partners should treat one another, and how the relationship should progress. Thus, satisfaction with a romantic relationship depends on whether the rewards and costs of that relationship meet the expectations the individual holds for that relationship. If these relationship outcomes exceed expectations, that relationship should be satisfying, but if those expectations are not met, the relationship would be perceived as unsatisfying. Satisfaction, then, can be summarized mathematically as

$$\text{Satisfaction} = (\text{Rewards} - \text{Costs}) - \text{Comparison Level}$$

The Investment Model also proposes that satisfaction is an important determinant of commitment. Specifically, commitment is proposed to be a function of three factors: satisfaction, investments, and the comparison level for alternatives. This relationship can be expressed as

$$\text{Commitment} = \text{Satisfaction} + \text{Investments} - \text{Comparison Level for Alternatives}$$

As might be expected, greater satisfaction tends to lead to greater commitment to any given relationship. Investments, however, also increase commitment. Investments are resources (i.e., time, money, emotional effort) that are put into the relationship that would be lost if the relationship were to end. Investments tend to increase commitment by increasing the costs of ending the relationship. A third determinant of commitment is the comparison level for alternatives or an evaluation of the attractiveness of the best available alternative to the relationship. The attractiveness of any given alternative is evaluated in the same manner as is satisfaction with the current relationship. Specifically, the attractiveness of an alternative is a function of the rewards and costs of the alternative and the individual's comparison level.

Attractive alternatives tend to weaken commitment, whereas the lack of attractive alternatives serves to strengthen that commitment.

Exchange Versus Communal Relationships

The theories discussed thus far share the common assumption that exchange principles can be used to explain social interactions across a wide range of relationships. Exchange Theory, however, has been criticized for this assumption. Specifically, some researchers have proposed that social interactions in intimate relationships are different than those that take place in other, less intimate involvements. Clark and her colleagues have explored this hypothesis.

Clark's research suggests that many social interactions are governed by social exchange principles, and she refers to these involvements as exchange relationships. In exchange relationships, individuals are motivated to maximize their profits. Rewards are given to others either in return for rewards received in the past or in anticipation of receiving rewards in the future. These exchanges are sometimes referred to as "tit for tat." In exchange relationships, individuals also keep track of the rewards given and received and are concerned that these exchanges remain fair and equitable.

More intimate relationships, referred to as communal relationships, do not seem to be governed by these same exchange principles. In communal relationships, an exchange of rewards still takes place. The motivation for this exchange, though, is not the maximization of profit. Instead, rewards are provided to intimate partners from a desire to please them and to fulfill their needs. Thus, in communal relationships, rewards are given without consideration of rewards received or the expectation of future gain. Instead, individuals monitor their partner's needs and are less attentive to their inputs into the relationship than is the case with exchange relationships. Thus, although communal relationships are still based on exchange principles, the exchange process is different than that which takes place in most other social interactions.

The Social Exchange of Sex

From a social exchange perspective, sexual interactions are no different than other social interactions; they

are also based on an exchange of rewards. In particular, social exchange theory has been proposed as explanation for the finding that men are, on average, much more interested in and supportive of the sex industry (prostitution, pornography) than are women.

An exchange perspective proposes that sex is a female resource. Specifically, sex is a resource controlled by women who grant sexual access to men in exchange for other resources. The resources most commonly exchanged for sexual access are material goods and commitment. The exchange of material goods for sex can be seen in prostitution, the tradition of men paying for dinners, movies, and other activities, and in men expending money to access various forms of pornography. The exchange of commitment for sex is evidenced in the fact that most cultures have negative sanctions against both premarital and extramarital sex. Thus, men must offer commitment to a long-term marital relationship to gain sexual access to a partner. Social exchange theory also provides an explanation for the finding that women often view the sex industry more negatively than do men. The sex industry makes sex more readily available in the form of prostitution and pornography. In doing so, women's control of sexual access is diminished. Any increase in the availability of prostitution and pornography also makes sex a less scarce and, consequently, a less valued resource.

Concluding Remarks

In conclusion, social exchange theory has proved to be a useful approach to the exploration of social interactions. Much of its appeal lies in its simplicity and its application to a wide range of social exchanges and types of relationships. In addition, many of the basic principles (the desire to maximize profit or to engage in fair and equitable exchanges) are intuitively appealing to relationship researchers as well as to those engaged in less rigorous but no less serious contemplation of their interpersonal interactions.

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See also Communal Relationships; Equity Theory; Fairness in Relationships; Investment Model; Sexuality; Social Exchange Theory

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EXCITATION TRANSFER THEORY

Acute emotions permeate all human relationships. In intimate groupings, frequent bouts of conflict and aggression characterize negative relationships, and frequent experiences of joint accomplishments and elation characterize positive ones. As a rule, relationships are shaped by both aversive and joyous emotions that occur with some regularity and that are often intertwined. Successive emotions are particularly interesting because their physical intensity tends to escalate from earlier to later ones. Such sequential intensification may boost ensuing joy. But it also strengthens aversive emotions such as anger and rage, thereby motivating hostile and aggressive actions that may imperil relationships. The Excitation Transfer Theory, described in this entry, addresses this phenomenon of emotion intensification, along with its behavioral consequences.

Excitation as the Driving Force in Acute Emotions

Excitation Transfer Theory focuses on physiological manifestations of bodily arousal. All vital emotions are known to be accompanied by elevated sympathetic reactivity, which is subjectively experienced as general excitedness. The primary function of this reactivity is to provide energy for a burst of action to allow the organism to cope effectively with acute behavioral challenges. Coping via immediate physical action is often unproductive in contemporary situations of challenge, so much of this energy provision has become useless, if not counterproductive. A man, for instance, after being apprised of a divorce settlement of devastating consequence to him, is bound to be superbly energized by rage, but is in no position to resolve the challenge to his advantage by beating up his estranged wife or the judge, nor by racing away from the courthouse. Energizing reactivity has been retained nonetheless, primarily because it is mediated by enduring brain structures, such as the amygdala. This reactivity generates agitation that favors action over inaction. Via feedback of skeletal-motor tension and cardiac acceleration in particular, the reactivity fosters cognizance of the degree of bodily arousal. It ultimately signals emotional intensity and thus drives the experience as well as the goal-directed expression of emotions.

Cognitive and Excitatory Adjustment to Environmental Changes

The time course of cognitive and physically energizing excitatory reactions to emotion-arousing changes in the environment differs greatly. Cognitive adjustment to such changes is quasi-instantaneous because of the exceedingly fast neural mediation of cognition. In contrast, the mediation of sympathetic excitation via the release of hormones into the blood circulation is lethargic, and excitatory adjustment to situational changes comes about only after considerable passage of time. Once instigated, this activity runs its course even after the instigating emotional challenge has ceased to exist and, because of rapid cognitive adjustment, another emotion has come about.

Emotion-Intensification by Leftover Excitation

Excitation Transfer Theory is based on the apparent discrepancy in adjustment time. Specifically, the theory predicts that whenever particular circumstances evoke an emotional reaction at a time when portions of excitation are left over from preceding emotions, the leftover portions combine inseparably with newly instigated excitation to produce excitatory activity whose intensity is greater than that specific to the new instigation alone. Leftover excitation may thus be considered to artificially intensify newly triggered emotions and thereby create "overreactions." It has been observed, for instance, that libidinal urges and sexual behavior engendered in the wake of furious quarrels tend to be extraordinarily intense. In the reverse direction, thwarted erotic desires tend to foster excessive hostility in unrelated subsequent disputes. In both cases, the leftover excitation from a prior emotion intensified a subsequent, different emotion, thereby making the artificially intensified emotion incommensurate with its actual instigation.

Evidence of Excitation Transfer in Anger and Aggression

Investigations of interpersonal conflict have shown that sympathetic excitation increases with the severity of threatened harm and that the intensity of fear, anger, and ultimately aggressive behavior increases along with rising excitation. It has also been demonstrated that under conditions of extreme agitation, concerns about future implications of aggressive actions diminish and aggression becomes impulsive and reckless. The preoccupation with immediate threat-deflecting actions apparently carries with it a neglect of non-immediate ramifications. The escalation of anger and aggression during acute conflict can thus be understood as a sequence of threats and counterthreats that successively increases excitation to levels at which a "cognitive deficit" is engendered and behavior becomes impulsive.

The excitatory escalation that creates a propensity for violent action is not limited, however, to chains of aggression-inspiring threats. As expected by Excitation Transfer Theory, sympathetic excitation from reactivity that is unrelated to fear and anger can

accumulate and then intensify aggression. It has been shown that leftover excitation from sexual instigation, or from strenuous physical exercise, is readily integrated and may fuel anger and aggression.

Research suggests that the escalation of excitation to levels that invite impulsive aggressive actions is best prevented by the early provision of information that mitigates apparent provocations. Information that shifts the perception of suffered aggravation away from a deliberate targeted attack toward incidental and unavoidable causes can curtail this escalation. In case such information cannot be provided, prevention of excitatory escalations can be achieved by a voluntary or imposed temporary truce or the separation of the feuding parties. Once excitation has dissipated, because of homeostatic control, the resolution of conflict is bound to be more within reason.

Evidence of Excitation Transfer in Joyous Emotions

Excitation associated with fear and anger is not inextricably linked to aggression. Residual portions of such excitation have been shown capable of intensifying amorous feelings and sexual experiences. In turn, leftover excitation from sexual enticements has been observed to intensify such diverse emotional experiences as anger, hostility, sadness, empathy, altruism, the appreciation of humor, and the enjoyment of music.

Considerable attention has been given to the transition from aversive emotions to joy and elation. Excitation left over from acute fear has been shown to fuel euphoria upon the successful elimination of the threatening circumstances. The phenomenon of suspense entails the same conversion. The more intense empathic apprehensions about others' failure and doom, the greater will be the joy upon finding these apprehensions groundless. This transfer-facilitation of joyous emotions is heavily exploited by the entertainment media. Fictional drama of any kind is laden with episodes in which the instigation of distress is promptly superseded by satisfying resolutions to the agonizing occurrences. Spectator sports, although less scripted, also follow the suspense format in providing the greatest enjoyment with games in which much agony precedes a yearned-for outcome.

Such facilitation may be less obvious in immediate human relationships but permeates them nonetheless. In intimate groupings, challenges abound and undoubtedly create ample distress and infurcation. Perhaps ironically, the more intensely these aversions are experienced, the greater will be the joy upon removing their basis by concerted, joined efforts. The frequent experience of this kind of emotional overcoming of challenges contributes greatly to satisfying human relationships.

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See also Emotion in Relationships; Emotion Regulation in Relationships; Hostility; Relational Aggression

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EX-PARTNER AND EX-SPOUSE RELATIONSHIPS

Ex-partner and *ex-spouse relationships* are the ties between members of a former couple after divorce or relationship dissolution. The divorce rate in the United States remains around 40 percent, which means large numbers of people find themselves in postdivorce relationships. When children are involved, how former partners relate to each other is critical to their children's well-being. This entry describes perspectives that have been used to study ex-partner relationships and types of relationships that can form after dissolution for those who do not have children together as well as for those who share children.

Perspectives Used to Study Ex-Partner Relationships

Researchers who study relationship dissolution vary in how they view the resulting changes. Some take a problem-oriented or deficit comparison

perspective; they view divorce as an event or process that causes difficulty for adults and children and greatly disadvantages them when compared with adults in first married nuclear families. Others take a normative approach and view divorce and relationship dissolution as normal because of its frequency and not necessarily negative because some family members may benefit from the break. For example, if an abusive relationship dissolves, the dissolution may be positive for the person being abused and for the children who have been exposed to the abuse or who have perhaps been abused themselves. In a third approach, a stress and coping model is used, suggesting that over time, most people adjust to life changes brought about by relationship dissolution. The first 2 years following divorce are a time when parents experience personal and economic stress and are more likely to have higher levels of conflict with their former partner. As a result, these 2 years often affect children in a negative way. Children are more likely to have lower levels of academic success, have more emotional problems, and may act out. Over this 2-year period, however, most parents and children are able to adjust to the divorce.

Types of Ex-Partner Relationships

For former partners to continue a relationship after divorce, the relationship must be redefined. Part of this redefinition process includes negotiating and redefining boundaries. This postdissolution relationship may manifest itself in a number of different ways, depending partly on whether the ex-partners have children together. Regardless of the presence of shared children, intimacy and power boundaries must be addressed.

Childless Ex-Partner Relationships

Although relationships between former partners who do not have children are less likely to continue than are relations between those who share children, most childless ex-partners maintain some contact after divorce. There are a number of reasons for this. For example, they may continue to work together, they may share the same social circle, or they may want to maintain the friendship

they had before and during the marriage. They may also want to continue ties because of shared history, because of extended family relationships, and to maintain mutual support. Some couples can maintain close friendships but cannot tolerate each other's company on a day-in and day-out basis. There are few societal scripts, however, to guide former partners in how to relate with each other. There is also a prevailing assumption that ex-partners should be antagonists. If ex-partners remain friendly after divorce, others are often confused about why the relationship dissolved or they may make assumptions that the couple will reunite. New romantic partners often discourage ex-partner relationships. If intimacy boundaries are not renegotiated, ex-partners may continue such behaviors as having keys to each other's households, and sharing pets and expensive items such as snow blowers, lawn mowers, and vacuum cleaners. It may be disconcerting to a new romantic partner when an ex-partner bursts into the house, unannounced, sometimes at quite inappropriate times, to borrow the vacuum cleaner!

It is typically easier for couples to renegotiate power boundaries than it is to renegotiate intimacy boundaries. Some ex-partners view divorce as a chance to develop different roles than they assumed during the marriage. Other ex-partners may resist these changes and feel threatened by them. For example, if the husband was the main source of financial support for the couple or if the ex-partners have become dependent on each other for matters such as emotional support, routine household tasks, or financial management, divorce might introduce genuine crisis to their lives. Conflicts over power boundaries may result in prolonged and expensive legal disputes over property and money, among other things. Power boundaries are not really negotiated until both ex-spouses realize they no longer have control over the other.

The well-being of those involved in postdissolution relationships can be affected by the type of relationship that ensues. Those who are preoccupied with their former partner, have lingering romantic ties, and are overdependent on their former partner, or continue to have conflict with them, are more likely to have lower levels of well-being than are those who are able to retain reasonably friendly relationships.

Relationships for Ex-Partners With Children

Former partners who share children are likely to continue interacting following divorce and to participate in a *coparenting relationship*. A coparenting relationship exists when biological parents continue conjoint responsibility for their child's well-being and work together to raise their children. The children are the tie that connects former partners, although the relationship that ensues is now different because the two typically are no longer romantically involved. The couple must disengage from the spousal relationship but continue to relate as parents. Children who are biologically related to one parent and not the other (i.e., stepchildren), however, no longer have a connecting tie with the stepparent. Unless stepparents have adopted the stepchildren, they are not legally required to continue a relationship with them. In fact, stepparents often find that they can be legally prevented from having any contact at all with their stepchild even though they may have helped raise the children from birth.

Ex-spouses who share children are likely to have higher levels of interpersonal conflict and lower levels of well-being than are those who do not. There are a number of reasons for this. For one, they may be required by law to share custody of their child even though they would prefer to not interact with each other, whereas those who do not have children are more likely to maintain contact because they want to do so. For parents, arguments stemming from the difficulties of raising children as well as those surrounding parenting children from separate households (e.g., shared parenting time, child support amounts, how child support money is spent) can trigger conflict that would not exist for those who do not have children. Renegotiating intimacy and power boundaries can be quite stressful.

Clinical researcher Constance Ahrons identified five types of postdivorce coparenting relationships: Cooperative Colleagues, Perfect Pals, Angry Associates, Fiery Foes, and Dissolved Duos. Cooperative Colleagues and Perfect Pals are those who are able to maintain cooperative relationships following divorce. Approximately half of parents are Cooperative Colleagues—couples who are able to separate spousal disagreements from parental responsibilities. These parents manage to control

their conflicts to work together to parent their children. Cooperative Colleagues have negotiated intimacy boundaries and do not intrude unwelcomed into each other's personal lives and new relationships. These coparents are able to share their children's events such as graduation, weddings, school conferences, and sporting events with low levels of interpersonal stress. Good parenting plans provide boundaries that negate power struggles by clearly defining issues of shared time (e.g., what time a parent will pick up and return a child, where and when children will share holidays, birthdays, etc.). Even a well-designed parenting plan, however, does not solve all the problems related to the inevitable changes and contingencies that occur as children grow older. The parents have to have at least minimum motivation to cooperate for coparenting to work.

Perfect Pals consist of a small group of people (less than 5 percent) who remain best friends after the divorce and continue a nonsexual, intimate relationship with each other. These parents operate almost exactly as they did before divorce, except they no longer share a household. These ex-spouses continue to enjoy each other's company, but they have found it impossible to live together. They may cite things as simple as differing standards of household cleanliness as a reason for living apart. Some have grown apart as romantic partners over time but remain friends who share a heavy investment in their shared children. They maintain the rituals that the family enjoyed before divorce, plan special events such as birthday and graduation parties for the children, and jointly attend conferences and children's sporting, musical, and other events. Children appreciate their parents being Perfect Pals, but it only works if neither parent remarries. Perfect Pals are unlikely to have negotiated boundaries to the extent that is true of Cooperative Colleagues. This painful process may be avoided until one member of the former couple finds a new love interest.

Cooperative coparental alliances are possible and are beneficial for children and parents alike. When parents can cooperatively coparent, they and their children are more likely to adjust positively to the changes brought about by divorce or relationship dissolution. For parents to enhance the positive parenting environment, they should share information about the child with the other

parent, share responsibility for childrearing tasks, and be cordial and respectful toward each other.

Angry Associates and Fiery Foes are not able to cooperate, but instead have highly conflicted relationships. Approximately 20 percent of divorced coparents are Angry Associates who are unable to differentiate between spousal problems and parenting responsibilities. They often hold grudges, do not cooperate with each other, and may engage in parallel parenting, which means that they do not talk with each other about the children. These parents are not able to jointly attend teacher conferences, birthday parties, or other important events related to their children without acrimony.

Fiery Foes, about 2 to 5 percent of coparents, do not recognize each other's right to parent, and they go to great lengths to sabotage each other. These parents often have long, drawn-out custody battles and may resort to violence to seek revenge on their former partners. They cannot let go of hurtful things that happened during the marriage and refuse to recognize anything positive about their ex-spouses. This style of coparenting is the most likely to negatively affect children. Finally, Dissolved Duos no longer have contact with each other, and one parent, usually the father, no longer has contact with the children. This may reduce the children's exposure to parental conflict, but it leaves children feeling abandoned and unloved.

When there are high levels of conflict between the former partners as is the case with Angry Associates and Fiery Foes, children's well-being is negatively affected in many ways. They often have behavioral problems (they may act out or be depressed) and lowered academic success. Fathers are less likely to remain involved in the child's life when there are high levels of interpersonal conflict between him and his former partners. In addition to the diminished level of contact the child has with the father, the child's relationship with extended family members on the father's side is often cut off, which may at least reduce the richness of the child's social environment.

Most former partners, regardless of whether or not they have children, retain some contact after relationship dissolution or divorce, but the type of relationship that ensues can vary greatly. The ways in which the ex-partners interact with each other affects the well-being of the former partners as well as any children involved. When former

partners are able to successfully redefine their relationship, negotiate power and intimacy boundaries, and remain cordial to each other, all of those involved can benefit.

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See *also* Dissolution of Relationships, Coping and Aftermath; Divorce, Effects on Adults; Postdivorce Relationships

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EXPECTATIONS ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS

Humans have many expectations for their interpersonal relationships. Relational expectations are assumptions or beliefs about how the self and partner typically think, feel, and behave in

relationships, as well as how relationships typically function. These expectations concern relationships in general, as well as expectations for specific relationships. Expectations are formed through the cultural environment, socialization, and personal experiences within relationships. Relational expectations are important because they influence both interpersonal behavior and individuals' evaluation of the quality of their relationships. This entry describes types of relational expectations and the mental organization of expectations.

Types of Relational Expectations

Social scientists have identified two types of relational expectations. People have both general relationship expectations and relationship-specific expectations.

General Relationship Expectations

General relationship expectations are those assumptions and beliefs concerning how people typically behave, think, and feel in relationships, as well as the nature of different types of relationships. These general expectations are formed from people's acceptance of cultural norms, parental socialization, observation of other's relationships, and people's own experiences in relationships. Because of these multiple influences, general relationship expectations tend to be widely held among those in a particular society.

Cultural Influences

The normative expectation for choosing a marital partner in Western cultures is that love should exist between the partners. In other cultures, equal social status between marital partners may be the predominant expectation. Cultures transmit their expectations through its institutions. Cultural expectations are transmitted through media portrayals of relationships, as well as by various societal institutions, such as the family (see further discussion later) or religious beliefs.

Parental Socialization

People's *general relationship expectations* also are influenced through parental socialization.

Parents influence these expectations through direct teaching about what to expect in relationships and by modeling interpersonal behaviors. For example, parents are likely to teach their children about what to expect in marriage, for example, spouses support you, spouses can be trusted. Children also observe their parents' interactions with other married couples. This modeling of parental behavior in relationships can lead children to internalize expectations about how relationships typically operate.

Observation of Other People's Relationships

People have multiple opportunities to observe others' relationships. People observe relationships in various media, their own and others' families, and those of their friends. Through these observations, people learn to expect certain things in their relationships. Not all observations are equally influential in the formation of expectations. People are most likely to be influenced by people who are important or similar to them. Thus, it is not surprising that parents are a powerful force in the development of relational expectations in their children. Similarly, adolescents' observations of their peers' relationships should be particularly important in influencing relational expectations.

People's Own Relationship Experiences

The development of general relationship expectations is not solely a passive process of observation. People's direct experience in their own relationships is an important force in the formation of their general relational expectations.

The seeds of relational expectations are sown early in children's lives. Early research showed that parenting styles are influential in the development of relational expectations, although many other factors also are important. Parents who are loving, nurturing, and dependably respond to their children's needs promote children who trust and are comfortable relying on their parents and others. Other parents are inconsistent with their children, providing love and nurturing at times, but not at other times. Such parenting leads children to be anxious about their relationships and unsure that parents and others are trustworthy. Other parents are hostile in their parenting styles, with some displaying rejecting behavior toward

their children. This parenting style can lead to children who emotionally withdraw and are distrustful in their expectations for others. Many researchers believe that these expectations acquired in early interactions with parents may carry over to their adult relationships. Consequently, in adulthood, some people will generally expect that others will like them and be trustworthy. These individuals are secure in their expectations about relationships. Some individuals will expect others to be relatively untrustworthy and undependable, whereas some people will expect others to be unpredictable, thus leading to insecurity in their expectations.

People's relational expectations do not completely depend on their experiences with parents. As children develop, they begin to experience relationships outside the family. They form relationships with peers, teachers, and romantic partners.

Relationship-Specific Expectations

As people begin to explore longer term relationships with friends, romantic partners, and others, they begin to form expectations about each of those specific relationships. People use their *general expectations* for relationships as an initial roadmap for what to expect from a specific partner. For example, in Western societies, there is a general expectation that relationships with others will be characterized by considerable equality between the two people. Consequently, on a first date, a woman will likely expect her dating partner to consider her likes and dislikes as they decide whether to have a meal together or engage in certain activities. However, if the man exhibits an attitude of male superiority by taking sole charge of where they go to eat and what they are going to do, her expectation about equality in that specific relationship may begin to change. Of course, his behavior might be the result of his general expectation that women prefer a male partner to take charge. In that case, further interaction in differing circumstances would allow the woman to develop more accurate expectations for the man's relational behavior. Consequently, if the relationship persists, the content of the woman's expectations for that specific relationship will become more detailed.

The Mental Organization of Expectations

Relational expectations, whether general or relationship specific, do not exist in isolation from each other in people's minds. In other words, when people have one expectation for a relationship, they tend to have other expectations that are related to the first one. For example, people who expect romantic partners to love them are also likely to expect those partners to be trustworthy. Relational expectations tend to be organized in what social scientists call interpersonal scripts or social schemas.

Interpersonal Scripts

Interpersonal scripts are mental representations that contain people's expectations for how certain events should unfold in an interpersonal interaction. For example, a common first date script for a heterosexual relationship contains the following expected events: The man asks a woman for a date, a decision is made about what to do on the date, the people groom themselves in getting ready for the date, the man picks the woman up at her home, they engage in recreational activities, they share a meal, the woman is taken back to her home, and then the daters tell each other that they had a good time and say goodbye. Other interpersonal scripts exist, such as scripts for a sexual encounter.

Social Schemas

Social schemas are mental representations of one's knowledge or expectations about social concepts (e.g., love, commitment) and social relationships. For example, people have many related expectations for what it means to be "committed" (a social concept) to a relationship. They expect their committed partners to show their commitment through loyalty, living up to their word, persevering in hard times, and so on. People also have social schemas for different types of social roles. People typically expect their parents to love them, to protect them, and teach them how to handle life's difficulties. These scripts and schemas are important in the functioning of relationships.

The Importance of Relational Expectations

Relational expectations play an important role in relationships, possibly more so at present than

in the past. For example, in the 19th and early 20th centuries in the United States, expectations for a marital partner were relatively straightforward. Expectations for a marital partner focused on the practical qualities of the partner that could lead to a successful economic union. Today, people expect marriage to be a source for personal growth and happiness. Consequently, when such expectations are not met, serious consequences can result. Social scientists have speculated that the relatively high divorce rate in Western society is a result of these inflated expectations.

Expectations have consequences for relationships in two ways: (1) They act as guidelines for behavior in interpersonal relationships, and (2) they assist in assessing the quality of those relationships. Expectations influence the establishment, maintenance, and dissolution of interpersonal relationships. The following sections illustrate how relational expectations can influence interpersonal relationships at these different phases of relationships. However, the discussion of one type of expectation at a particular phase does not mean that the same expectation is irrelevant at other phases. In addition, expectations are only one factor that influences the course of relationships.

Establishing Relationships

General relational expectations are important in the process of beginning a relationship. These expectations can either facilitate or interfere with the establishment of relationships. These potential influences can be illustrated using a fictional example of a first meeting between two people, Mark and Amy. Mark, a psychology major, is attending a get-acquainted function sponsored by his mixed-sex residence hall at the university. As he walks in, he notices an attractive woman, Amy, standing alone at the refreshment table. Mark is interested in exploring possible dating partners, so he considers approaching Amy.

Facilitation by general expectations might proceed as follows: Mark's general script for a first meeting includes an expectation that men initially approach women in such situations, thus he feels comfortable initiating an interaction with Amy. Amy's attractiveness also influences Mark's decision about approaching her. Considerable research shows that individuals

tend to *expect* physically attractive people to be more socially skilled, make better marriage partners, and make better lovers than those who are less attractive. Consequently, Mark decides to approach Amy.

The next task in a first meeting is to behave toward the other in a way that promotes feelings of rapport. Relational expectations also will influence how Mark attempts to build rapport. During his life, Mark has enjoyed trusting, caring, and comfortable relationships with his parents, peers, and former dating partners. Consequently, Mark has generally secure expectations for his relationships and will enact behaviors that promote rapport. Researchers have found that people with generally secure versus insecure expectations are likely to engage in higher levels of appropriate self-disclosure in initial encounters and are more responsive to the disclosures of the potential partner, thus promoting rapport. In addition, Mark's generally secure expectations (e.g., trust) for a potential partner are likely to result in Amy displaying similarly secure behaviors. This phenomenon is known as the self-fulfilling prophecy. Simply stated, the self-fulfilling prophecy holds that when people have an expectation for other individuals, those others tend to behave in ways that confirm the first person's expectations. Thus, when Mark competently communicates with Amy, she matches his behavior with her own competent communication. This ongoing reciprocal communication is likely to lead to rapport between Mark and Amy, which bodes well for further development of a relationship.

In contrast to this scenario, people's general relationship expectations also can interfere with the establishment of relationships. Mark may have a history of poor relationships with his parents, friends, and past romantic partners. Consequently, Mark's general expectation of failure in relationships makes him anxious about starting relationships. Research shows that this anxiety is associated with an impaired ability to approach other people for a relationship effectively. Mark's anxious insecurity may lead him to approach Amy by emphasizing his weaknesses to gain her sympathy. Such an approach lessens the chance that Amy will be attracted to Mark. In addition, Mark's insecure or anxious expectations can lead him to be extraordinarily sensitive to any sign that Amy may not be

attracted to him. For example, if during their conversation, Amy looks away for even a fleeting moment, Mark may interpret that as a lack of interest in him, even if that was not Amy's intention. Mark may then decide to terminate the interaction.

If Mark and Amy's first meeting results in future encounters, the potential exists for their relationship to become more committed. General relationship expectations also are involved in these increases in commitment. Two types of expectations are particularly significant. Relationships scientists have shown that people are satisfied with a relationship to the extent that their present relational rewards exceed their *expectations* for what they generally receive in a relationship. Consequently, if Mark and Amy perceive that their relationship is yielding higher rewards than what they generally *expect* (based on a comparison with past relationships), they will experience satisfaction, which contributes to the development of commitment. In addition, people also have expectations for what they *should* receive in their relationships. In other words, people have expectations, what social scientists call *standards*, for ideal mates. These general relationship expectations develop over time as people internalize cultural expectations for relationships, and through their interactions with parents, peers, and past relationship partners. Relationship researchers have found that the extent to which people believe their partners meet (versus not meet) their expectations for an ideal partner, the more likely they are to persist in those relationships. Consequently, if Amy and Mark believe that the other meets their ideal expectations, the relationship is likely to become more committed.

Maintaining Relationships

If some level of commitment develops over time between Mark and Amy, general relationship expectations will continue to play a role in their relationship. However, both Mark and Amy will begin to form specific expectations for each other and their relationship as they continue to interact after the first meeting. Some of these specific expectations will be similar to their general relationship expectations, whereas others will be based on their experiences with each other. For example, Mark generally expects that men will initiate

interaction with dating partners. However, after a few dates, Amy occasionally calls Mark to see if he wants to “go out.” Over time, Mark may form a specific expectation that it is acceptable for Amy to initiate activities with him, although his general expectation may not change. Other specific expectations for each other will develop as they continue to interact.

As commitment grows between Mark and Amy, so do relationship-specific expectations that the other is trustworthy. These expectations play an important role in helping people maintain their relationships. People in relationships who have trusting expectations of their specific partners evaluate those partners in a way that promotes positive outcomes. Research has demonstrated that people who have higher expectations (versus lower expectations) that their partners are trustworthy interpret their partners’ behaviors relatively more positively, as well as discounting the influence of any negative partner behavior. For example, since trusting expectations have developed between Mark and Amy, a negative remark from Mark about Amy’s being late to meet him for dinner is not construed by Amy as a threat to their relationship. In turn, Mark does not conclude that Amy’s lateness is a sign of waning commitment. Consequently, this and similar interactions help maintain this relationship. In addition, maintenance of Mark and Amy’s relationship will also depend on an ongoing assessment by each of them that the rewards they are receiving are greater than what they generally expect to receive in relationships (see earlier discussion of this issue).

Deteriorating Relationships

Relational expectations also can contribute to the deterioration of relationships. Mark and Amy’s relationship could have taken a downturn at any point after their first meeting. Expectations are involved in the deterioration of relationships in at least two different ways.

Relationship problems often arise from one or both partners having unrealistically high general expectations for their partners and relationships. Relationship researchers have uncovered five basic unrealistic expectations: (1) disagreement is destructive, (2) mind reading is expected, (3) partners

cannot change, (4) sexual performance must be perfect, and (5) the sexes are different. Social scientists have shown that possessing such unrealistic expectations is associated with dysfunction in interpersonal relationships (e.g., negative problem solving, lowered satisfaction). Amy may generally expect that good relationships are free of conflict. This expectation leads Amy to question the quality of her relationship with Mark when there is the least hint of disagreement. In addition, Amy may be reluctant to express any disagreement with Mark. Consequently, problems are not dealt with and accumulate over time, possibly leading to a later emotional outburst.

Relationship specific expectations also can play a role in the deterioration of relationships. Over time, people develop many expectations specific to their present relationships. Amy, through her repeated interactions with Mark, likely develops a set of expectations (e.g., a social schema) about him as her committed partner. She expects Mark to be dependable, trustworthy, and caring. However, their relationship could begin to deteriorate if Mark begins to violate Amy’s expectations for him as a committed partner, thus resulting in a change of her expectations.

Relationship researchers believe that changes in specific relational expectations occur via two processes. For example, if during the past 2 months Amy has noticed that Mark has failed to follow through on several promises that he made to her. Researchers suggest that Amy’s expectations for Mark will change when his undependable behavior reaches a certain level, essentially a bookkeeping process. On the other hand, a sudden change in expectations for Mark can occur when Mark severely violates Amy’s expectation for dependability, which is a conversion process. Either process can lead to deterioration of the relationship.

In conclusion, relational expectations are important in the functioning of interpersonal relationships. They can play a positive or negative role in interpersonal relationships. Future research is likely to bring a better understanding of their role in relationships.

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See also Beliefs About Relationships; Cognitive Processes in Relationships; Ideals About Relationships; Rules of Relationships

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EXPECTATION STATES THEORY, APPLIED TO RELATIONSHIPS

In his book *The Power of Positive Thinking*, Norman Vincent Peale famously noted, “If you paint in your mind a picture of bright and happy expectations, you put yourself in a condition conducive to your goal.” As this quotation suggests, expectations are related to behavior and ultimately to success. Expectation States Theory, which was developed by Joseph Berger and his colleagues, helps explain how judgments about status influence perceptions and performance in task-oriented groups. Other related theories focus on how expectations are related to emotions and communication in personal relationships. This entry describes both these areas of research.

Expectation States Theory

Expectation States Theory examines how status cues influence expectations and encourage particular behaviors within task-oriented groups. *Expectation states* refer to beliefs about a person’s competence and ability to contribute to a group

task. These expectations are based on status cues such as clothing and accessories, physical appearance, accent, posture, use of technical jargon, age, and gender. According to the theory, when group members first meet, they evaluate one another and form initial expectations based on these status cues. People who possess high status cues are expected to be more competent, influential, and successful than are those possessing low status cues. These expectations then work as self-fulfilling prophecies. People who are expected to be competent are given more opportunities to succeed, more positive feedback, less criticism, and more cooperation from others, all of which increase their confidence and their ability to influence others and succeed. In contrast, group members who are perceived as low status are rebuffed and disliked if they try to assert power or authority.

In addition to general expectation states, the theory proposes that people develop *self-to-other performance expectations*. The idea here is that when people first come together in groups, they make implicit comparisons between themselves and others to better understand their roles. When people have low performance expectations, they are likely to be fairly passive, ask others for information, be easily influenced by others, and evaluate other people’s suggestions favorably. In contrast, people who have high performance expectations are more likely to share ideas, be critical of others, and take leadership roles.

Although Expectation States Theory was developed to apply to task-oriented groups, other scholars, such as Cecilia Ridgeway, have used the theory to explain gender inequality in relationships between men and women. Ridgeway has argued that expectations based on gender stereotypes produce a network of constraining beliefs and behaviors that prevent women (who are viewed as having less status than men) from succeeding in the workplace. According to this view, expectation states help explain why women are evaluated more harshly than men when they act aggressively; because they are seen as lower in status, women are expected to engage in behavior that is conciliatory and cooperative rather than authoritative and competitive. Expectation States Theory also helps describe the perceptual biases and processes that lead women to hit “glass ceilings” and be overlooked for promotions. The theory suggests that

this happens because women are not expected to perform well, leading others to overlook or dismiss their accomplishments.

Implications for Relationships

Other expectation-related theories, such as Mary Levitt's Social Expectations Model and Judee Burgoon's Expectancy Violations Theory, have been applied to close relationships. In these theories, *expectation states* are cast broadly as beliefs about what will or should occur in a given situation based on individual knowledge about a person or social norms. For example, a wife might expect her husband to be outgoing at a party because that is how he normally acts, and most people likely expect more small talk than intimate disclosure on a first date. Similar to the premises underlying Expectancy States Theory, these types of expectations are theorized to act as roadmaps that help people predict, explain, and reduce uncertainty about their own social behavior as well as the social behavior of others.

In relationships, as in work groups, expectancy states influence perceptions and behaviors. People in happy relationships tend to expect their partners to be pleasant, whereas people in unhappy relationships tend to expect their partners to be unpleasant. These expectations can become self-fulfilling prophecies because partners look for behaviors that confirm their expectations. When people expect negativity in their relationships, they also tend to interpret positive or neutral behaviors more negatively. For instance, if a husband expects his wife to be critical when he tells her about a problem, he may hear a negative tone in her voice that objective observers would not hear. This perception of negativity can then lead to conflict. Of course, people can also have unrealistically high expectations that are difficult, if not impossible, to fulfill. They may believe their new relationship will solve all their problems, their good looking partner is as perfect as he or she looks, or having a baby will restore closeness in their marriage. Such high expectations often lead to disappointment and disillusionment.

Theories such as the Social Expectations Model and Expectancy Violations Theory have also extended work on expectations by distinguishing

between expectancy-confirming and expectancy-violating behavior. Expectancy-confirming behavior often goes unnoticed because it is consistent with what people imagined would happen. In contrast, people tend to notice and evaluate unexpected behavior. *Positive expectancy violations*, which occur when an unexpected behavior is evaluated as better than what was expected, lead to positive emotions such as joy and affection. *Negative expectancy violations*, which occur when an unexpected behavior is evaluated as worse than what was expected, lead to negative emotions such as anger or disappointment.

The same behavior can be evaluated differently depending on the initial expectancy state. For example, imagine that Christa and Maria both receive flowers and a card from their husbands on Valentine's Day. If Christa's husband usually forgets to do anything on Valentine's Day, his behavior would be evaluated as better than expected, constituting a positive expectancy violation. In contrast, if Maria's husband usually purchases an expensive gift for Valentine's Day, the flowers and card would be evaluated as worse than expected, constituting a negative expectancy violation. Even though the two husbands gave the same gift, Christa would be happier than Maria. Thus, as the quote by Peale at the beginning of this entry suggests, there is indeed a connection between expectations and emotions such as happiness.

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See also Emotion in Relationships; Expectations About Relationships; First Impressions; Gender Stereotypes; Interpersonal Influence

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EXPERIMENTAL DESIGNS FOR RELATIONSHIP RESEARCH

Research is a cyclical process. Theories shape research questions, and the outcomes of the research process in turn shape theories. A critical component in this cycle is the research methods that are used to gather data for testing hypotheses. This entry discusses the benefits and limitations of using experimental designs to test hypotheses in the field of relationship research.

Experimental Designs

The main focus of experimental research methods is on how different social or situational contexts influence people's responses (e.g., their thoughts, feelings, or behaviors). In a basic experiment, the researcher introduces a treatment to one group of participants (i.e., the experimental group) and withholds treatment to another group of participants (i.e., the control group). Critically, all study participants are randomly assigned to each group, helping ensure that participants in each group do not differ, on average, in any meaningful way from each other. Additionally, all study procedures are identical across the groups except for the treatment introduced by the researcher. The researcher then assesses all participants on the same dependent variable(s) of interest, and compares the scores from participants in the experimental and control groups to determine if the treatment had the intended effect. Any differences that emerge between participants placed into the experimental or control conditions are attributed to the treatment rather than extraneous factors. The control of extraneous factors and the isolation of key experimental manipulations allow the researcher to make cause and effect conclusions, which is the major benefit of experimental methods.

To illustrate the implementation of an experimental design in relationship research, consider a study conducted by Clive Seligman and colleagues that tested the hypothesis that in the context of a committed romantic relationship people would feel more love for their partners when they perceived their own motives for being with their partners as intrinsic (i.e., enjoying the qualities of their partners for their own sake) rather than extrinsic (i.e., enjoying the qualities of their partners because they serve other ends). Couples participating in this research were randomly assigned to one of three treatment conditions. Participants were asked to complete a number of open-ended sentences containing either the prepositional phrase *because I* (e.g., I seek out my girlfriend/boyfriend because I . . .), or *in order to* (e.g., I seek out my girlfriend/boyfriend in order to . . .). Prior research had shown that the phrase *because I* established an intrinsic mindset and the phrase *in order to* established an extrinsic mindset. In a third (control) condition, participants simply completed the set of dependent variables. The primary dependent variable was the degree to which participants reported loving their partner, assessed after the experimental treatments had taken effect. Compared with people in the control and intrinsic motivation conditions, people in the extrinsic motivation condition reported lower levels of love for the partner when led to believe that they were with their partner as a means to achieve other ends. No mean differences in reported love emerged, however, between the control and intrinsic motivation conditions. The use of an experimental design allowed the researchers to conclude that an extrinsic motivation for maintaining a romantic relationship caused people to feel less love for their partners.

In the previous example, the researchers might have used other research methods to test their hypothesis. For example, they might have asked a sample of participants the degree to which they were with their partners for both intrinsic and extrinsic reasons and how much they loved their partners. Scores on these three variables could then have been correlated within the sample. Presumably, scores on the intrinsic motivation and love scales would have been positively correlated, showing that love was greater when people possessed more intrinsic reasons for being with their partner. Similarly, scores on the extrinsic motivation

and love scales would have been negatively correlated, showing lesser love when people report more extrinsic reasons for being with their partner. The primary limitation with this correlational approach is that a correlation describes a relation between two variables, but does not speak to the direction of causation between them. For instance, it is not known if type of motivation for being with a partner causes feelings of love or whether feelings of love cause different types of motivation to be felt in a relationship. Additionally, an unmeasured third variable could be responsible for the type of motivation people feel for being with their partner and feelings of love. Carefully controlled experiments, therefore, are the most compelling method for providing evidence of cause and effect relations between the manipulated variables and study outcomes.

Limitations of Experimental Designs for Relationship Research

To conduct an experiment, researchers must have the ability to control and manipulate the factors under investigation. Many factors in field of relationship research, however, are outside the researcher's control. On the one hand, there are some things that researchers simply cannot control, such as who will fall in love, or who will become a parent and who will not. For example, researchers are not able to randomly assign people to a "one child" treatment, a "three child" treatment, or a "no child" control group to determine if having more children causes people to, for example, experience declines in physical and mental well-being compared with having fewer or no children.

On the other hand, some events are beyond the ethical reach of experimentation. It would not be ethical, for example, to assess the impact of infidelity on people's negative feelings toward their romantic partners by comparing the affective reaction of one group of people falsely told that their partners had admitted to many recent sexual affairs with another group of people provided no such information. Overall, researchers are expected to cause no serious harm to individuals or their relationships with their experimental manipulations. Testing certain types of hypotheses in

relationship research via experimentation is therefore a challenging task.

Concluding Remarks

Experimental designs for relationship research need to focus on variables that can be controlled, while taking special care to investigate, but not harm, potential or existing relationships. It is worth the effort of designing experiments that meet these two criteria given the power of experimental designs to provide evidence for cause and effect relations. The development of knowledge in relationship science is greatly assisted by the prominence of experimentation in the researcher's toolbox.

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See also Archival Methods; Daily Diary Methods; Discourse Analysis; Dyadic Data Analysis; Ethical Issues in Relationship Research; Peer Report Methods; Quantitative Methods in Relationship Research

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EXPRESSED EMOTION

Expressed emotion is a rather confusing term. It does not refer to a person's willingness to show emotions. Rather, it refers to a measure of the family environment that has been linked to psychiatric patients doing worse clinically after they

are discharged from a treatment facility. This entry describes how the construct was originally developed, discusses how it is measured, and explores its correlates and consequences.

Origins and Measurement

More than 50 years ago, a British sociologist named George Brown made a surprising observation. Brown and his colleagues noted that male patients who were suffering from chronic schizophrenia did much better after they were discharged from the hospital if they went to live in lodgings, or with siblings, rather than returning home to live with their wives or their parents. The finding that patients did better when they did not live with their families was unexpected. At the time, there was little in the British psychiatric literature that might have led anyone to think that social experiences might play a role in the course of schizophrenia. The unusual finding led Brown and his collaborators to begin systematic research designed to explore the possible role that family relationships might play with respect to clinical outcome in schizophrenia.

A major insight here was that it was the more everyday aspects of family relationships that were thought to be important, not relationships that were pathological or extremely disturbed. Brown and his colleagues began a series of studies designed to measure the emotional climate that existed in the family. This work resulted in the development of the expressed emotion (EE) construct.

The most accepted way of measuring EE is through an interview with the patient's key relative (usually a parent or a spouse); this is conducted in the absence of the patient. The interview is known as the Camberwell Family Interview (CFI). It is semistructured, and it takes about 1 to 2 hours to complete. Although the CFI contains specific questions about the development of the patient's psychiatric difficulties and asks about specific symptoms, it is also designed to provide the relative with an opportunity to talk and tell his or her story. There is a focus on how the relative deals with difficult situations involving the patient. Other questions concern the relationship between the relative and the patient and how they get along on a day-to-day basis.

Ratings of EE are derived from the relative's tone of voice when speaking about the patient as well as from what he or she says during the CFI. Because of this, the CFI must always be recorded for later coding. Training to rate EE is time-consuming and sometimes difficult to obtain. However, after approximately 2 weeks of training, coders are able to rate the elements of EE quite reliably. Coding EE takes approximately 4 hours per recorded interview.

Three key elements are used in rating EE: criticism, hostility, and emotional overinvolvement. The most important of these is criticism. Critical remarks are remarks that indicate clear dislike or disapproval of some aspect of the patient's behavior (e.g., "He stays up late watching TV and makes a lot of noise when the rest of us are trying to sleep. It's so frustrating and annoying."). Critical remarks are rated as such either because they contain critical content or because the relative uses a negative voice tone when speaking about the patient.

Hostile remarks are conceptually related to criticism in that they reflect dislike or disapproval. However, the degree of negativity is much more extreme. Hostile remarks include comments that are rejecting of the patient ("Sometimes I don't even want to be in the same room as him"). Remarks that indicate dislike of the patient as a person ("She's very selfish—doesn't care about anyone else but herself") are also coded as hostile.

The third element of EE is emotional overinvolvement (EOI). EOI is not like criticism or hostility. Rather, it reflects dramatic, exaggerated, overprotective, or devoted attitudes or behaviors toward the patient by the relative (e.g., "It breaks my heart to see him suffering. I'd do anything for him if it would help. There's nothing I wouldn't do for that boy."). EOI attitudes and behaviors are much less common than are critical or hostile comments. When found, they tend to be seen more in parents (especially mothers) than in other kinds of relatives.

To be classified as high in EE, relatives either need to make an above-threshold number of critical remarks, show any evidence of hostility, or score high (3 or more) on a 0–5 scale of EOI. The cutting scores that are used for criticism vary according to the diagnosis of the patient. If relatives of schizophrenia patients make six or more critical remarks

during the CFI, they will be classified as being high in EE. For relatives of patients with unipolar depression, however, a lower cutting score (two or three critical remarks) is used. The differences in cutting scores derive from empirical research on the predictive validity of EE and may reflect diagnostic differences in sensitivity to criticism. In cases where patients live with more than one relative (e.g., two parents), the family is classified as high in EE if at least one of the relatives is so rated.

In addition to rating criticism, hostility, and EOI, coders also rate (on a 0–5 scale) how much warmth the relative expresses when talking about the patient and how many positive comments about the patient (frequency count) he or she makes. These ratings are not considered in the overall (high versus low) EE classification, however. The reason for this is that, in Brown et al.'s early study, warmth was negatively correlated with criticism and very high warmth was associated with EOI. Unfortunately, this has led to a general neglect of the possible link between positive characteristics of families and risk for relapse.

Alternative Measures of Expressed Emotion

In the assessment of EE, the CFI is undoubtedly the measure of choice. However, the CFI is a time-consuming measure to administer and to score. This has led to the development of several alternative forms of assessment. Some of these involve questionnaires. Another common alternative measure is the Five Minute Speech Sample (FMSS). This requires the relative to talk about the patient for 5 uninterrupted minutes. The FMSS has been used by researchers studying childhood psychopathology and, to a more limited extent, in the study of schizophrenia and bipolar disorder. Although learning to code the FMSS still requires training, assessing EE with this measure takes much less time. One problem with the FMSS, however, is that, when compared against the criterion measure of the CFI, the FMSS tends to under-identify high EE relatives.

Expressed Emotion and Relapse

Expressed emotion is important because it is a predictor of relapse. When patients with schizophrenia

live with families rated as high EE, they have a risk of relapse that is more than twice the relapse rate found in patients living with low EE relatives. The association between high EE and increased risk for relapse in schizophrenia patients has been replicated many times and in many countries. High levels of family EE are also predictive of higher rates of relapse in the 9 to 12 months after treatment for major depression and bipolar disorder. Although most of the research on EE has involved patients with schizophrenia and mood disorders, studies have also examined EE as a predictor of clinical outcome in other forms of psychopathology including anxiety disorders, substance abuse, eating disorders, and borderline personality disorder. In general, these have shown that high family levels of EE predict worse clinical outcomes (shorter time to relapse, poorer functioning after treatment) in patients. An exception concerns patients diagnosed with borderline personality disorder. Research suggests that criticism and hostility are unrelated to clinical outcome in patients with borderline personality disorder and that high levels of emotional overinvolvement predict *better* clinical functioning at 1-year follow-up. Perhaps, for patients with strong emotions and abandonment concerns, there is something positive about the high levels of devotion, overprotection, and emotional expressiveness that are central to the EOI construct.

Understanding High EE

Because EE is measured in relatives and predicts poor clinical outcomes in patients, researchers initially assumed that EE was indexing something negative about relatives that played a causal role in the relapse process. This idea was consistent with behavioral observations that showed that, during face-to-face interactions with patients, high EE relatives were more critical, disagreed with patients more, and showed higher levels of nonverbal negativity than did low EE relatives. However, studies have also indicated that negativity is often apparent in both the relatives and the patients. Rather than being thought of as a construct that blames family members, EE is perhaps best regarded as a measure of a set of *patient-relative relationship problems* that are important for the relapse process.

Although the question of why EE predicts relapse is far from resolved, research supports the idea that EE may play a causal role in the relapse process. When families receive family-based interventions designed to reduce aspects of high EE, relapse rates in patients (who are already receiving medications) are reduced. This is true for patients with schizophrenia and for patients with bipolar disorder. Family-based interventions typically provide relatives with education about the illness. They also aim to improve communication and problem solving within the family.

Although the success of family-based interventions in reducing patients' relapse rates supports the idea that EE may play a causal role in the relapse process, it is important to avoid an overly simplistic and unidirectional view of EE. Family-based interventions may benefit families in many ways and changes in EE are not always necessary for patients to show clinical improvement.

The fact that two relatives of the *same* patient can sometimes have *different* levels of EE suggests that EE is not a simple reaction to symptoms or characteristics of the patient. Instead, EE should be thought of as a bidirectional construct. Current theoretical models emphasize dynamic and transactional processes, regarding high levels of EE as the product of failed (and often well-intentioned) coping efforts by the relative. More specifically, certain characteristics (such as an internal locus of control or a less flexible personality style) are thought to make it difficult for relatives to accommodate to patients' functional impairments or challenging behaviors. If relatives attribute patients' behavioral impairments to personal and controllable factors, they may make efforts to get patients to behave differently. If these efforts fail, tension and frustration are likely to result. Over time, unless the relative is able to adjust his or her expectations (or the patient is able to change his or her behavior), the family climate will become increasingly negative. The culmination of this is criticism and hostility in relatives and an emotional climate in the home that is stressful for all.

New directions in EE research are now bringing this decades-old construct into the era of affective neuroscience. Using functional neuroimaging, researchers are exploring the link

between EE and relapse more directly by examining how criticism from a close family member is processed in the brain. Findings from studies involving depressed patients suggest that even when fully recovered and symptom free, people who are vulnerable to depression do not process criticism in the same way that healthy controls do. More specifically, when they are exposed to critical comments from their own mothers, people vulnerable to depression show more activation in amygdala and less activation in dorsolateral prefrontal cortex and anterior cingulate cortex compared with healthy controls. Criticism may be important in the relapse process because it is capable of perturbing some of the neural circuitry that underlies vulnerability to psychopathology.

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See also Assessment of Families; Attribution Processes in Relationships; Conflict, Family; Criticism in Relationships; Depression and Relationships; Family Therapy; Mental Health and Relationships; Psychopathology, Influence on Family Members

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EXTENDED FAMILIES

This entry will discuss definitions of extended family, the diversity and complexity of extended family membership in contemporary societies, the significance and meanings of extended families, and types of extended family relationships being studied. Definitions of *extended family* (also called *kin* or *kinship group*) generally include relatives beyond immediate family relationships. Thus, extended family is a concept that extends past the definition of immediate family. Ways of defining immediate family have undergone change in the past few decades because of increased diversity in family structures. Many now recognize that immediate families can include not just heterosexual married spouses and their children but also cohabiting partners, same-sex partners, stepparents and stepchildren, grandparents raising grandchildren, and other relationships as well. This entry will consider extended family the legally, biologically, and voluntarily related kinship group that extends past the immediate family of parenting adults, their spouses/partners, and minor children.

Diversity and Complexity

Several trends have contributed to the great diversity of extended family relationships today. Many countries have experienced declines in fertility, which has resulted over time in fewer siblings, aunts, uncles, cousins, nieces, and nephews than in the past. At the same time, many countries are experiencing increases in life expectancy, resulting in a rise in the number of family generations alive at the same time (and the potential for more active relationships between grandparents and grandchildren). China, with its one-child policy, is an extreme example of how extended family relationships can change with reductions in fertility and increases in life expectancy. As the one-child policy continues, more of the younger generations will be without siblings, aunts, uncles, cousins, nieces, and nephews. Chinese extended families fit with Vern Bengtson's idea of the "beanpole family," which has several generations alive at once but few members of any one generation.

Other trends contributing to the diversity of extended family relationships include high rates of

divorce, remarriage, and cohabitation, resulting in more half- and step-relatives. Along with the increased visibility of same-sex partnerships and the retention (in practice) of relationships with ex-partners or former partners and relatives, these trends create extended families that are complex, diverse, and influenced by personal choice. Thus, when scholars refer to extended families, the meaning may extend beyond grandparents, grandchildren, non-coresidential parents, adult children, aunts, uncles, cousins, nieces, nephews, and in-laws to include cohabiting partners of family members, godparents, former step-relatives and in-laws, foster relatives, "fictive kin" (voluntary kin), and "chosen families" (voluntary kin chosen to be part of gay, lesbian, and bisexual networks). These relationships reflect the discretionary and fluid nature of extended family ties in contemporary societies.

Meaning and Significance

Extended families are often considered significant in the various types of support they offer. Different types of support are possible with geographic nearness, so proximity and coresidence are often considered along with support. Extended families also serve as a fall-back group when immediate families are unable to provide for their members, especially children. This safety net function is vital to the well-being of many families, and the literature on this topic spans numerous countries.

Research about levels of proximity, contact, and support among extended family members often focuses on particular kinds of extended family members: adult children and siblings. The literature conceptualizes support in several subareas: financial, emotional, and practical. Racial and ethnic group differences in extended family patterns have been a topic of examination for some time, with researchers debating and trying to distinguish the relative effects of cultural and structural predictors on extended family outcomes. For instance, Natalia Sarkisian, Mariana Gerena, and Naomi Gerstel's recent study using national data in the United States found that Mexican Americans experienced higher levels of coresidence, proximity, and practical support with extended families than European Americans did. On the other hand, European Americans gave higher levels of financial support to extended family members than Mexican

Americans did. Social class factors were found to be much more important than were cultural factors in explaining these differences; higher income and education levels among European Americans put them in a better position to give money or goods to extended family members, and the weaker socioeconomic position of Mexican Americans helped explain their greater propensity to live and exchange practical support with one another.

Other research has posed similar questions, comparing European Americans with African Americans. Although European Americans appear to have more socioeconomic resources to share with extended families than do African Americans, evidence indicates that African Americans receive more practical support from extended family members. This suggests that differences between racial/ethnic groups in the United States in their levels of extended family support may have more to do with social class than with cultural differences. Cultural factors may be somewhat relevant as well, as shown in the finding that African Americans experience stronger extended family ties through siblings and fictive kin than European Americans do.

Extended families are also recognized as significant safety nets or backup groups that can provide care to children when immediate family members are unable to. For instance, the foster care system in the United States tries to take advantage of the availability of extended family members as caregivers to children who cannot live with their parents. Extended families are seen as more desirable than strangers to be caregivers of foster children, and they may continue to have access to children they have helped raise if those children become reunited with parents. The topic of grandparents raising grandchildren has been a popular research topic in recent years.

From a global perspective, extended families often provide vital support to children whose parents may have died or become incapacitated. The AIDS pandemic in Africa is a prime example of a large-scale problem that is decimating nuclear families in many places and causing extended families to take on the roles of surrogate parents for vast numbers of children. For example, Tatek Abebe and Asbjorn Aase found that Ethiopian extended family members such as grandmothers and uncles took responsibility for orphaned

children after their parents died, and that children were often more comfortable being cared for by extended family members who had been particularly close to a deceased parent. A range of extended family caregiving situations was identified, with caregivers fairly evenly distributed across a four-category continuum: rupturing (chronically impoverished), transient (relatively poor and deteriorating), adaptive (relatively secure economically and well functioning), and capable (economically and socially viable, even without outside assistance). Extended families considered orphaned children to be economic assets particularly in rural areas, where the children could contribute to the family economy through working in crop production and household activities.

Types of Extended Family Relationships Being Studied

Research on U.S. extended families often focuses on relationships between individuals who at an earlier point in the life course would have fit the idea of "immediate family" or "nuclear family" or "family of orientation." These relationships include adult children and their parents and siblings. This is contrary to what many would expect when thinking about extended families and seems to reflect a relatively narrow examination of extended families by researchers. Perhaps Western family practices place the greatest priority on closely related relatives who over time no longer coreside but act as significant extended families to one another. There is a large gerontological literature on parents and adult children across the life course that is not explicitly designated or thought of as research on extended families, but could be better integrated with it.

Beyond parent-adult child and adult sibling relationships, extended family scholarship is focused heavily on relationships between grandparents and grandchildren. Increases in life expectancy have generated more interest in multigenerational families, and the phenomenon of grandparents raising grandchildren has caught the attention of researchers and the public. A notable example of extended family research on grandparents is Colleen Johnson's exploration of how the extended family networks of California grandparents have shifted

over time with the divorces and remarriages of children. Grandmothers' networks could expand in four different ways after a child's divorce: (1) when relationships with relatives of a child's divorce were retained, while new relatives were added after a child's remarriage, (2) when the divorces and remarriages of multiple children created several subsets of relatives, (3) when the divorces and remarriages of grandparents added another set of step and in-law relations, and (4) when they retained relationships with former children-in-law after these children remarried. Johnson found that extended families often reflected a matricentric focus, with paternal grandmothers connecting with their grandchildren through ongoing ties with their former daughters-in-law (who were usually the primary physical custodians of the grandchildren). Johnson's research also contributes to the idea that "kinkeeping" with extended family members is a practice predominantly performed by women.

Other kinds of extended family dynamics seem to have been understudied, such as research on aunts, uncles, cousins, nieces, and nephews. This is especially true of family research focused on Western, industrialized countries. Robert Milardo's research on uncles and nephews fills a gap in this area. His work in New Zealand and the United States revealed diverse connections between these extended family members. Uncles often served as family historians, mediators, and mentors to their nephews. Milardo's work makes visible the multiple and diverse ways in which extended family members are concerned for and committed to the next generation.

Other topics that fit well under the umbrella of research on extended families can be found in literatures that are not designated as research on extended families but can be considered as such. "Fictive kin" and "chosen families" are examples. "Fictive kin," often discussed in the literature on African-American families, refers to family-like relationships that coexist with biologically and legally related family networks and can be vital sources of affiliation and support. "Chosen families" usually refers to the voluntary kin networks formed by gay and lesbian individuals. These literatures could be better integrated with research on extended families.

It is likely that a greater scholarly focus on cousins, aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews, godparents,

ex-relatives, fictive kin, and chosen families would reveal realms that are both interesting and meaningful to our knowledge about extended families. Although the breadth of extended family relationships has been overlooked, the research that exists suggests that this is a fruitful avenue for future research in the area of personal relationships.

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See also Aunts and Uncles, Relationships With; Fictive Kinship; Foster Care, Relationships in; In-Laws, Relationships With; Kin Relationships; Kin Selection; Postdivorce Relationships

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EXTRADYNAMIC SEX

Extradynamic refers to a wide range of behaviors occurring outside of a committed relationship. Most research focuses on vaginal sex occurring outside of a marital relationship. However, behaviors can range from intense emotional relationships or close friendships, to kissing, oral sex, or other sexual behaviors, and the primary dyad need not be married. Extradynamic behavior that takes place

on the Internet is a burgeoning area of research, focusing on individuals who engage in secretive, often sexually charged interactions with others online. Extradyadic relationships are often characterized as emotional or sexual in nature. Emotional relationships involve an intense friendship or romantic bond, but lack a physical or sexual component. Sexual relationships are considered to be purely physical, without emotional connection or commitment. Some researchers have suggested that infidelity more often exists on a continuum of sexual and emotional involvement.

A distinguishing feature of infidelity is that it occurs without the awareness or sanction of one's partner. If both partners are aware of and consent to extradyadic activities, such an arrangement would be considered an open marriage or relationship; these types of relationships are more common among gay men but do also occur among heterosexual couples and lesbians. Unless otherwise stated, extradyadic sexual intercourse among heterosexual and same-sex couples, not condoned by both members of the primary dyad, is the focus of the current entry. *Infidelity*, *extramarital sex*, *extrarelational sex*, *affairs*, *cheating*, and *adultery* are other terms used to describe this type of extradyadic sex. In this entry, the prevalence of and attitudes toward infidelity will be described as will decisions about ending affairs, followed by correlates of infidelity and emotional and relationship outcomes. Finally, therapeutic implications and methodological issues are discussed.

Prevalence

Studies of infidelity among heterosexuals conducted during the past several decades suggest that between 20 and 40 percent of men and between 20 and 25 percent of women have ever engaged in extramarital affairs. In one study, 45.2 percent of gay men who indicated that they were in committed, monogamous relationships reported that they or their partner had sex with a third party since the beginning of their relationship. Data from national, representative samples, however, such as the 1994 General Social Survey and the National Health and Social Life Survey, suggest lower rates of infidelity. Specifically, data from national surveys indicate 23 to 25 percent of

men and 12 to 15 percent of women have ever engaged in extramarital sex, with between 1 and 4 percent doing so in the past year.

Attitudes Toward Infidelity

Results suggest that attitudes toward infidelity are most often negative, although men report more favorable attitudes than do women. Men and women typically evaluate infidelity in committed dating relationships less negatively than infidelity occurring among married couples. Some research suggests that women are more accepting of sexual infidelity than of emotional infidelity, and men are more accepting of emotional infidelity than of sexual infidelity. In general, however, emotional infidelity is more accepted than sexual infidelity is.

Correlates of Infidelity

Much of the infidelity research has focused on correlates of transgressing behaviors. The most widely cited predictors and correlates of infidelity can be broken down into three subcategories: demographic factors, interpersonal factors, and individual factors. However, study results vary widely; as a result, clear predictors of infidelity are difficult to determine.

Demographic Factors

Gender is the most commonly studied demographic factor. Gender is so critical in infidelity research that most researchers separate men and women in their analyses. Findings generally suggest that gay and heterosexual men are more likely to engage in infidelity and have more extradyadic partners than are women. However, when extradyadic behaviors other than sexual intercourse are considered (e.g., maintaining an intimate emotional relationship or engaging in other extradyadic sexual behaviors), women report engaging in as many or more acts of infidelity than do men. Generally, men who engage in infidelity are motivated by sexual factors and women are more emotionally motivated.

Research on marital status suggests that married individuals are less likely to be unfaithful than are those who are cohabiting or dating. Perhaps

level of commitment in a marriage relationship confers some protective benefit. Individuals who have had a divorce are more likely to have engaged in infidelity.

Race is also commonly included in correlational studies of infidelity, although the relationship between race and infidelity is not consistent. Infidelity appears to be more common among African-American persons, and particularly African-American men, than among other ethnic groups.

Religiosity is another demographic variable that is widely cited as a predictor or correlate of infidelity. Virtually all religious groups condemn extradyadic relationships and hold fidelity as a strong core belief. Infidelity is reported more often by individuals who endorse no religious affiliation than by those who endorse a religious affiliation. The interconnected nature of religious communities may decrease opportunities for infidelity and suggest to individuals that they are likely to be caught—two factors that may lessen motivation to be unfaithful.

Higher levels of completed education are often concomitant with more accepting attitudes about infidelity, but the relationship between education and extradyadic sexual behaviors is less consistent. Several studies have found that well-educated persons are more likely to engage in infidelity than are individuals with lower education levels. However, other studies have found the reverse, or no relationship at all. It is likely that the relationship between education and infidelity is a complex one, influenced by other factors.

Several demographic factors, such as employment, income, and rural versus urban residence, are thought to increase infidelity by providing individuals with greater opportunity to meet potential partners. Studies of couples or individuals in therapy suggest that 46 percent to 62 percent of persons who had engaged in extrarelatinal sex reported meeting their extradyadic partner through their workplace. Also, higher income levels can defray costs associated with infidelity and provide more opportunities to engage in extradyadic relations. Nonetheless, a number of empirical studies have not found a relationship between employment, income, and infidelity, and some find a relationship for men but not women. Results indicate that individuals who live in urban settings are more likely to engage in extradyadic relations than are those who live in rural areas. This could be

attributed to a greater number of available partners in urban settings, as well as to a potentially lowered risk of discovery.

Interpersonal Factors

A variety of interpersonal factors increase the probability of being unfaithful. The strong expectation of fidelity in monogamous relationships levies high costs for being caught engaging in extradyadic relations. However, if the quality of the relationship is low, there is less to be lost as a result of infidelity. The interpersonal factor that best predicts infidelity in monogamous relationships is a lack of satisfaction in the primary relationship. In one study of gay men, participants in committed, monogamous relationships who reported that they, or their partner, had engaged in sex with someone else since the beginning of their relationship scored lower on measures of relationship quality and satisfaction than do men who maintained faithful monogamous relationships and men who had agreements with their partner to be sexually nonexclusive. Additionally, men and women who are sexually dissatisfied in their primary relationship are more likely to be unfaithful than are those who report sexual satisfaction, although sexual dissatisfaction plays a larger role for men than for women.

A number of other relationship factors have been found to put couples at risk for infidelity. For example, boredom, low levels of commitment, and higher levels of conflict in the primary relationship are associated with infidelity in both men and women. Perceived inequity also affects the likelihood of engaging in extradyadic sex, particularly among women.

Personal peer groups may also play a role in infidelity, especially for men. Individuals involved with a peer group where the prevalence and acceptance of infidelity is high are more likely to engage in infidelity themselves. Conversely, if there is a greater chance that members of a shared peer group will find out about extradyadic relations, men and women are less likely to engage in such behaviors.

Individual Factors

Personality attributes such as extraversion, low agreeableness, high neuroticism, low conscientiousness, and high psychoticism all contribute to

a greater likelihood of engaging in extradyadic relations. Likewise, individuals who emphasize independence from their primary partner, those who feel a need for variety in their relationship, and those who feel insecure in their primary relationship all show higher incidences of engaging in infidelity. Men who feel a sense of powerlessness, meaninglessness, or social isolation tend to engage in more infidelity.

Psychological problems may also play a role in engaging in infidelity. In particular, individuals with low self-esteem or depression may be more likely to have extradyadic sex. However, one non-clinical study found that men who engaged in infidelity actually had higher self-esteem than did those who did not, and men and women who engaged in infidelity self-rated their attractiveness higher than did those who did not engage in infidelity. Additionally, those with substance abuse problems are more likely to engage in extradyadic relations. Notably, many results in this body of literature have not been replicated in community samples and may only apply to those with clinical levels of depression or substance abuse.

Permissive sexual values and attitudes have consistently been associated with infidelity. Not surprisingly, those who are more open to the idea of extradyadic relations are more likely to engage in such behaviors. Some research suggests that "personal readiness" to engage in infidelity is a salient predictor of being unfaithful.

If an individual has less sexual opportunity, it is more difficult for them to become extradyadically involved. Individuals who have had more sexual opportunity in the past, such as those reporting a higher number of prior sexual partners, have been shown in some research to be more likely to engage in infidelity, although this is not a consistent finding.

Decisions to End an Affair

Although some cases of infidelity are one-time occurrences, others may be recurring and persist for many years. The decision to end an extradyadic relationship can be made by the individual having the affair, his or her primary partner, or by the extradyadic partner. A number of factors affect the decision to end an affair. Women with

positive attitudes toward sex tend to carry on their extradyadic sexual relationships for longer periods. Men and women typically consider the rewards and costs of engaging in an extradyadic relationship: If the rewards of the relationship outweigh the costs of ending it, the relationship will persist until the opposite is true.

Emotional Responses to Infidelity

Infidelity evokes many emotions in both the betrayed partner and the partner that engaged in extradyadic activity, and many of these emotions, surprisingly, overlap. These may include symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, for example, disturbed sleep, irritability or anger outbursts, difficulty concentrating, hypervigilance, and recurrent intrusive thoughts about the affair. However, emotional responses may vary depending on the type of infidelity. Both women and men have been found to react to sexual infidelity with anger and blame but react to emotional infidelity with more hurt feelings. Where many studies have shown men and women to react similarly to a partner's infidelity, some other research suggests women experience more emotional distress over all types of infidelity than men do.

Emotional responses to the initial disclosure of infidelity are usually intense. At the initial disclosure, powerful emotion is expressed through confrontation with the offending partner. However, some research shows a time lapse between the initial discovery and the expression of intense emotions. These emotions include, but are not limited to, insecurity, helplessness, abandonment, depression, and a desire for vengeance.

Once the intense emotional response passes, most individuals go through a time of making meaning of the event, evidenced by less emotional reactivity. This is often when crucial decisions about the future of the relationship are made.

Much research has focused on the jealous reactions men and women experience in response to various types of infidelity. Traditionally, among heterosexuals, men have been found to react with more jealousy when their partners have transgressed sexually, whereas women have been found to react with more jealousy to a partner's emotional transgressions. Further, heterosexual men

and women report less intense jealousy to a partner's same-sex infidelity than to infidelity with an opposite-sex partner.

Research on jealousy in response to infidelity in same-sex couples has been mixed. In one study conducted in the mid-1990s, lesbian women reacted similarly to infidelity as their heterosexual counterparts, but gay men were found more often to react with distress to emotional infidelity than did heterosexual men. Study authors Michael Bailey and his colleagues suggested this is because homosexual men have a much higher tolerance for sexual jealousy than heterosexual men do, making emotional infidelity the more upsetting event. A second, more recent study, however, found lesbian women resembled heterosexual men (more jealous of sexual transgressions) and gay men resembled heterosexual women (more jealous of emotional transgressions). More research is needed to understand how jealousy resulting from different types of infidelity is manifested in same-sex relationships.

Relationship Outcomes

After an affair, the fate of the primary couple's relationship depends on a number of factors. If the bond between the core couple is stronger than the bond between the extradynamic couple, it is more likely that the primary relationship will prevail. Also, the circumstance surrounding the extradynamic activity, for example who the extradynamic partner is and where the affair took place, can affect whether the primary relationship succeeds or fails. The extent to which the betrayed partner is willing to forgive the transgressor affects whether the primary relationship can continue and at what level it will function.

Jennifer Schneider found that 60 percent of the participants planned to leave their primary relationship once infidelity was disclosed, but less than 25 percent of those couples actually did so. Other research has found that in a large number of infidelity cases, the couple stays together but the relationship quality remains poor.

Infidelity spawns, and occurs in response to, a variety of relationship issues. If a couple is unable to work through these issues, or one individual is not open to rebuilding the trust in the relationship, the relationship may dissolve. Among married

couples, infidelity independently predicts divorce. Men are more likely to end their relationship if their female partners were sexually unfaithful. Women, on the other hand, are more likely to end their relationship over emotional infidelity.

Some couples are able to keep their relationships intact after an extradynamic involvement. Research suggests that a subset of couples actually experience positive relationship outcomes after infidelity. These couples are often better able to communicate about the affair and work through their differences, either on their own or with the help of a therapist.

Therapeutic Implications

Infidelity often leads a couple to seek relationship counseling. Couples therapists report infidelity is one of the most difficult relationship problems to treat. Couples seeking therapy after an affair are often more distressed at the start of treatment than are couples in therapy for other issues. Therapists and clients have a number of important tasks to accomplish in therapy: gaining an understanding of why the affair occurred, expressing emotions, achieving forgiveness, and rebuilding trust. To reduce long-term resentment and hostility, it is critical that the betrayed spouse have the opportunity to express his or her feelings. Couples may also benefit from working on wider relationship issues, rather than focusing solely on the affair. There is limited research on the efficacy of couples therapy specific to couples who have experienced infidelity, and studies that have been conducted are based on small samples. Nonetheless, studies typically show improvement in couples functioning after broad-based couples counseling.

Counselors working with couples on issues related to extradynamic sex must take the relationship context into account. Sex outside of a dyadic relationship is not, by nature, harmful if couples have agreed upon and feel comfortable with non-monogamy. This is most common among gay male couples, but does occur in heterosexual and lesbian couples as well. Therapists working with same-sex and opposite-sex couples will often use similar approaches; however, it is particularly important that practitioners consider unique cultural and relationship norms when evaluating the

meaning and impact of the secondary sexual or emotional relationship.

Methodological Issues

Research on infidelity is plagued by a number of methodological issues that lead to inconsistencies in findings. Because of the taboo nature of extradyadic sexual behavior, social desirability is a serious obstacle to obtaining honest information related to incidence of infidelity. Mark Whisman and Douglas Snyder found that women were more likely to report being unfaithful when completing a computer-assisted survey than when directly interviewed by a researcher. As well, infidelity lacks a consistent operational definition, so comparing across studies can be difficult. Most research on infidelity is based on small, geographically limited samples of primarily Caucasian individuals. A large subset of this research is conducted on university student participants, who most often have not been married, posing a challenge to generalizability. Further, most researchers use cross-sectional designs. Because of this, it is difficult to discern whether relationship problems or other correlates of infidelity predated the transgression or occurred as a result. Finally, little is known about infidelity in cohabiting and lesbian couples. Future research is needed with samples that are more diverse in sexual orientation, marital status, socioeconomic status, and ethnicity.

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See also Attraction, Sexual; Marital Satisfaction and Quality; Marital Stability, Prediction of; Marriage and Sex

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EXTRAVERSION AND INTROVERSION

Extraversion is a broad trait that encompasses many distinct but related facets. A variety of characteristics, including positive affectivity, gregariousness, warmth, impulsivity, assertiveness, activity level, and the tendency to seek excitement have all been incorporated at one point or another into different models of the trait. Extraversion is important for the study of relationships because all of its features are linked with social activity. For some facets, such as gregariousness, assertiveness, and warmth, these links are quite direct—the characteristics explicitly involve interactions with others. With other facets, such as impulsivity, activity-level, excitement-seeking, and positive emotions, the links are more indirect—people who have these characteristics tend to enact them in situations involving other

people. Thus, extraversion is potentially one of the most relevant personality characteristics for the study of human relationships. This entry discusses the history of the trait, the processes that underlie it, and the relationship outcomes that are most strongly associated with it.

History

Extraversion is one of the most studied traits in personality psychology. Although it is sometimes described using terms other than *extraversion* (including *confident self-expression*, *surgency*, *assertiveness*, *power*, or its antonym *introversion*), some form of this trait has been included in almost all comprehensive models of personality. For instance, many personality psychologists believe that five broad dimensions (the so-called Big Five model of personality) subsume the many narrow characteristics that exist and that have been studied by psychologists. The five traits include Extraversion, Neuroticism, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, and Openness to new experience. These Big Five dimensions have been identified through factor analysis of lists of trait-descriptive adjectives and questionnaire items. They have also emerged in cross-cultural and cross-language investigations. The fact that an extraversion-like trait emerges in most if not all analyses provides strong evidence of its robustness and importance as a personality trait.

Extraversion is also usually found in other trait models that were identified using alternative techniques. For instance, extraversion is one of three major traits (along with neuroticism and psychoticism) in Hans Eysenck's influential model, which was developed using a combination of theoretical and factor analytic work. In addition, extraversion is conceptually similar to positive emotionality, one of three major traits (along with negative emotionality and constraint) in Auke Tellegen's model.

Processes Underlying Extraversion

A number of process models have been developed to explain individual differences in extraversion, though no consensus has been reached regarding which of these models is correct. Some of the earliest models traced individual differences in

extraversion to differences in basic learning processes. Eysenck initially believed that extraverts conditioned (or learned new associations) slowly and got bored with repetitive tasks quickly. In turn, these basic underlying learning processes led to distinct behavioral outcomes—extraverts' poor conditioning was thought to manifest in poorer socialization (compared with introverts) along with a desire for constantly changing stimuli.

After further research, Eysenck modified this early model to focus on arousal as the key individual difference that underlies extraversion, with extraverts having lower resting levels of arousal and less susceptibility to becoming aroused than introverts have. Because arousal is thought to have an inverted-U-shaped association with performance and subjective enjoyment, moderate levels of arousal tend to be optimal. Arousal levels that are either too high or too low are detrimental to performance and enjoyment. According to this model, the chronic under-arousal of extraverts leads them to seek out situations with high levels of stimulation, thereby moving their own characteristically low arousal closer to an optimal moderate level. These arousing situations often involve other people, which is what makes extraverts appear to be sociable. Introverts, on the other hand, were thought to be chronically over-aroused, which leads them to avoid stimulating social situations—such as parties and other social interactions—that could increase their arousal even more.

Although research on Eysenck's theory continues, modern theories of extraversion tend to focus less on arousal and more on individual differences in positive affect, reward-sensitivity, and dopamine systems in the brain as underlying causal mechanisms. For instance, Jeffrey Gray presented a revised version of Eysenck's original model, arguing that the basic dimensions of extraversion and neuroticism reflected combinations of two more fundamental dimensions: individual differences in the tendency to approach rewards and in the tendency to inhibit responses in the presence of punishment. The former characteristic—which Gray believes is more strongly associated with extraversion than is the latter—was linked to an underlying physiological system termed the *behavioral activation system*. Gray posited that individuals with sensitive behavioral activation systems would learn better when rewarded for good behavior than

when punished for bad behavior. In addition, individuals with strong behavioral activation systems are thought to be more motivated to approach and pursue rewards. As with the inhibition and cortical arousal models that came before it, the reward-sensitivity model posits that social activity is a somewhat indirect outcome of this more basic underlying process.

Reward-sensitivity theories also link extraversion with dopamine and dopamine systems in the brain. Dopamine is a neurotransmitter that has been associated with so-called pleasure centers in the brain. Dopamine appears to be involved in the psychophysiological reactions to rewards and especially in the motivation to approach rewards.

Additional researchers have built on the idea of reward-sensitivity to focus on underlying individual differences in positive affect. It is thought that one mechanism by which the motivational component of reward systems work is through the feelings of energy and excitement that are associated with positive affect. Those who are approaching a reward will experience these feelings, and those whose reward systems are quite sensitive will experience positive affect to a greater degree than will those whose reward systems are less sensitive. For instance, spending time with others might be rewarding to most people, and therefore, people would feel a sense of excitement and positive anticipation when they knew such social interactions were potentially available. These feelings of excitement and anticipation might actually motivate people to approach the social situations, and those who experienced these emotions more strongly might go to greater lengths to make sure that these interactions occurred. Some believe that these individual differences in positive affect are the central features of the extraversion dimension. Much current research on extraversion is devoted to identifying which of these underlying process models is correct.

Correlates and Outcomes of Extraversion

As one of the most studied personality traits, extraversion has been linked with a wide variety of correlates and outcomes. One of the most robust findings is the correlation between extraversion and subjective well-being (otherwise

known as “happiness”). Research consistently shows that extraversion is (along with low levels of neuroticism) one of the strongest correlates of happiness and related constructs. Extraverts are particularly likely to experience high levels of positive emotions such as joy and excitement. Interestingly, even though extraverts are particularly likely to experience high levels of these positive emotions, they are not necessarily any less likely than are introverts to experience negative emotions such as anxiety, sadness, and fear (characteristics that tend to be better predicted from neuroticism). This is because positive and negative emotions are relatively independent from each other. These findings linking extraversion to well-being variables have been replicated frequently using a variety of self-report and non-self-report methods.

Extraverts tend to engage in more social activity than do introverts. For instance, numerous studies have compared self-reports or informant-reports of extraversion to measures of social activity collected using experience sampling techniques. In these studies, participants are asked to describe their current activities multiple times per day using handheld computers or paper-and-pencil questionnaires. Although correlations between extraversion and social activity variables tend to be somewhat smaller than some might expect, they are robust. These studies consistently show that extraversion is associated with increased time spent in social situations, particularly in social situations involving friends and family members.

Extraversion has also been linked to the *quality* of social relationship outcomes. For instance, Daniel Ozer and Veronica Benet-Martinez reviewed the literature on the personality predictors of interpersonal outcomes and found that extraversion (along with agreeableness) predicted peer acceptance, friendship, and popularity among children and adolescents. In addition, the quality of children's relationships with their parents was associated with extraversion. Ozer and Benet-Martinez noted that fewer studies had examined the links between personality variables and adult peer relationships, but those that had been conducted supported the idea that extraversion is an important characteristic.

Extraversion does not appear to be a particularly important predictor of romantic relationships, however. Several meta-analyses have

summarized the links between personality traits and romantic relationship outcomes, and these studies show that in comparison with such traits as agreeableness, neuroticism, and even conscientiousness, extraversion tends to be a weaker predictor of romantic relationship variables including marital stability and relationship satisfaction. This may be because in most models of the trait, surgency, confidence, and assertiveness are emphasized rather than warmth and empathy. These characteristics may promote popularity and the ability to confidently interact with (and perhaps even dominate) others, but they may not improve the quality of romantic and other close relationships. Instead, the lack of hostility that is associated with high levels of agreeableness and low levels of neuroticism might play a more important role in these close relationship outcomes. Extraversion may reflect a general interest in social activity and confidence with such activity rather than a general tendency to be warm, empathic, and supportive.

Future Directions

Future research on extraversion faces at least two clear challenges. One is to identify the processes that underlie this trait. More than perhaps any other personality trait (with the possible exception of neuroticism), extraversion has been linked to specific psychophysiological systems. However, multiple underlying systems have been proposed. Future work must clarify which of these systems are most important and how the underlying processes that occur within these systems lead to the external, behavioral manifestations of extraversion typically associated with the trait. Research into these underlying processes will also help clarify why the various characteristics that are subsumed under the broad trait of extraversion (including such characteristics as gregariousness, assertiveness, high activity levels, and high levels of positive emotions) are linked and which is most central.

In addition, future research must clarify the real-world outcomes of extraversion. The research reviewed earlier shows that extraverts do engage in

more social activity than introverts do and that extraverts appear to have more success in peer relationships. But future research can go further in identifying the real-world outcomes that extraversion fosters. For instance, most of what we know about the outcomes of extraversion concerns sociability and social relationships. But if the underlying individual difference that drives extraverted behavior is not a desire to be sociable, but individual differences in sensitivity to rewards, then outcomes related to this difference might be closely linked to extraversion. For instance, dopamine has been linked to the processes involved in drug addiction, and if extraversion is related to these underlying systems, then extraversion may play an important role in these real-world outcomes, too. Extraversion is associated with many positive outcomes including greater happiness, but more work is needed to understand the full range of outcomes that exist, along with the processes by which this important personality trait leads to these outcomes.

Richard E. Lucas

See also Agreeableness; Happiness and Relationships; Neuroticism, Effects on Relationships; Personality Traits, Effects on Relationships; Temperament

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FACEWORK

If you have ever given a presentation and you forgot what you were going to say, dropped your notes, or stumbled as you began to move across the room, you know what it means to lose “face.” You were embarrassed because you were not performing as a competent public speaker. This is a common scenario that comes to mind when people think about losing face. However, consider occasions when you might have dressed inappropriately for an event, lost your temper or cried in public, said something rude and hurtful to a friend, asked someone out on a date but were rejected, or even cheated on a romantic partner who trusted you. In these instances as well, you lost face. This entry defines the concept of face and discusses the ways people maintain or restore face through facework.

The realization that a person’s competent and moral “self” is to some degree a social construction dates back to ancient Chinese philosophers. However, Erving Goffman was the first contemporary writer to present a coherent theory of face and facework during the 1950s and 1960s. Goffman considered *face* to be the public image we present to others during interaction. We construct this image based on our understanding of the social norms for expected and appropriate behavior. For example, in some situations, we may emphasize that we are witty or funny, in other situations that we are intelligent, and in other situations when a friend is distressed that we are compassionate and

supportive. *Facework* includes the range of communicative strategies we use to maintain face. This is a two-directional process. That is, the process involves the efforts we expend to construct and maintain our own face as well as the efforts we expend to maintain the face of others and that we expect others to expend toward maintaining our face as well. If people did not cooperate to maintain their own and others’ face, interaction would become chaotic; the norms that guide interactions are predicated on the assumption that people respect their own and others’ face. In fact, Goffman used the term *shameless* to refer to people who consistently act inappropriately in public and seem to feel no embarrassment. He used the term *heartless* to refer to people who can watch others lose face and feel no compassion.

Goffman illustrated concepts of face and facework with a theatrical metaphor. Much as actors have a backstage where they prepare for performance on a front stage, ordinary people have a backstage (e.g., their home or office) where they prepare for their performance in public. While on front stage, we are expected to perform appropriately by successfully managing our props, lines, and costumes—that is, not spilling our coffee, not tripping on the sidewalk, not referring to people by the wrong name, not wearing our gym clothes out to dinner. We are expected to display positive emotions (even when sometimes not genuinely felt) and to moderate displays of negative emotions (control our anger toward others). In Goffman’s sense, the people with whom we interact serve as the audience for our performance when we are on front

stage. Indeed, even though we generally consider our home to be the backstage, we also realize that it is necessary on occasion to leave the stress of the day outside and construct a more relaxed face as we enter. We can certainly be more informal at home and social settings with friends, but many of the expectations for constructing an appropriate face or image still apply.

The facework that people do to support their own performance or the performances of others is typically uneventful and routine. However, sometimes people become more conscious of face loss and more actively engage in facework. The two general types of facework are preventive and corrective.

Preventive facework is performed when we anticipate that we might threaten our own or someone else's face. For example, the use of disclaimers such as "I may be wrong, but," "this might be a stupid idea, but," or "I know this might upset you, but" tell a listener that we recognize our comments may reflect on our competence or our sensitivity to the needs of others. Even the dreaded question, "does this make me look fat?" forces us to find a gracious way to soften the potential criticism (threat to other's face) by saying something such as, "Well, I think the other outfit is more flattering."

Corrective facework is performed after face has been threatened or lost. If the incident is relatively minor, then simple expressions such as "Excuse me" or "I'm sorry" will suffice. However, when the incident is more serious, a sequence of four interaction "moves" known as the remedial interchange may be necessary to restore face. First, a *challenge* is made that calls attention to the face-threatening act. The challenge may be implied or explicit. For example, if you are supposed to meet a friend for dinner at a local restaurant at 6:30, but you do not arrive until almost 7:00, your friend may look you with the expression, "You better have a good excuse" or may be more direct by saying, "You're late; what happened?" Both of these actions function as a challenge. Second, as the offending person, you make an *offering* that shows you are aware of and sorry about being late. Offerings typically include apologies, excuses (explaining extenuating circumstances), and justifications (attempts to minimize the severity of the action). So you might first apologize and make an excuse ("Sorry. I got held up at work and had to stop by the bank to get some money."). Or, you might apologize and offer a

justification ("Sorry. I know I'm a little late, but it's Friday and we can take our time."). Assuming that the offering is acceptable, the offended person gives an *acceptance* and the offending person closes the exchange with an *appreciation* or *thanks*. In our example, your friend might say, "No problem, I've been reading the menu and watching that interesting couple over there" and you would reply, "Thanks, I'm starved."

Research subsequent to Goffman's early writing has identified additional types of remedial actions that people do to restore face. This research indicates that in addition to apologies, excuses, and justifications, people sometimes use *remediation*, which physically corrects the situation (e.g., cleaning up a spilled soft drink or picking up dropped items). Other people often do this for the person who has lost face. In addition, people who have lost face or observed others lose face employ *humor* to alleviate the tension (e.g., "I'm such a klutz" or "Way to go, Grace"). Finally, two different strategies include *avoidance* (e.g., ignoring a behavior or action so as not to draw attention to it) or *aggressive actions* (e.g., insult, criticism, or retaliation). Aggression is not generally a useful strategy but is sometimes used to get back at a person who has intentionally damaged another's face, to assert power, or to teach someone a lesson so the incident doesn't happen again.

In sum, facework is a routine aspect of daily life. We tend to take it for granted until we feel the sting of embarrassment and realize that we have lost face. Fortunately, the cooperative efforts of others usually help us restore face and continue the interaction.

Sandra Metts

See also Accounts; Apologies; Embarrassment

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FACIAL EXPRESSIONS

Facial expressions are one channel of nonverbal communication. Facial expressions can function as paralinguistic signals—such as when one raises one or both eyebrows to signal a question—but most frequently have been studied as a means to express emotions. Emotional facial expressions are an important source of information that frequently dominates information derived from other nonverbal channels such as posture or tone of voice. In relationships, facial expressions often play an important role. For example, smiling is an important signal for affiliation, and the absence of smiles in marital conflict can escalate conflict.

The study of facial expression has been characterized by a number of controversies. This entry provides a brief summary of the current state of the literature and outlines the important roles facial expressions play in human interaction.

The first person to systematically study and describe facial expressions and their possible meaning was Charles Darwin in his book *On the Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*, published in 1872. He considered facial expressions to be both directly useful for the organism (e.g., the eyes are wide open in fear to facilitate information uptake), and an important source of information for others by alerting them to the intentions of the expresser (e.g., bared teeth in an angry dog signal an intention to fight).

Darwin considered facial expressions as evolved, and he necessarily assumed clear parallels and antecedents to human emotions in the emotions of animals and presumed human emotion expressions to be universal. Research in the early 20th century, however, failed to find a systematic link between emotional states and facial expressions. The contradictory research findings led Jerome Bruner and Renato Tagiuri to conclude in 1954 that there was little clear evidence for the recognizability of emotional expressions. This view remained basically unchanged until 1972 when Paul Ekman, Wallace Friesen, and Phoebe Ellsworth wrote a book to explicitly vindicate Darwin. They revisited the early literature and noted methodological problems with most failures to support Darwin's contentions. Based on this and some of their own findings, they concluded that emotional

expressions are indeed universal and directly associated with underlying emotional states. In the following decades, the notion that at least so-called basic emotions are universally expressed and recognized was largely accepted. However, the question of what emotional facial expressions actually express and whether they do so universally is still strongly disputed.

What Do Facial Expressions Express?

Three main theories have been proposed: Facial expressions express emotion, facial expressions express intentions, and facial expressions express the outcome of appraisals. The principal support for the notion that facial expressions express emotions stems from the fact that emotional facial expressions are generally well recognized. That is, when shown posed facial expressions—at least those corresponding to the so-called basic emotions of happiness, anger, fear, sadness, disgust, surprise, and possibly contempt—individuals are able to identify the corresponding emotional state at high rates of agreement and accuracy. The assumption here is that people recognize these expressions because they have associated events where people feel these emotions with these expressions.

However, when individuals are in a situation where they either report experiencing a certain emotion or that is highly likely to evoke a specific emotion, these same expressions have not systematically been observed. The fact that individuals who experience a specific emotion often do not show the prototypical facial expression that is usually recognized as signaling this emotion but, rather, a variety of—often quite weak and ambiguous—expressions, has been explained as an outcome of social norms. These “display rules” can override the innate expressions (Ekman's Neurocultural Theory) by attenuating them or replacing them with socially demanded ones.

A contrasting view regarding the source of facial expressions maintains that facial displays do not express emotions but, rather, social motives, such as a desire to affiliate or to withdraw (Alan Fridlund's Behavioral Ecology Theory). Evidence for this notion was provided in form of experiments showing that facial expressivity varies as a

function of social context. For example, smile intensity varies as a function of the presence of others, which in turn influences the expressers' motivation to share their amusement, a motive that is presumed to be stronger in a more sociable context. Later research showed that these functions are not necessarily mutually exclusive and that facial expressions vary as a function of both emotional state and social motives.

One conceptual challenge, however, posed by Fridlund's critique remained unresolved. He argued that given the rapidity of facial expressions, an emotion program that started in response to an emotion elicitor could not be successfully interrupted by a social norm, which replaces the emotion expression output of the program with a socially demanded expression. This issue is potentially amenable to resolution by recourse to appraisal theories of emotion. These theories predict that facial expressions are not first produced by an emotion-eliciting process and then filtered or modified by a social-rule-driven process. Rather, the social norms and motives—to the degree that they are endorsed by the individual—are an inherent part of the emotion elicitation process. Thus, using an appraisal framework, one can reconcile both the signal and symptom functions of emotions. That is, appraisal theories consider emotions as inherently determined by the organisms' motivational state and, hence, their intentions; therefore emotion expression by its very nature should express intentions because these are part of emotions in a fundamental way.

More specifically, some appraisal theorists have proposed that emotional facial expressions do not express emotions as a unitary state, but instead are directly related to individual appraisals. For example, the drawing together of the eyebrows in a frown is an output of an appraisal of goal obstruction. As appraisals proceed, a full-blown facial expression emerges as the sum output of the appraisals.

Are Emotional Facial Expressions Universally Recognized?

Since first posed by Darwin, this question has consistently been an important but divisive focus of the work on facial expressions. On one hand, a

considerable body of research supports the conclusion that the expression of emotion is largely universal, for example, through the mutual recognition of emotional signals across many cultures and across species boundaries. Thus, chimpanzees and dogs can recognize human emotion displays, and humans can recognize chimpanzee and dog emotion displays. Yet, the research on cross-cultural recognition has been heavily criticized on methodological grounds. This view also contrasts with perspectives that consider emotional behavior as determined completely by verbally transmitted cultural norms and rules. Thus, social constructivist approaches to emotion emphasize differences in emotion vocabularies across cultures and dispute universality of expression or recognition on these grounds.

Most contemporary psychologists now favor an interactionist perspective in which both innate and cultural factors play some role. More recently, strong meta-analytical evidence for this intermediate view has emerged and led to the formulation of Hillary Elfenbein and Nalini Ambady's Dialect Theory. They argue that the universal language of emotion expression has local dialects that differ subtly from each other. Consistent with an appraisal approach to emotional expressions, dialects could be explained by postulating subtle differences in appraisal patterns resulting from differences in cultural constraints, values, and norms that reflect themselves as differences in facial expression.

Social Context and Facial Expression

Facial expressions are usually shown in the context of social interactions, and hence, it should not be surprising that they depend to some degree on the relationship between interaction partners. Facial expressions tend, for example, to be more intense when shown in the presence of friends than strangers. The relative status of the interactants also affects facial displays. For example, higher-status individuals show clearer, more easily decodable expressions. One hypothesis is that high status individuals are less bound by social rules and norms and, hence, have more leeway to express what they feel clearly.

Further, the social group to which a person belongs influences the nature of that person's facial

expressions. Some of this is due to the different social rules and norms that apply to various social groups. Women, for example, are expected to smile more and in fact do smile more than do men. But there are other more subtle influences. Specifically, certain factors that covary with group membership, such as facial morphology or appearance, may lead decoders to interpret the same facial expressive movements quite differently depending on the specific nature of the face on which they are displayed. For example, the facial morphology of women and younger individuals appears to enhance the cues associated with happiness, whereas those of men and older individuals enhance those associated with anger. The facial morphology differences across racial groups also affect the clarity of cues associated with specific emotions. For example, the strong contrast between teeth and dark skin makes smiles more easily perceptible, whereas the eye fold of some Asian eyes obscures the widening of the eyes shown in fear.

Independent of the cues actually present on the face of another, the perceptions of these are going to be filtered through the goals, concerns, motivations, and stereotypes that individuals bring to an interaction. These factors may attract attention away from or toward the cues specifically linked to particular emotions. Thus, the belief that women are more likely to experience sadness tends to lead people to perceive more sadness in female than in male faces—even when the same androgynous face is simply rendered male or female by adding the corresponding hairstyle.

Facial Expression and Person Perception

Facial expressions express more than emotions. Specifically, facial expressions modulate perceptions of the personality dimensions. Thus, individuals who show anger or disgust are perceived as more dominant and those who show happiness or sadness as more affiliative. Facial expressions of anger have also been linked to perceptions of competence (at least for men) and toughness. By contrast, expressions of sadness suggest lack of competence and submissiveness. Smiling in turn leads to attributions of trustworthiness. Appraisal theories of emotion provide a theoretical rationale for the link of expression to person perception.

Specifically, facial expressions of emotion relate to the underlying appraisal. For example, showing anger rather than sadness when learning bad news suggests that person appraises the situation as potentially changeable rather than as irreversible and, hence, implies that the person has the required competence to deal with the problem.

Measurement of Facial Expressions

There are three primary means of measuring facial expressions. First, facial expressions can be shown to naïve judges who are asked to identify the mental state of the person. For expressions shown spontaneously by individuals in a social interaction, inter-rater reliability is usually only low to moderate and hence demands a relatively large number of judges to achieve acceptable levels of agreement. Also, judges tend to fatigue rapidly and can therefore only rate a limited number of expressions (probably not more than 100). This implies that the logistic requirements for this method can be prohibitive. Second, facial expressions can be measured by trained coders who use a descriptive coding system such as Ekman and Friesen's Facial Action Coding System (FACS). This system allows coders to categorize every possible facial movement based on the appearance changes associated with that movement and has the advantage of high reliability and precise information on the actual facial movements shown. More difficult is the task of assigning specific meaning to the facial patterning. This procedure is also fairly time consuming (1 minute of expressive behavior requires approximately 1 hour of coding time). Recent advances in computer coding of facial action units may eventually overcome this particular limitation of FACS. There are specific versions of FACS for the use with infants (whose faces wrinkle differently than adults' faces do) and chimpanzees, allowing for developmental and comparative studies using facial measurement. Finally, instead of measuring overt facial behavior, it is possible to use electromyography to measure the relevant facial muscle activity. This approach has the advantage of providing excellent time and space resolution, thus allowing for the measurement of subtle expressions that are not or are only barely visible (such as facial

mimicry reactions). The disadvantage is that only a limited number of muscles can be assessed at any one time. Also, it is not always easy to assign specific meaning to a specific muscle reaction. For example, Corrugator Supercilii activity occurs in sadness, in anger, and when concentrating. However, this problem can be solved by looking at patterns and constraining the experimental situation appropriately.

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See also Emotional Communication; Nonverbal Communication, Status Differences

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FAIRNESS IN RELATIONSHIPS

Romantic relationships are generally associated with love, trust, commitment, and caring for each other's needs and much less with issues of fairness or justice. In the past, most justice theorists have therefore typically considered justice and fairness—terms that are used interchangeably—as unimportant in close relationships. More recently, however, theories of fairness and justice have been increasingly applied to close relationships, and there is consensus that justice issues are important in close relationships. Fairness and justice refer to laws and formal rules that guide human behavior, but also to the ideas that people have about right and wrong, about how we should or ought to behave, and about what we are entitled to. As one of the first social justice researchers, J. Stacy Adams, addressed the fairness of the allocation of resources or outcomes, generally referred to as *distributive justice*. Later, John Thibaut and Laurens Walker argued that people's fairness judgments depend not only on the allocation of outcomes, but also on the procedures that precede the allocation of outcomes. This type of justice is referred to as *procedural justice*. This entry discusses the basic principles of distributive and procedural justice and how fairness affects close relationships.

Distributive and Procedural Justice

The three basic principles of distributive justice are *equity*, *equality*, and *need*. Equity theorists such as Elaine Hatfield and her colleagues were among the first to apply justice theories to the domain of close relationships. Equity exists when partners perceive the same ratio of inputs and outcomes as their partner, or in other words, when partners perceive an equal balance in their relative inputs and outcomes in the relationship. When partners perceive inequity in their relationship (i.e., when they feel overbenefited or underbenefited), they become distressed. Second, people feel a right to be treated equally with others who are like them. According to the equality principle, partners will feel satisfied in their relationship if each receives the same level of outcomes, regardless

of their inputs. This principle holds for the distribution of positive outcomes such as goods, benefits, and rewards as well as for negative outcomes such as costs, burdens, and duties. Finally, the need-based principle refers to the rule that resources and outcomes should be allocated on the basis of the partners' needs, regardless of the partners' inputs. Researchers such as Margaret Clark argue that the need-based rule of justice is the prevailing justice norm for close (or *communal*) relationships, as romantic partners are expected to be responsive to each other's needs, instead of keeping track of inputs and outcomes. Others have shown that exchange principles such as equity and equality also apply to close relationships, for example, when partners divide paid and unpaid (i.e., household) labor, exchange intimate behaviors (e.g., spending time together, sexual relations), and when they regard their overall contributions to the relationship.

Procedural justice entails both formal procedures such as laws and rules and informal procedures such as being treated with dignity and respect or having the opportunity to voice one's opinion. Research in organizational and experimental settings has shown that procedural justice affects human behavior, attitudes, satisfaction, and affective feelings. People are more satisfied with their relationship and more committed to a distribution of outcomes when they have been treated fairly than when they have been treated unfairly. This effect is commonly referred to as the *fair process effect*: People react more positively to outcomes or other events that follow from fair rather than unfair procedures. Procedural justice is enhanced by the opportunity to express one's views and opinions and the opportunity to present information relevant to the decision (i.e., *voice*). This effect is commonly referred to as the *voice effect*: Individuals perceive a procedure to be more fair and satisfying when they are granted voice than when they are not granted voice.

Fairness in Close Relationships

Research on fairness in close relationships has focused almost exclusively on distributive justice. This research has addressed the use of the equity, equality, and need-based rules. In addition, Melvin

Lerner's *justice-motive theory* has provided a different theoretical approach and proposes three basic schemas that are developed in early childhood: an identity schema (i.e., the other is the same as the self and identities are merged), a unit schema (i.e., the other is similar to the self and an equal interaction partner), and a non-unit schema (i.e., the other is different from the self and a competitor). Situational cues that are present in the interaction with a close other will determine which justice rule is appropriate, given a certain basic schema. Situational cues are vicarious dependency (i.e., partners largely depend on each other for attaining desired resources), convergent goals, and divergent goals. For example, partners who have recently married usually feel merged with each other (identity relation). When partners have to decide who will attend a school meeting, situational cues of vicarious dependency (e.g., one partner is not feeling well) will elicit feelings of caring and the other partner will decide to attend the school meeting (i.e., using a need-based rule). The same situation may lead to a different decision in a couple that is about to divorce (non-unit relation). The other partner may now apply the equity rule to determine whether both are doing their fair share in attending school meetings.

Individual differences and relationship norms matter also. For example, women tend to feel deprived in their relationship more often than men do. Bram Buunk and Nico van Yperen showed that both men and women perceive women to contribute more to their marriage in relational inputs (i.e., love, attention, accommodation) than do men and to receive fewer outcomes (i.e., interesting work, opportunities to meet others, freedom to do what one wants). Furthermore, individuals differ in whether they favor a communal orientation, in which they generally desire to give and receive benefits out of concern for others' needs, versus an exchange orientation, in which they generally seek direct reciprocity from others in benefits and demonstrations of affection. They will use justice norms accordingly.

Another area of research on distributive justice in close relationships has dealt with gender inequalities in various domains in close relationships, with the division of family labor (i.e., housework and childcare) standing out as the predominant area of research. Women do a much larger share of the

family work than men, regardless of their employment status, both in Western Europe and in the United States. Surprisingly, only a minority of women regards the division of labor as unfair. Apparently, mere gender inequality is not a sufficient condition of feelings of injustice. The *distributive justice framework* was developed by Brenda Major and Linda Thompson to understand this “paradoxical sense of contentment” with the unequal division of labor. It is a conceptual analysis of partners’ perceptions of fairness in the relationship that claims that fairness judgments are affected by people’s wants and values, comparison standards, and justifications.

Wants and values refer to the outcomes people desire or value. Fairness judgments depend on the individual’s aspirations, expectations, and desires. Individuals must value or want an outcome in order to feel inequitably treated or deprived if they do not have that outcome. Faye Crosby’s *two-factor model of relative deprivation* further states that feelings of injustice result from a combination of unfulfilled wants and feelings of entitlement or deservingness. Women will not feel deprived if their partner does not do his fair share in the household unless they *want* their partner to participate more in household tasks and feel that they are *entitled to* their partner’s help. Thus, wanting and feelings of entitlement are a necessary condition for feelings of deprivation or injustice. Gerold Mikula further adds that attributions of blame are basic elements of the experience of injustice. Women will regard the division of labor as more unjust when they blame their partner for not doing his fair share.

Comparison standards refer to the standards people use to judge their outcomes. Feelings of injustice depend on the outcome of a social comparison process. For example, partners compare their own inputs and outcomes with those of their partner. Consistent with Equity Theory, partners who perceive inequity in the division of labor will feel distressed. Buunk and van Yperen labeled this type of social comparison with the partner as *relational comparison*. In line with Social Comparison Theory, partners also compare their inputs and outcomes in the relationship with those of similar others in a reference group—family members, friends, and acquaintances of the same gender. This type of comparison with similar others is

referred to as *referential comparison*. Because people generally tend to make downward comparisons with regard to their close relationships (i.e., people generally tend to view their own relationship as better than other people’s relationships), women tend to perceive more fairness in their own relationship than in the relationships of other women. This adds to the explanation of the paradoxical sense of contentment with the unequal division of labor.

Justifications refer to procedures, attributions, or rules that legitimize a given outcome. Women can justify an unequal division of labor (or a negative outcome) when they believe that the outcome resulted from the application of a fair procedure. As mentioned in the introduction of this entry, the literature on procedural justice has shown that people judge the same outcome as more fair under conditions of high procedural fairness than under conditions of low procedural fairness. Research has shown that women perceive the division of labor as more fair when they have had a voice during relationship conflict over the division of labor.

Little is known about the role of procedural justice in close relationships, even though it has been argued in the social justice literature that procedural justice generally has great consequences for the way people react to (in)justice. These consequences often have more impact than do those of distributive justice. It could well be argued that procedural justice has strong effects on partners’ reactions toward injustice in close relationships. Tom Tyler and Alan Lind have argued that relational motives shape procedural justice judgments. Their influential Relational Model of Authority states that relational concerns play a major role in the individual’s sensitivity to procedural justice. People care about procedural justice because it communicates that their interaction partner values them, and this information validates their status, identity, self-esteem, and self-respect.

Research conducted by Esther Kluwer and her colleagues indicates that the relationship between procedural justice in the context of a relationship conflict and several outcome variables (affective feelings and relationship satisfaction) is stronger for women than for men, suggesting that women react more strongly toward procedural (in)justice than men. This gender difference disappeared under conditions of strong relationship orientation.

A strong relationship orientation made men more vulnerable to how they were treated by their partner during a relationship conflict. The findings suggest that procedural justice operates at a dispositional level for women, who are generally more relationship oriented, whereas it operates at a relationship-specific level for men. Men are affected by procedural justice only when they are highly committed to their relationship, when they strongly identify with their partner, or when their relationship is experientially made salient.

Esther S. Kluwer

See also Communal Relationships; Division of Labor in Households; Equity Theory; Interdependence Theory; Justice Norms Applied to Relationships; Rewards and Costs in Relationships; Sex Differences in Relationships

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person—the transition from not being in love to being in love. Falling in love appears to be a universal phenomenon, appearing in every culture for which data are available, in every historical era, and in every age group, from 4- to 100-year-olds and beyond. Analogues to falling in love are found in a wide variety of higher animal species and may well have played a critical role in human evolution. Falling in love is often an intense experience, a source of some of the greatest joys, including connectedness, ecstasy, and fulfillment, and some of the greatest problems, including depression, rage, stalking, suicide, and homicide. It is also a common phenomenon: It happens at least once to most U.S. residents at some point in their lives, with only somewhat varying rates across cultures. This entry reviews the literature on the falling in love process, including distinguishing it from onset of sexual desire, discussing predictors of falling in love, and identifying the consequences of the experience of falling in love.

History of the Study of Falling in Love

Falling in love has been the subject of both artistic and scholarly attention from the earliest times. Some classical contributions in Western culture are Plato's *Symposium*, Stendhal's book-length 18th century essay *de L'Amour*, and Sigmund Freud's extensive discussions of the topic. In the 19th and early 20th centuries, cultural anthropologists and clinical writers outside the Freudian tradition became interested in the topic; researchers in the 1960s and 1970s mainly focused on initial romantic attraction between strangers. The 1980s set the stage for much current thinking on romantic love, most prominently including the extension of Attachment Theory to adult love, descriptive work on intense passionate love, the identification of lay understandings of love, and the development and application of relevant theoretical models. Researchers in the early 1990s added work on unreciprocated love and love ideals. The major developments in the late 1990s and early 21st century include an upsurge of interest in romantic love in adolescence and old age, ethnic and cultural differences, love as an emotion, and—most prominently—biological approaches, including work on oxytocin and vasopressin in

FALLING IN LOVE

Falling in love is the onset of a strong desire for a close, romantic relationship with a particular

monogamous prairie voles, the related work it has inspired in humans, and brain imaging and other neuroscience methods.

What Is Falling in Love?

As noted, falling in love is the transition from not being in love to being in love. The metaphor of “falling” suggests a rapid transition, but many individuals report a gradual transition, sometimes over years, as from an acquaintanceship to an intense passion. Nevertheless, regardless of how long it takes, falling in love for most people clearly refers to a transition from something not at all intense to something quite intense, involving a major redirection of one’s attention and energy, and more than just a passing or ephemeral attraction or valuing of an individual.

The key definitional issue has been about what is being fallen into: “What is love?” Extensive research by Beverly Fehr and others has shown that people understand love by its resemblance to a prototype, a standard model, or idea (as one would recognize a bird by its resemblance to a robin). The prototypical features of love encompass, in order of centrality, intimacy, commitment, and passion. Scientists such as Art Aron, by contrast, have defined love in a more formal way, for example, as “the constellation of behaviors, cognitions, and emotions associated with a desire to enter or maintain a close relationship with a specific other person.” Researchers have found romantic love to be associated with dependence, caring, and exclusiveness, as distinguished from mere liking, which emphasizes similarity, respect, and positive evaluation. Elaine Hatfield and Ellen Berscheid also distinguished passionate romantic love (“intense longing for union with another”) from companionate love (“affection . . . for those with whom our lives are deeply entwined”). Some items on the standard research measure of passionate love are “I would rather be with ___ than with anyone else” and “I melt when looking deeply into ___’s eyes.” A similar distinction is between those whom one “loves” and the subset of these with whom one is “in love.”

Other research approaches have focused on typologies. One, based on the work of John Alan Lee and Clyde and Susan Hendrick, identifies six “love styles:” *eros* (romantic, passionate love),

ludus (game-playing love), *storge* (friendship love), *pragma* (logical, “shopping-list” love), *mania* (possessive, dependent love), and *agape* (selfless love). Another influential approach is the Triangular Theory, developed by Robert Sternberg, which conceptualizes love in terms of intimacy, commitment/decision, and passion, the various combinations of which define diverse types of romantic love.

Falling in Love Versus the Onset of Sexual Desire

Sexual desire is clearly linked with passionate love. For example, the features that identify the lay understanding of love include “sexual passion” and “sex appeal.” Similarly, the standard measure of passionate love described earlier includes items emphasizing physical response to the partner. Nevertheless, romantic love and sexual desire have been shown to be associated with different nonverbal cues and behavioral responses. For example, head nodding and smiling are significant predictors of love but not necessarily of sexual desire. Another relevant finding is that 5-year-old children, who presumably do not have the same kind of sexual response as do adolescents, report levels of passionate love as high as 14 to 18 year olds. Finally, brain imaging studies of romantic love have consistently found patterns of brain activity that only minimally overlap with activation patterns found in studies of sexual arousal.

Variations in Falling in Love

Personality

Those who fall in love most often and most intensely are people high on a dimension of “anxious-attachment,” those who, presumably as a result of inconsistent love from their primary caregiver as infants, as adults are hungry for love, tending to seek it more avidly and to be more engaged in the concern about the partner’s response. Other research has reported a similar pattern for those with low self-esteem.

Gender

On average, and across the cultures studied, men appear to be more variable (either having

been many times in love or none at all) and are more romantic and passionate than women are, but women are more likely to be in love at any given time. However, nearly all observed gender differences are only slight average trends, with substantial overlaps between the genders. Many studies find no gender differences.

Cultural Context

Cross-cultural comparisons suggest that people fall in love everywhere, that there is a universal, core element of passionate love. However, how it is enacted may depend heavily on the cultural context. In particular, the greatest variation seems to be in just what precursors lead to falling in love and different styles of expressing and experiencing love and in its incidence across the life cycle. Much of the cultural variation may be due to people in “collectivistic” cultures (e.g., many Asian societies), compared with those in more “individualist” cultures (e.g., North American societies), being less motivated to separate from the family and community context to become intimate with each other.

Whether or Not the Love Is Reciprocated

Autobiographical accounts of being rejected and of being the undesired object of someone's attraction have reported that rejection can lead to strong organization as well as strong disorganization of thoughts, behaviors, and emotions. Both the rejectors and rejectees largely express passive behaviors, both are unhappy with the situation, and both usually end up disappointed. The intensity of a person's feelings of unrequited love can be predicted by how much the individual wants the relationship, how much he or she likes the state of being in love (whether reciprocated or not), and whether the rejectee initially believed his or her love would be reciprocated.

Predictors of Falling in Love

Numerous experiments have identified factors that lead to liking in general and to initial romantic attraction. These factors include discovering that the other person likes one's self; attraction to the other's characteristics, including kindness,

intelligence, humor, good looks, and social status; similarities with one's self, especially in attitudes and background characteristics; proximity and exposure to the other; confirmation and encouragement from one's peers and family that this is a suitable partner; and meeting under conditions of shared humor. With romantic attraction, versus mere general liking, there is a greater importance of physical appearance and that the being liked by the other is specific to oneself (as opposed to the other person liking everyone). In addition, a predictor specific to romantic attraction is being physiologically stirred up at the time of meeting a potential partner. For example, one study found that men who met an attractive woman when on a scary suspension bridge were more romantically attracted to her than were men who met the same woman on a safe bridge; another study found that individuals felt greater romantic attraction to an individual whom they met just after running in place for a few minutes! Finally, systematic analyses of people's retrospective accounts of falling in love find that the most common scenario is discovering that a reasonably appropriate and desirable person is attracted to you.

Effects of Falling in Love

Those experiencing intense passionate love report a focused attention on the beloved, heightened energy, sleeplessness, loss of appetite, euphoria and mood swings, bodily reactions such as a pounding heart, emotional dependence on and obsessive thinking about the beloved, emotional and physical possessiveness, craving for emotional union with the beloved, and intense motivation to win this particular partner.

Is this a good or a bad thing? On the one hand, in the week after falling in love, people experience an increase in self-esteem and an expanded, more diverse sense of one's self. Further, falling in love quickly and intensely, including idealizing the partner, is associated even years later with less divorce and more positive relationships. On the other hand, falling in love may be much less positive, as when it is not reciprocated or when one is already in a relationship with someone else. Also, falling in love can be highly disruptive of one's friendship network. Whether falling in love is seen as a good

or bad thing also seems to differ by cultures. For example, Chinese, more than U.S. residents, associate it with negative features such as sadness, heartbreak, and darkness.

The Biology of Falling in Love

In her 1998 review of the animal literature, anthropologist Helen Fisher concluded that birds and mammals evolved several distinct brain systems for courtship, mating, and parenting, including (a) the sex drive, characterized by a craving for sexual gratification; (b) attraction, characterized by focused attention on a preferred mating partner; and (c) attachment, characterized by the maintenance of proximity, affiliative gestures and expressions of calm when in social contact with a mating partner, and separation anxiety when apart. Each neural system is associated with a different constellation of brain circuits, different behavior patterns, and different emotional and motivational states. With regard to human love, one can equate “attraction” with falling in love. Indeed, recent human studies using brain imaging and biological markers confirm this view.

How Does Falling in Love Work? Major Theoretical Approaches

Love as Attachment

Attachment Theory, originally developed by John Bowlby in relation to infants and extended to adults most prominently by Philip Shaver, has been among the influential approaches to understanding romantic love. The theory emphasizes that early experience with caregivers strongly shapes individual differences in adult love experiences. Thus, for example, those who have had inconsistent caregiving (e.g., those high on the anxious attachment dimension) are much more likely as adults to experience intense passionate love. They are also more likely to experience intense unrequited love given their propensity to easily fall in love but not to trust that the other returns the love, even if the other does return the love. In contrast, those who experienced a consistent lack of security as an infant are said to be high on the avoidant dimension of attachment. As adults, they are

especially unlikely to fall in love, given their tendency to reject passionate love as real and to avoid closeness of any kind.

Love as a Story

Sternberg suggested that loving relationships can be described accurately by the people involved through narrative autobiographies, often suggesting culturally prototypical “stories.” For example, the story of a couple locked in constant struggle is common, as is the story of couples growing to love each other over time. Each type of story has a characteristic mode of thought and behavior that often corresponds to other views of love (e.g., someone with a game-based love story will behave in ways consistent with the ludus love style). Having a particular love story can also affect one’s expectations of what a romantic relationship should be like. People tend to seek romantic partners with similar love stories and complementary roles within these stories. Finally, these stories are inextricably linked with the rest of one’s life: Particular stories can influence behavior in a relationship, and stories can be shaped and modified by one’s experiences.

Evolutionary Approaches

Because courtship and mate choice are central aspects of reproduction in avian and mammalian species, it seems plausible that the experiences, behaviors, and neural underpinnings of falling in love might be strongly shaped by evolution. Thus, as noted earlier, Fisher proposed that the brain system for romantic attraction evolved to motivate individuals to select among potential mating partners, prefer particular conspecifics, and focus their courtship attention on these favored individuals, thereby conserving precious courtship and mating time and energy. Other evolutionary-oriented theorists have proposed that many human traits, including language and even some artistic talents, evolved as display devices to trigger attraction. Another important line of evolutionary thinking emphasizes gender differences in what features are desirable in a mate. For example, across cultures, men more than women consistently say they care more about a potential partner’s physical appearance and women more than men care about a

potential partner's social status. Finally, some approaches to the evolutionary basis of romantic love have argued that the mating system exploits an evolved bonding module between infants and parents.

Self-Expansion Model

Another approach to understanding falling in love is Arthur and Elaine Aron's Self-Expansion Model. This model posits (a) that a primary human motivation to expand one's self in terms of potential to attain desired goals and (b) that a main way people seek to expand the self is in terms of "including others in the self" through close relationships so that the other's resources, perspectives, and identities are treated to some extent as one's own. Both principles have received considerable research support. In terms of romantic love, the researchers argue that the exhilaration and intense, focused attention of passionate love arises from the rapid rate of including the other in the self often associated with forming a new romantic relationship. Falling in love, according to this model, arises when one perceives the opportunity for substantial self-expansion by including a particular other person in the self.

Conclusions

Falling in love is much less a mystery than it once was. Scientists are no longer just watching the storms and heat waves with at best only a poetic sense of what is going on. We know what people mean fairly precisely by "falling in love." We know that it is not just sexual desire. We know many of the systematic similarities and differences across personality, gender, culture, and whether the love is reciprocated. We know a fair amount about falling in love's effects on the individual experiencing it and on how its intensity affects relationships that develop from it. We know a great deal about the variables that predict falling in love. We have a growing basis for understanding its biological correlates and cross-species similarities. And several theoretical approaches offer substantial insights into underlying mechanisms.

Yet, mystery remains. Most of what we know, as noted throughout this entry, is extrapolation

from work on initial attraction or on romantic love, the states on either side of falling in love, each of which has been much more thoroughly studied. Nevertheless, one can look forward to continued important work using existing approaches, as well as to exciting findings from entirely new approaches or new adaptations of successful paradigms from other research domains. Given the sophistication and innovation that have characterized research in this area to date, it seems likely that it will not be long before falling in love is as well understood as other relationship phenomena. Indeed, one can look forward in the not too distant future to both being and falling in love becoming as well understood and predictable as the next storm or heat wave.

Arthur Aron, Helen Fisher, and Greg Strong

See also Infatuation; Interpersonal Attraction; Love, Companionate and Passionate; Love, Prototype Approach; Love, Typologies; Love, Unreciprocated; Obsessive Love

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FAMILIARITY PRINCIPLE OF ATTRACTION

The *familiarity principle of attraction* refers to the idea that objects and people seen repeatedly are subsequently rated more positively than are those seen less frequently. This principle stems from research on the *mere exposure effect*, which predicts that repeated exposure to neutrally valenced objects increases *attitudes*, or evaluations, of those objects. Early studies on the mere exposure effect varied the exposure frequency of nonsense syllables and Chinese characters (to non-Chinese fluent samples) and showed that those seen more frequently were rated more favorably. These effects seem to generalize even to non-humans; rats have been shown to prefer music that they were raised with to novel music.

Subsequent research has investigated the effect of increased exposure on social stimuli. For example, hearing a rumor repeatedly can lead one to believe that the rumor is true. When it comes to interacting with people who have been seen frequently, there are a wide range of effects. For example, people tend to agree with persuasive arguments from individuals they are familiar with, compared with that same argument from those they were not previously exposed to. Likewise, people tend to comply with the requests of those they are familiar with. At the foundation of these effects is the fact that we like those that we have seen repeatedly. Laboratory studies have shown that individuals prefer to interact with those with whom they have had more previous exposure. In addition, faces presented more frequently are rated as more attractive.

These findings generalize beyond the laboratory as well. In a clever study, researchers planted four

female confederates in a college class (i.e., they posed as students). The confederates were pre-tested to be of similar physical attractiveness, and their class attendance was varied during the semester. At the end of the term, there was a strong association between students' ratings of the confederates and their class attendance (i.e., familiarity); the confederate who came to class most frequently was rated as the most attractive and likeable, and the one who never came to class was rated lowest on these dimensions.

The effect of familiarity can even be seen in individuals' preferences for pictures of themselves compared with their friends' preferences. Because we typically see ourselves "backward" (i.e., in the mirror), we tend to prefer our own images if reversed. However, our friends typically see us the "right way," and they will prefer our non-reversed picture. Furthermore, when rating the attractiveness of opposite-sex others, participants prefer faces of others that look similar to themselves. Using computerized image-morphing, participants were shown a range of faces, and unbeknownst to them, some included their own face transformed into an opposite-sex target; these were the faces that received the highest attractiveness ratings.

In addition to the implications for liking in interpersonal relationships and attraction, the familiarity principle has been applied extensively in consumer and political contexts. According to this perspective, one rationale for the frequency and effectiveness of advertising is that viewers should prefer products and political candidates that they have seen more often.

Many potential mechanisms underlying the mere exposure effect have been investigated. One particular process that has received support is that familiarity involves *classical conditioning* in situations absent of aversive events. It is possible that the lack of aversive stimuli elicits a positive response, which through subsequent trials (i.e., exposure) becomes paired with the person or target repeatedly presented, yielding a preference for those objects or people that are familiar. In addition, the principle of familiarity makes sense from an *evolutionary perspective*; those objects that are seen often are viewed as safe and pleasant, whereas unfamiliar things are unknown and may promote uncertainty. A preference for familiar

objects would have led individuals to gravitate toward safe and predictable situations and away from the unfamiliar, thus facilitating survival and reproduction. Therefore, according to this perspective, selective pressures would have reinforced the preference for familiar stimuli within ancestral populations.

Familiarity effects have been found to be stronger when people are unaware that they have seen the stimulus more often and when stimuli are presented for short durations. For example, the mere exposure effect can occur when stimuli are presented *subliminally*. The familiarity principle, however, does not mean that increased exposure to people or objects that are previously disliked will lead individuals to like them more. Though liking for neutral objects or those with a preexisting positive evaluation may be facilitated with increased exposure, evidence indicates that increased exposure to negatively evaluated objects causes a further decrease in liking of those objects.

Closely related to the familiarity principle are the effects of *proximity* on attraction, which predicts that people will be attracted to those who are physically nearby, given that those in close proximity are also likely to be seen more often and offer opportunities for interaction. Thus, the familiarity principle is one explanation for why proximity is associated with attraction.

Benjamin Le

See also Proximity and Attraction

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FAMILIES, COPING WITH CANCER

The diagnosis and treatment of cancer has immense emotional and practical repercussions for the entire family as well as for the patient. Although the medical community has long treated cancer as a “family disease,” the psychological implications of cancer on families have only begun to receive empirical attention during the past two decades. This entry focuses on the psychological ramifications of the diagnosis of cancer on the adult and his or her spouse, children, and other family members, as well as the role of family support in psychological adaptation to cancer.

Impact of Cancer on the Spouse and the Marital Relationship

Most studies suggest that between 20 percent and 30 percent of spouses report clinically relevant levels of psychological distress, although higher rates of distress (50 percent) have been reported among spouses of individuals with advanced stage disease. Numerous studies have compared rates of distress of patients and their partners, but a recent meta-analysis suggests that the higher rates of partner distress reported in previous studies might be associated with gender: Women report more distress than men regardless of whether they are the person with cancer or the spouse. Many couples are drawn closer together by the cancer experience, but a subset of couples, particularly those with preexisting marital dissatisfaction, report increased marital difficulties after cancer. Although some early studies suggested that divorce or marital separation were more likely after cancer, current research does not consistently support this contention.

Impact of Parental Cancer on Children

Current research indicates that most children who have a parent with early-stage cancer do not experience clinically relevant psychosocial problems. However, evidence suggests that children experience greater internalizing problems, such as depressive or anxious symptoms. Adolescents report more anxious, depressive, and aggressive

symptoms than prepubescent children do. Gender of the child, as well as gender of the affected parent, may influence how the child copes with parental cancer. Adolescent daughters, particularly daughters of women with cancer, report greater internalizing difficulties relative to sons, or to adolescents of either gender whose fathers have cancer. Other evidence suggests that families coping with cancer may experience positive outcomes, such as less family conflict, greater family expressiveness and cohesiveness, and better social competence among children. Though most data indicate that illness-related variables are not related to children's functioning, at least one study found that depressive or anxious symptoms decreased for both children and adolescents as the time since diagnosis increased. Most studies have focused exclusively on children experiencing maternal cancer; paternal cancer may not have the same effect.

Impact of Cancer on Patients' Adult Siblings and Parents

Few studies have examined the impact of cancer on adult siblings and parents of individuals with cancer. Sisters of breast cancer patients who are at high familial breast cancer risk (i.e., from hereditary breast-ovarian cancer families) report that they do not experience increased psychological distress. However, other studies have reported that female first-degree relatives (i.e., parents, siblings, and children) of breast cancer patients, who are at increased (but not necessarily familial) risk report high distress, suggesting that community samples may report higher distress than relatives of women recruited from cancer risk registries. Studies assessing distress in first-degree relatives providing care to cancer patients indicate that levels of distress may be influenced by the type of cancer the patient has.

A large body of literature examines how pediatric cancer affects families, a topic too extensive to include in this entry; however, few studies have looked at the impact on parents of adult children diagnosed with cancer. Most studies have examined parents whose adult children died from cancer. These studies indicate that parents may feel uncertain of their role in their

adult child's healthcare and experience conflicting desires to care for their child as well as allow him or her to maintain autonomy. One study examined parents' distress approximately 2 years after the death of their adult child from cancer and found that parents did not report higher than normal levels of distress. Psychological issues of adult family members of individuals with cancer would benefit from greater empirical attention.

Family Support and Cancer

Social support is one of the most-studied contributory factors to the psychological adaptation to cancer. Social support is typically defined as the perception that emotional, practical, self-esteem bolstering, or informational help would be available from others if it were needed or the perception of the receipt of these same behaviors from others during the cancer experience. Other studies have evaluated perceived satisfaction with support provided by others. Most studies have evaluated global perceptions of support from the patient's network of family and friends with relatively few studies separately examining the role of support provided by family. In these studies, family support generally correlates positively with mental and physical health. Among family members, spouses are the most studied source of social support. Both perceived and received spousal support predict higher levels of psychological adaptation, with several studies suggesting that supportive responses from spouses predict adaptive coping responses such as greater use of problem-solving coping. Not all responses from family are viewed as supportive by cancer patients. For example, avoidance of talking about the cancer by changing the topic and responses that are perceived as minimizing the patient's concerns are considered unsupportive, and these responses, both from spouses and other family members, have been associated with greater psychological distress as well as with less adaptive coping strategies by the individual with cancer, including avoidance. The literature to date suggests that not avoiding talking about the cancer, asking the patient and his or her family members directly what he or she wants in terms of support, and

attempting to provide esteem-bolstering support are all beneficial.

Family-Focused Interventions

Although support from family is a key resource for patients coping with cancer and bolstering support is likely to be beneficial effects for both patients and the family members who care for them, few psychological interventions incorporate family members. Family-focused grief therapy, which includes patients with advanced cancers at the end of life and their family members, has been shown to facilitate post-death adaptation of family members. Couple-focused group and individual couples' interventions have also shown promise in reducing distress for patients and their partners. Finally, recent studies targeting distress among family caregivers of patients with advanced disease have shown promise. Psychological interventions may benefit from including family members.

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See also Family Therapy; Health, Relationships as a Factor in Treatment; Health Behaviors, Relationships and Interpersonal Spread of; Illness, Effects on Relationships; Marriage and Health

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FAMILIES, DEFINITIONS AND TYPOLOGIES

Family is the primal relational experience for most people. Most people assume that they know what a family is. Yet, the basic definition of this universal phenomenon has recently become intensely controversial. Recently, California's Supreme Court followed Massachusetts in ruling that gays and lesbians can marry and raise children—in essence establishing a legal family—just as heterosexuals do, although this ruling was overturned by public referendum. Whether referendums to ban gay marriages are passed, traditional definitions of family are changing. The rise of gay rights is not the only social change to challenge traditional notions of family. With the divorce rate long higher than 50 percent, single-parent and blended families have become as commonplace as the traditional nuclear family with a father, mother, and biological children. Likewise, the rise of long-term cohabitation has created a social unit, sometimes called a *common-law marriage*, that has also challenged traditional conceptions of family. Laws protecting children have also led to increasing numbers of children being removed from their biological parents and adopted or placed in foster care. Likewise, there are cross-cultural variations in what constitutes a family and what a family looks like. Polygamy is accepted in some cultures or subcultures but not in others. Different cultures have different traditions for where to draw the boundaries of the extended family. All of these variations have political and legal implications.

This entry presents three approaches to defining what constitutes a family: structural, functional, and process. It also describes several of the most popular and useful family typologies.

Definitions

Dictionaries usually define terms reflecting common usage. Scholars define terms to facilitate research and communication, not necessarily to advance a political agenda. Nevertheless, because a definition of a family typically includes certain social groupings and excludes others, most definitions will have political implications. Some people

have attempted to skirt the issue by simply saying that a group is a family when its members say that it is. Whereas this approach probably works well for most practical situations, it may not prove useful for systematic research, analysis, or understanding. Scholars have usually defined *family* in terms of structures, functions, or processes.

Structural Approach

Structural approaches to defining what a family is may be the most challenged by societal changes and cultural variations. The structural approach usually distinguishes between the *family of procreation* (often called the *nuclear family*) and the *family of origin* (also called the *extended family*). The family of procreation is the “immediate family” in a household responsible for the raising of children, usually parents and their children. The extended family includes less immediate relationships including in-laws, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, and so on. The bases of the family’s relationships are viewed as biological (blood) and legal (e.g., marriage or adoption). The challenges to legal distinctions have been noted; however, with the rise of in vitro fertilization and surrogate parenting, even the biological basis for family membership is potentially controversial.

Typically, structural definitions require at least one adult or guardian and at least one child (though the child can be an adult). A marital relationship is typically considered a subsystem or part of the family system, but not a family by itself. A typical structural definition would describe a family as *an intergenerational social network of relationships based upon biological (hereditary) and legal (e.g., marriage, civil union, or adoption) kinships*.

Functional Approach

A functional definition defines a family in terms of the function(s) that it accomplishes. The primary function that most people identify with family is the raising of children—both their nurturing and their socialization. However, families also provide other functions (e.g., social support), but these often do not distinguish them from other social groups or networks. As families progress through their life cycle, the function of care and support often shifts such that children are

responsible for the support and care of their parents. In a purely functional definition, a group is a family if it accomplishes the functions of a family, regardless of its structure. Whereas some definitions focus on structure and others on function, these are not mutually exclusive. Structures often evolve to support functions. A typical definition that combines the structural and functional approaches holds that a family is *an intergenerational social network of relationships based upon biological (hereditary) and legal (e.g., marriage, civil union, or adoption) kinships whose primary functions are the socializing, supporting, and nurturing of children and other family members*.

Process Approach

It has become increasingly popular to define families in terms of the communication and social-psychological processes that characterize them. Processes, like structures, cannot be separated from the functions that they accomplish. Processes are the means by which functions are accomplished. These definitions focus upon *how* groups function as families.

Families are highly interdependent. The behavior of one member affects all other members, and all members of the family share a common fate. The needs of an infant may place an added burden on a working parent, may require an added time commitment from a nurturing parent, and may take away from time and resources available to another child. When mom loses her job, dad may have to work more hours, and daughter may not get her own car or may not have enough to eat. When children quarrel, parents may need to step in to mediate, and when parents quarrel, children are emotionally affected. It is both popular and useful to consider a family as a *system* (i.e., an interdependent group that acts as a unit because of the relationships between its members and subgroups). Whereas family systems may vary in the degree to which they orient inward or interact with the outside world, for a family to act as a system, some degree of coordinated interdependence and identity is necessary.

Families are intimate interacting systems. Though families and individuals within families certainly vary in the extent to which they guard their privacy or are open and confiding (see the following discussion of

family types), a degree of intimacy is unavoidable in an intact family. By virtue of the degree of interdependence, the amount of time that they spend together, and the basic requirements of family life, private and personal information is more available to family members than to most other people. Family members know what other members look like before they comb their hair, and they know how other members act behind closed doors.

Probably more than any other type of group, *families create their own social realities*. Children come to know who they are by how others treat them, and the first and most important source of such information is the family (parents, grandparents, and siblings). A child's identity is initialized by the family. Children are socialized into a culture, and they are indoctrinated into a worldview that the parents and other family members negotiate and cocreate. If children are loved and protected in the family, they are likely to see the world in a different way than if they are abused, neglected, or told that others are out to hurt them. Research on Attachment Theory shows that these views of self and others formed within the family system predict emotional coping, cognitive development, and the nature of future relationships.

Families require commitment. Though members may be born into a family, if they lose their loyalty or ties to the family, the family ceases to function as an ongoing interdependent system. Members can drift away from each other and remain members in name only. Such a group might remain a family under the structural definition but would not be a family under a process definition. It is, of course, more difficult to "divorce" one's family than to separate from most other social groups because of legal and social pressures. This may be what is responsible for many behaviors within families (e.g., rudeness and conflict) that might break apart groups with less commitment.

Families maintain a degree of continuity of relationships over time. This does not mean that they don't develop and change—they do—but the relationships extend over years and generations. Many groups create a group identity, but *a family creates a "sense of home."* This is a feeling of belonging and a sense of place that extends beyond the present to the past and future.

As noted in the following typological discussion, there is a lot of variation both within and

across cultures in the extent of interdependence and identification with the family. For example, in collectivist cultures, the interdependence and sense of identity with the family is likely to be much higher than within individualistic cultures. Nevertheless, a degree of interdependence, commitment, and identity is necessary for a group to function like a family.

According to a process definition, a family is *an interdependent and intimate interacting system, which creates its own social reality, its own conception of home, and maintains itself through a continuity of commitment over time*. This begs several questions. In addition to what one normally thinks of as a family, can a social gang (the Mafia or the Crips) be a family under this definition? Yes, and it has been argued that the need for a sense of "family" is a primary reason why people often join such groups. Are a biological mother, father, and son or daughter who by choice no longer have contact or interaction still a family under this definition? No. Nevertheless, most intact groups that would be considered families under the structural definition would also be defined as families under the process definition. Likewise, the prototypical instance of the process definition family would be the prototypical structural family. Definitions are evaluated based upon their utility. The process definition invites focus on the central communication and social-psychological processes that create the family experience.

Family Typologies

It is not controversial to observe that not all families are alike. The question is, on what systematic basis does one differentiate between families? To say no two families are alike, though true at some level, is of little help in improving understanding. Whereas there are many ways to differentiate between different types of families, a *typology* makes those distinctions systematically based on a set of fundamental principles. As the previous discussion would suggest, these distinctions can be based on variations in structure, function, or process.

Typologies based on structure may differentiate families according to who is considered part of the family system and the biological or legal basis for such inclusion. Variations from the prototypical

nuclear family (two married parents with children) include single-parent families, foster or adoptive families, blended families, civil unions with children, grandparents raising grandchildren, and so on.

Typologies Based on Processes

Several typologies distinguish between families based on distinctions in functions or processes. David Reiss proposed a typology based on the issues or functions that the family is most sensitive to. He suggests that families may be consensus sensitive, interpersonal distance sensitive, or environment sensitive. This typology holds that environment-sensitive families are more likely to produce children who are mentally healthy.

David Kantor and William Lehr proposed an early typology of families based on three targets or goals (affect, power, and meaning) and three access dimensions (space, time, and energy). Family members seek to obtain affect or power or make sense of things using space, time, and energy. Variations in these goals and processes constitute the ways in which families handle the fundamental issue of autonomy and connection. Kantor and Lehr proposed three types of families.

Open families maintain flexible boundaries such that family members freely interact with their environment and the world outside the family and what is learned feeds back to influence the family system. Rules and understandings are also subject to negotiation and change. For example, the parents of a daughter in an open family might always make sure that she gets to spend time with her friends and do things outside the family. However, she must let her parents know beforehand where she is and what she's doing. She might even go away with her friend's family for vacation instead of with her own family.

Closed families maintain more fixed boundaries by interacting less with and being influenced less by the outside world and spend their time and energies on the family. This produces a higher degree of predictability in how they interact and function. For example, a son in a closed family might spend every weekend with his family. On those few occasions he does spend time with his friends, his parents monitor his activities carefully. This family might hold to the motto "what goes on in the family stays in the family."

Random families by contrast tend to be highly unpredictable with members at times maintaining a high degree of separation or autonomy from the family. For example, a child in a random family might never know who will be at home when she comes home from school or where her parents might be. Her family may never all sit down to dinner together. Whereas the open family is flexible, the random family is chaotic and disjointed.

David Olson and his associates use two separate dimensions to distinguish between families: cohesion and flexibility. According to this typology, families that are too extreme on either of these two dimensions are likely to be dysfunctional, whereas those that are more moderate are more functional. If a family is too cohesive (enmeshed) or lacks any cohesion (disengaged), it is dysfunctional, whereas families that are moderate (i.e., connected or separated) are healthier. An enmeshed family may not allow any autonomy for its members or exhibit "codependency" (the inability of members to separate their own feelings from those of others). Disengaged families would be families in name only, but fail to function as a unit. Likewise, families that are either rigid or chaotic (not flexible enough or too flexible) are unhealthy, but moderately flexible or structured families are likely to be healthier. A rigid family adheres so strictly to proscribed rules or structures that family members cannot adapt to changing or novel situations. A chaotic family has so little structure that there is no predictability or coordination of the family unit. The combinations of four levels of these two dimensions produce 16 family types. Whereas the underlying dimensions of the Olson typology are similar to the Kantor and Lehr typology, cohesion and flexibility are viewed as more distinct in the Olson system and Olson makes finer distinctions and, therefore, proposes a more elaborate typology. This typology may have its greatest benefit for family therapists, but may not describe families in ways that the family members themselves would identify with.

Jack McLeod and Steven Chaffee proposed a typology of families based on communication patterns, which was further developed by Mary Anne Fitzpatrick. Families are typed based on their members' self-reports on two aspects of family communication: conversation orientation and conformity orientation. These two dimensions

form the basis by which families create their own social realities.

Families that focus more on conversation and concepts than on conformity in forging their reality are called *pluralistic families*. Their family communication is unconstrained and open regarding all family members. For example, a married couple may be strong Democrats, but when their son begins expressing conservative ideas and supporting Republican candidates, the parents engage him in debate without demanding that he change his views.

Protective families are oriented more toward conformity than toward open conversation and, therefore, their communication is based on conformity to parental authority and limited concern for conceptual issues. Unlike the prior example, such a family would not encourage the expression of views, political or otherwise, conflicting with the parents' expressed worldview.

Families that attempt to use both open conversation focused on concepts *and* adherence to parental authority are termed *consensual families*. Their communication displays the tension that comes from the tendency to conform while attempting to openly discuss new ideas and issues. In the example of differences over political orientation, the family would be in tension until all members were able to negotiate a common family viewpoint.

Finally, when families are focused on neither conformity nor open conversation, they display the uninvolved or disengaged relationships of a *laissez-faire family*. For example, in such a family, members might not know or care about the political positions of other members.

There are clear similarities between the Kantor and Lehr, the Olson, and the McLeod and Chaffee typologies. For example, the descriptions of the random, disengaged, and laissez-faire families are somewhat similar, though not necessarily identical. They come close to not being families under the process definition. For these types to qualify as a family under the process definition, some limited degree of cohesion and coordination are necessary. All of these process typologies consider how families create their own reality, negotiate autonomy and connection, and display predictability or flexibility. However, McLeod and Chaffee's typology does not view any family type as inherently

functional or dysfunctional. Rather, each type has its own strengths and weaknesses. There can be functional and dysfunctional families in each of the four types.

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See also Attachment Theory; Families, Demographic Trends; Families, Intergenerational Relationships in; Families, Public Policy Issues and; Family Communication; Marital Typologies; Parent–Child Relationships; Sibling Relationships

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FAMILIES, DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS

This entry reviews various demographic trends and, in so doing, illustrates the fluidity and complexity of families. Before beginning the discussion, it is

worthwhile to review a few terms. *Demography* is a study of characteristics pertaining to the human population, such as fertility, mortality, structure and distribution, geographic mobility, immigration, emigration, and population density. This includes examining changes over time. *Family demography* involves examining factors associated specifically with the family, such as number of families, presence of children, living arrangements, and relationship status. Much of this information can be obtained from U.S. Census data, which contains a collection of demographic information. This enumeration (or headcount) is mandated by the U.S. Constitution. In a U.S. Census *Current Population Report* developed by Jason Fields (2004), family living arrangements were reviewed.

According to Fields's (2004) report, the Census Bureau developed two typologies—*family households* and *family groups*—in an attempt to assess demographic characteristics of families.

- *Family households*: A household is defined as everyone residing in a housing unit. It may consist of one or more people. The householder is the person who rents or owns the unit. There are family households and nonfamily households. Unlike a household, a family household consists of at least two related people; these people can be related by marriage, birth, or adoption. One of these people is the householder. Children may or may not be present in family households. Family households, according to definitions provided by the census, are maintained either by married couples or by a man or a woman with whom other kin are living. Identifying family households entails asking who in the home is related to the householder.
- *Family groups*: Identifying family groups entails counting family units. In this case, the householder may or may not be a member of the family. This means that family groups include all related and unrelated subfamilies. An example of an unrelated subfamily is a married couple who is not related to the householder. An example of a related subfamily is an offspring and that offspring's spouse living in the household of the offspring's parents.

There were about 76 million family households and 79 million family groups in the United States in 2003.

A factor that generally comes to mind when discussing families is the presence of children. About 60 percent of nonmarried-couple family groups and 45 percent of married-couple family groups included an own child under the age of 18 years in 2003. The proportion of large family groups with children decreased between 1970 and 2003. For example, the proportion of family groups with four or more children was 17 percent in 1970, 8 percent in 1980, 5 percent in 1990, and 5 percent in 2003. Some children living in the homes were older. In 1960, 52 percent of family households included a male adult child aged 18 to 24. In 2006, that figure was 53.7 percent. In 2006, about 14.3 percent of family households included male children aged 25 to 34 living with their parents and 9 percent included adult female children in that age range. There are many possible reasons that adult children return to their parents' home; they may return in need of support as a result of job loss, poor economy, or divorce.

Relationship Status: Trends Among the Married, Never-Married, and Divorced

Although more than 80 percent of the U.S. population will eventually marry, the proportion of nonfamily households has increased since 1970. One reason for this increase is the rise in the age at first marriage. Age at first marriage was reviewed by Jason Fields, who reported that among men, the median age at first marriage was 23.2 in 1970, 24.7 in 1980, 26.1 in 1990, 26.8 in 2000, and 27.1 in 2003. Among women, the median age at first marriage was 20.8 in 1970, 22.0 in 1980, 23.9 in 1990, 25.1 in 2000, and 25.3 in 2003. Although age at first marriage increased for both men and women, women married at younger ages than men did. The proportion of never-married men and women increased slightly during the aforementioned decades. For example, among men, the proportion never-married was 28.1 percent in 1970 but 32.1 percent in 2003. Among women, the proportion never-married was 22.1 percent in 1970 and 25.4 percent in 2003.

A careful examination of specific age groups reveal that between 1970 and 2003, the proportion of never-married women 20 to 24 years old increased more than twofold (that is, 36 percent to

75 percent) and increased more than threefold (6 percent to 23 percent) for women 30 to 34 years old. Significant changes were also observed among men. The proportion of 20- to 24-year-old never-married men increased from 55 percent (1970) to 86 percent (2003); the proportion of 30- to 34-year-old never-married men increased from 9 percent (1970) to 33 percent (2003). Though the proportion of never-married increased, the proportion married decreased. Among men, the proportion married was 65.4 percent in 1970, 61.4 percent in 1980, 58.7 percent 1990, 56.1 percent in 2000, and 55.4 percent in 2003. Similarly, among women, the proportion married was 59.7 percent in 1970, 56.1 percent in 1980, 54.0 percent in 1990, 52.3 percent in 2000, and 51.6 percent in 2003. Socioeconomic status (SES) plays a significant role in marriage trends. The attractiveness, as well as the size, of the marriage pool affects the options of low-income women. Furthermore, an imbalance in the ratio of women to men among the severely economically disadvantaged hinders the ability of women to find spouses. Key trends contribute to this occurrence, such as higher mortality rates among marriageable-aged, low-income men compared with women and the incarceration of a greater proportion of marriageable-aged, low-income men. Although some issues cut across race, other issues tend to be more race-specific. Census data provide information about Whites, Blacks, Asians, American Indians/Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islanders.

According to the U.S. Census 2000 brief *Marital Status: 2000*, by Rose Kreider and Tavia Simmons, which was issued in 2003, of all the racial groups, Blacks represented the lowest proportion married; moreover, there was a difference between women and men. Forty-two percent of Black men were married, compared with only 31 percent of Black women. That was the largest difference between men and women among any of the groups. Of all the racial groups, Black men and women also represented the largest proportion who had never been married in the year 2000. Blacks represented the *lowest* proportion married, whereas Asians represented the *highest* proportion married (women, 61 percent; men, 60 percent). Besides racial differences, there are regional differences in marital status as well as differences by state.

For example, states with the highest proportion of people *married* when Census 2000 was taken were Idaho (60 percent) and Utah (59 percent). New York and Massachusetts had the highest proportion of *never-married* people; the proportions were 32 percent and 31 percent, respectively.

Just as marriage trends differed by sex, state, and race/ethnicity, such differences also existed in divorce and separation. In 1970, 3.5 percent of men and 5.7 percent of women were separated or divorced; in 2003, that figure was 10.1 percent for men and 13.3 percent for women, according to Fields's report. When the Census 2000 was taken, Asians represented the lowest proportion separated and divorced (women, 7 percent; men, 4 percent), which means that Asians were less likely to divorce than were other groups. Those representing the highest proportion divorced when Census 2000 was taken were American Indians and Alaskan natives. The state with the lowest proportion of divorced adults was New Jersey (7.5 percent), and the state with the highest proportion divorced was Nevada (14 percent), according to Kreider and Simmons. Instead of married or divorced, some people fell under the category of unmarried-partner households.

Unmarried-Partner Households

The proportion of unmarried-partner households has been increasing. Cohabitation began growing in the 1970s and increased in the 1980s and 1990s. In 1996, 2.9 percent of households were categorized as unmarried-partner households; that proportion increased to 4.2 percent in 2003. More than 4 million households consisted of a householder living with someone of the opposite sex as an unmarried partner in 2003. This may be an underrepresentation for at least two main reasons. First, some people may be hesitant to describe themselves as cohabiting and may alternatively label themselves as friends or roommates. Second, according to Fields, all unmarried couples in a given household are not counted; only householders and their partners are counted. Decades ago, many cohabiting relationships tended to lead to marriage. In the 1970s, about 60 percent of cohabiting relationships resulted in marriage within a time span of about 3 years. That figure

dropped to 33 percent 20 years later. Andrew Cherlin explained that this reflects the trend that fewer trial marriages are leading to actual marriages. Perhaps cohabiting unions are not necessarily trial marital unions.

Relatively New Addition to Decennial Census: Grandparental Caregiving

Earlier, the presence of children was discussed. Not all children are taken care of by their parents. Some are raised—for either brief or extended periods—by their grandparents. Census 2000 marked the first time the decennial census included questions about grandparents serving in the role of caregivers for their grandchildren. This is yet another indication of the complexity of families. Once again reviewing a few terms is worthwhile:

The *Census 2000 Brief* prepared by Tavia Simmons and Jane Lawler Dye indicated that 5.8 million people aged 30 or older living in households in the United States were coresident grandparents—meaning that they were living with grandchildren who were younger than 18 years of age. About 2.4 million of those coresident grandparents *grandparent caregivers*. More than 90 percent of grandparent caregivers were the *householder* or spouse of the householder. Some of those households are referred to as *skipped generation households* because the parents of the grandchildren are not living in the home.

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See also Age at First Marriage; Culture and Relationships; Divorce, Prevalence and Trends; Grandparent–Grandchild Relationship; Marriage, Historical and Cross-Cultural Trends; Marriage Markets; Singlehood

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FAMILIES, INTERGENERATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS IN

Intergenerational family relationships are those between family members within a common lineage. Although such relationships tend to be primarily biological, they also arise through adoption, as well as step- and quasi-family arrangements. Although studies of parent–child relations have dominated the literature, a great deal of attention

has also focused on relationships between non-adjacent generations such as those between grandparents and grandchildren. These relationships are noteworthy for their stability and their sheer longevity. With human life expectancy almost doubling in length since the beginning of the 20th century, it is now common for children to reach midlife, and not unusual to reach old age, with at least one parent still alive. Similarly, it has become routine for grandparents to live long enough to see their grandchildren reach young adulthood and beyond. This entry focuses on intergenerational family relationships of older adults with their adult children and grandchildren.

Theoretical Perspectives on Intergenerational Relations

During the past several decades, the study of intergenerational relationships has been principally guided by two conceptual orientations: the solidarity-conflict paradigm and Ambivalence Theory. Building on theoretical and empirical advances in the social psychology of small group cohesion, the solidarity-conflict paradigm codifies the sentiments, behaviors, attitudes, values, and structural arrangements that bind the generations. This scheme is operationalized along seven dimensions: affectual solidarity (emotional cohesion), associational solidarity (social interaction), structural solidarity (opportunities for interaction based on geographic proximity as well as family size and gender composition), functional solidarity (support and assistance), normative solidarity (filial obligation), consensual solidarity (agreement on values and opinions), and functional solidarity (provisions of material, instrumental, and social support of intergenerational family members). Continuing efforts to refine the solidarity model have resulted in the inclusion of intergenerational conflict as a principal dimension. Although conflict was originally conceptualized as the absence of solidarity, it subsequently began to be considered a form of engagement that could exist alongside positive aspects of solidarity.

Most research suggests that the dimensions of solidarity are all-inclusive descriptors of the strength of intergenerational bonds, but other research finds that the dimensions are not additive

and do not form a unitary scale. Alternatives to examining these dimensions additively include clustering approaches that allow the identification of relationship types based on various combinations of the dimensions. Using five dimensions from the solidarity model, the following general types of parent-child relationships were identified in national data: (a) *tight-knit*, characterized by high levels on all dimensions of solidarity; (b) *sociable*, characterized by frequent contact, shared values, and emotional closeness, but little exchange of support; (c) *obligatory*, characterized by frequent contact and exchange of support, but emotionally distant and with few shared values; (d) *intimate but distant*, characterized by emotional closeness and shared values but with infrequent contact and little exchange of assistance; and (e) *detached*, characterized by low levels on all dimensions. Although a plurality of relationships fell into the tight-knit type, the three variegated types—strong on some dimensions and weak on others—formed a majority when taken together. Thus, intergenerational relationships are diverse and complex in form, with most falling somewhere between the polarities of tight-knit and detached.

In recent years, the concept of ambivalence has received much attention as either a competing or complementary perspective to the Solidarity-Conflict Model. *Ambivalence* refers to the coexistence of both positive and negative feelings about those in other generations, often described as having “mixed feelings” toward another. An evolving scholarly debate centers on the question of whether ambivalence is an emergent property of relationships, one that is irreducible to any constituent parts, or whether it can be conceptualized as the intersection of attractive and repulsive tendencies in relationships.

Attempts to bridge the conceptual divide have explicitly incorporated ambivalence into the Solidarity-Conflict Model as the space where opposing dimensions of solidarity and conflict meet to describe contradictory aspects of relationships. Other more critical approaches ask how pressures outside the family such as work responsibilities produce ambivalence by introducing competing demands that tear individuals in two directions with regard to their intergenerational relationships—a phenomenon known as structural ambivalence. Several investigations into sources of

ambivalence in late-life intergenerational relationships have centered on the negotiations surrounding caregiving and the attendant tensions between autonomy and dependency of the older adult and role-reversal of the caregiver.

Life-Span Models of Intergenerational Relationships

Styles of intergenerational relationships in adulthood have their roots in early family experiences. This perspective stresses continuity in intergenerational ties. A key example is the body of research that demonstrates how the strength of parent-child attachment early in the family life cycle is linked to whether adult children provide care to frail aging parents much later in the family life cycle.

Other perspectives consider life-course variations in intergenerational relations based on dynamic conditions in the family. Mapped over the lifetimes of families, norms of filial obligation for older parents, for instance, were found to peak in the middle age of adult children and decline in strength thereafter. Affection for aging parents has been found to be largely stable, but tends to decline with the onset of functional disability that sometimes imposes difficult demands on adult children.

An exchange perspective posits that intergenerational relationships are guided by the principle of reciprocity, predicated on the notion that stable relationships strive toward balance in their exchange of resources. This perspective maintains that the obligation to repay a debt is no less found in intergenerational family relations than it is in market relations—but with a crucial difference. Given that intergenerational relationships are rarely abrogated, they are capable of tolerating relatively long periods of imbalance until the direction of support shifts. Research has shown that parents who provided greater investments of time, money, and emotion in their adolescent and young-adult children tend to receive more social support from those children decades later when old-age vulnerabilities emerge. The metaphor of the “support-bank” has been used to describe this long-term pattern of reciprocity.

Another way parents influence their children is by demonstrating the desired behavior to them. Parents model behaviors they hope their young

offspring will eventually emulate toward them, such as caregiving or sharing time with an older parent. Parents also train or socialize their children to feel responsible for elders in the family. Filial responsibility of adult children has been conceptualized as a form of invested social or moral capital, whereby parents who instilled in their children the duty to help older generations are able to “withdraw” that capital in the form of support.

Social Change and Intergenerational Relationships

Social and demographic changes in the family have been the object of much scrutiny in the study of intergenerational relationships because they influence both kinship structure and function. Declining fertility and increasing divorce rates, combined with the rising labor force participation of women, have raised concerns about the continued viability of intergenerational support for the aged. Evidence shows that older divorced fathers may be particularly at-risk of experiencing support deficits. Demographic shifts can also cause intergenerational realignments. For instance, female labor force participation has reduced the amount of care mothers offer their children but has also increased the likelihood that grandmothers will provide childcare.

Accounting for these social changes has resulted in the need to develop new models of complex family forms. An alternative perspective is that marital disruption and remarriage, and the various family recombinations that result, have increased the kin supply by adding stepkin to biological kin in the support portfolio available to older adults. One example of such a model is the “latent kin matrix” that brings to light how intergenerational relations are negotiated and actively constructed, but also emphasizes greater uncertainty in the durability of these more volitional family ties.

By some accounts, the basis of family life is threatened by reductions in fertility and by the growth of the childless population. Preferences for family size are affected by the perceived cost and value of children. Today, the value of children is tied more to their emotional than to their utilitarian benefits. For example, having children is less needed than in the past to ensure old age support;

public transfer programs and private investments now provide economic security in retirement, and supportive services can be privately purchased or provided by the government. In the developed world, and ever more so in developing nations, fewer parents expect or want their children to be their sole sources of support when they are old.

Demographic change and improvements in population health have also altered multigenerational family roles. Increased longevity and later childbearing have produced families with more surviving generations but with fewer members per family. These elongated family lineages have increased the number of middle-aged individuals who are simultaneously caring for frail older parents and young children or grandchildren. Although there is debate about the prevalence of such families in the population, those in the so-called sandwich generation clearly face difficult challenges if they are still working in the labor force and have fewer siblings with whom to divide the labor in caring for older parents.

Intergenerational Relations in National Context

The availability of internationally comparative data has sparked empirical investigations concerning the role played by national context in micro-family interactions and support. Specifically, relationship intensity, as measured by proximity and frequency of contact, are weaker in nations that are more geographically mobile, possess a less coercive family culture, and have a more liberal public service sector. Thus, older adults in Western Europe tend more to rely on state-provided economic and instrumental support compared with older adults in Southern and Eastern European nations, who tend more to rely on family members for needed support. In part, this pattern reflects fundamental differences in whether intergenerational responsibility for older people is primarily considered a collective responsibility or mainly considered a private concern. In the United States, this tension is reflected in current policy debates about whether Social Security should remain a program that redistributes economic resources across generations or should be privatized as an individual investment vehicle.

Nowhere have intergenerational relations changed more radically than in developing nations of the world. Profound social and economic changes have shifted the center of gravity of the family from being elder-centered to being youth-centered. Extended family structures in many developing countries have traditionally been the basis for economic production, providing older adults with both power and the ability to rely on the wider kinship network. However, recent changes, such as the declining importance of agriculture, rural-to-urban migration of working-age adults, and greater education of youth, have reduced the primacy of the older generation. The ideology of filial piety, found in most East Asian nations, is almost certainly in decline when defined by the degree of intergenerational coresidence. However, other expressions of filial piety remain strong and have even been enhanced by economic growth, such as providing financial support to older parents. The accumulated impact of social change is already altering traditional expectations and forcing the adaptation of social understandings between generations.

Grandparent-Grandchild Relations

Advances in life expectancy increased the availability of grandparents dramatically during the 20th century. Whereas in 1900, only about one-quarter of children were born with all four grandparents alive, today that proportion has risen to slightly more than two-thirds. Grandparenting is a common family role and is currently occupied by about 70 percent of persons in the United States older than age 50. However, declining fertility rates raise the specter of increasing grandchildlessness, as well as increasing competition among grandparents for the attention of fewer grandchildren.

Grandparents vary markedly in the way they enact their roles, ranging from having sole custody of grandchildren to being remote figures in their lives. Generally, grandparents serve as secure attachment figures and confidants to grandchildren, sometimes compensating for various gaps and deficits in the family. For example, grandchildren raised in single-parent and divorced families particularly benefit in their social and emotional development from having close relations with grandparents, as do grandchildren in families with

working parents. A large body of literature focuses on the circumstances of the roughly 10 percent of grandparents who are raising their grandchildren. These studies find that custodial grandparents are self-sacrificing and committed caregivers who heroically substitute for parents under the most dire of family conditions, such as drug and alcohol abuse, incarceration, teenage pregnancy, and extreme poverty.

A wide range of factors influences the nature of grandparent–grandchild relations; these include the grandparent’s and grandchild’s gender, lineage (paternal or maternal), age, family structure, and race/ethnicity. Factors that are out of the control of grandparents and grandchildren influence the way their relationships are maintained. Geographic mobility and divorce of parents, as well as the quality of the grandparent–parent relationship, strongly affect how much access grandparents and grandchildren have to each other. Advances in digital communication technology have mitigated some of the effects of these disruptions, enabling grandparents and grandchildren to maintain independent relationships and stay in touch whether they are across the block or across the world.

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See also Caregiving Across the Life Span; Family Functioning; Grandparent–Grandchild Relationship; Social Exchange Theory; Social Support and Health

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FAMILIES, PUBLIC POLICY ISSUES AND

This entry describes current thinking about a significant type of public policy in the United States—family policy. As the diversity of U.S. society and culture has continued to grow, there has been corresponding debate and discussion of the meaning of the concept *family*. For some, the term refers to individuals related by blood (traditional), marriage, or legal adoption. For others, a broader definition that reflects changing demographics and cultural attitudes is more appropriate and useful. In fact, there is no universal definition of family even though everyone grows up in some constellation of people that they consider “family.”

In parallel fashion, in the realm of policy, there is ongoing debate about what “family policy” actually is. From one perspective, it is about policy that explicitly pertains to the business of families (e.g., mutual personal and economic support, procreation, care giving, rearing the next generation). From a broader view, anything and everything that happens in policy (whether in the public or private sector) eventually influences families. Therefore, all policy can be viewed as family policy. A fundamental aspect in discussions of family policy concerns a long-held value in U.S. society that seeks to limit the role of government in family life, that is, to limit the role of public policy in family life. This idea will be expanded in the last section of this entry.

When the two concepts (family and policy) are brought together, that is, when *family* is used as an adjective to modify the term *policy*, the full

range of different worldviews, political agendas, and ideologies are brought to the fore. So, although all policy involves politics to one degree or another, the kinds of debates that characterize family policy are particularly subject to strong ideologically based discussion.

Definitions

Karen Bogenschneider articulated a broad definition of *policy* as a statement, regulation, rule, law, or code adopted for pursuing a course of action. Policies are developed by governments, businesses or other organizations, individuals, families, teachers, coaches, friends, and spouses—to name just a few possibilities. Therefore, *public policy* is but one kind of policy, that which is proposed and produced by any branch of government (executive, legislative, judicial) at any level of government (federal, state, local). Public policy includes every manner of interest to governments and to citizens, for example, defense policy, health policy, environmental policy, monetary policy, and, indeed, family policy. *Family policies* affect families in one or more ways, but family policies may or may not be public policies.

Here are several examples of policies (1–3 are public policies that affect families, whereas 4 and 5 are private sector family policies):

1. Public Law 94-142 (1975), Education of All Handicapped Children Act (now, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) provides among other things for a free appropriate public education for all children with disabilities.
2. There will be a 60 percent increase in the minimum wage phased in over a 5-year period.
3. In a state, there is a legal right for same-sex couples to marry, or there is not a legal right to do the same.
4. A family agrees that “we will eat at least 3 dinners a week at home together.”
5. A company will provide, for full-time workers who have been in its employ for more than 10 months, 4 days of paid leave per year to perform home care for family members.

Contextual Issues, Public Policy, and Families

As is the case of family development generally, public policies of importance to families are not islands unto themselves. During the most recent three to four decades, family scholars such as Urie Bronfenbrenner (the ecology of human development), Richard Lerner (developmental contextualism), and Glen Elder Jr. (family life course development) have developed comprehensive approaches to explain the role that extra-familial factors play in family issues more fully. During this same period, there have been significant demographic changes in family structure and functioning in U.S. society, just as there have been in most other countries.

Bronfenbrenner conceptualized these multiple contextual influences on families as a set of interacting systems. The microsystem comprises the family itself—all their relationships, the time family members spend together, the various roles that each performs—and all other systems that contain the family. The church, a community center, a neighborhood, and extended family are all examples of microsystems in which families directly participate. The exosystems that influence families do not contain the family on a regular basis but, rather, indirectly influence families through a process of filtering in which decisions and judgments by others affect the family—for example, a school board meeting, the board room of a public company for which a family member works, a state legislature, a business or company’s health care and other benefits or changes in those, and so on. The macrosystem is yet further removed from direct family context and is the set of societal values, ideologies, laws, and mores that contribute to setting the tone for families in the society.

Neighborhood quality, local and national unemployment levels, quality of available dependent care, policy related to food and drug safety, and workplace policy pertaining to flextime and family leave provide a sampling of issues that both affect and are affected by public and family policy.

On a broader level, it is increasingly observed that national public policies—whether specifically aimed to affect families or, more often, not articulating potential impacts on families—can have strong and enduring impacts on families. For example, consider the effects on families of prison

policy, of whether the nation is at war, of the condition of the national economy, or of trade policy. Although researchers, the general public, politicians, and the media continue to debate what family policy is, whether public and family policy should be less or more expansive, and what the roles and responsibilities of public and private sector policies should be relative to families, U.S. society is increasingly locating families at the center of public policy considerations. Given the high economic and social importance of individual and family development, increased understanding by policymakers and citizens of several essential core policy issues is paramount.

Core Policy Issues

The core policy issues discussed in this section are relevant for all types of public policy, but they are particularly relevant to the family policy realm. In addition, of the four issues discussed, the first, the essential tension between family privacy and government (state) involvement in families, is most influential to U.S. society. This matter is ideological in two senses: first, in relation to the founding of the nation primarily because of inordinate involvement by the monarchy in all aspects of colonial life. Second, although involvement of the community in private family life was acceptable, and even desirable given the challenges to basic survival in the 17th and 18th centuries, colonists drew a sharp differentiation between community involvement and state involvement.

One example of how this tension has reverberated through U.S. history is seen in the history of child abuse legislation. In the mid 1870s, the first case of child abuse was prosecuted by using the laws against cruelty to animals. Thereafter, it took almost 100 years before the individual states in the United States passed child abuse laws to protect children. In effect, these laws gave the government permission to intervene in family life in ways that had previously been unthinkable. These developments bear witness to the deeply held belief that family privacy and government involvement in families are not easily reconciled matters.

A second core policy issue is the issue of direct (explicit) or indirect (implicit) family policy. The focus here is on whether the stated intention of the

policy is to affect families in some way. Examples of explicit public family policies are the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 and the Earned Income Tax Credit (first passed in 1975 and expanded periodically since). Examples of implicit policy include the increase in the minimum wage (focused on individual earners in low-paying jobs), which helped increase family income in low-income families, and the changes in U.S. prison sentencing laws in the 1990s, which has affected families in which the father or mother was imprisoned for minor substance-use offenses.

These latter kinds of often unintended outcomes lend support to the broader conceptualizations of family policy, exemplified perhaps most clearly by Sheila Kamerman and Alfred Kahn. Essentially, these approaches assume that any policy (whether aimed at family outcomes or not) has at least the potential to affect families. From this perspective, all policies should be analyzed for their potential impact on families—so-called family impact analysis, which is akin to the environmental impact statement. Others, such as Gilbert Steiner, see this view as much too broad because it includes all (public) policy and does not, therefore, make meaningful distinctions.

A third core policy issue concerns the issue of cost: direct, indirect, short-term, and long-term. The U.S. political system, much like a private sector that often focuses on immediate rather than long-term profit or cost, often does not lend itself easily to long-term strategic thinking. Thus, many considerations of family and public policy focus primarily on short-term direct costs. For example, discussions about educational funding often take this approach even though it is well established that most investments in early childhood education and intervention, investments in childhood immunization programs, and many other prevention policies more than recoup their short-term costs.

Another core policy issue concerns whether the goal of a policy is seen primarily as a “public good” or a “private good.” Consider education: Is education a public good (a benefit to the society at large) or a private good (a benefit to the individual only)? The answer to this question would likely be linked to one’s position on a proposed tax levy to support school funding. Just as the matter of cost is more complex than it first appears, so is the

answer to the question of whether a policy goal is a private good or a public good. In the case of education, for example, the conclusion that it is a private good is supported by the research data showing that economic and other benefits accrue to individuals in direct relation to their years of completed education. However, from a broader perspective, years of education are associated with lower likelihood of violent criminal activity, more years of employment, greater tax payments to the public treasury, and so on—outcomes that support the belief that education is a public good.

Conclusion

Policy, and family policy in particular, is inherently political in nature. When problem definitions and proposed policy solutions consider historical, contextual, and cross-cultural data and experience, they are more likely to be at least partially data based and less likely to be entirely ideologically driven. Finally, the level and quality of explicit family policies vary widely from country to country, as does the degree to which those policies reflect more individual-oriented or more family-oriented approaches to addressing family issues.

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See also Child Abuse and Neglect; Developmental Designs; Families, Definitions and Typologies; Family Data, Analysis of; Public Policy and Relationships; Values and Relationships; Work–Family Conflict; Work–Family Spillover

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FAMILY COMMUNICATION

Family interaction constructs and reflects family relationships and supports members' management of everyday life. In addition to creating families through blood and legal ties, many family members establish and manage their identity and relational ties, in whole or part, through their communication practices. As individuals live longer and experience varied family structures, these issues of meaning and identity become complex.

Change characterizes contemporary family life. No one majority family form exists in the United States. Although U.S. residents continue to marry, and wedded couples account for a slight majority of U.S. households, many of these relationships represent a second or third marriage for at least one partner. Whereas the divorce rate appears to have stabilized, almost half of all marriages still result in divorce; a high percentage of these divorced individuals choose to remarry one or more times, often creating stepfamilies. The percentage of single-parent families continues to rise, as does the number of cohabiting partners. Increasingly, families, including single parents and same-sex partners, are formed in whole or in part through the use of reproductive technologies, surrogacy, and adoption.

As more families reflect ethnic, religious, and class differences, as well as complex structural variation, members confront challenges in incorporating significant differences into their management of family identity. Many families are defining themselves, for themselves and others, through their interactions. The more complex the family

membership, the more family identity becomes dependent on discourse or talk among family members and between family members and outsiders. Through such talk, family members coordinate their understandings of how their family is formed and maintained.

David Olson's research reveals three central dimensions of behavior that family members must manage: cohesion, adaptability, and communication. Cohesion involves emotional bonding as well as acceptable levels of autonomy that family members experience. Cohesion is represented in areas such as adult partner relationships, family members' involvement with each other, subgroups and coalitions, and internal and external family boundaries. Adaptability, or a family's capacity to alter rules, roles, and power in response to stress, is evidenced through dimensions such as leadership, discipline, and negotiation. Communication facilitates the maintenance or change of patterns within these two dimensions. This entry focuses on the role of communication patterns across all stages of family life.

Family Communication Patterns That Influence Meanings

Families actively engage in *meaning making*, or creating shared understandings, of how members view the world. Shared meanings develop over time through the continuous interpretation of, and response to, interpersonal messages and family members' reactions to life events. Family meanings establish family identity as they evolve into patterns over time. Family communication patterns tend to move across generations, unless deliberately rejected. Each generation, consciously or unconsciously, teaches the next generation practices for managing issues such as those involving intimacy, conflict, and stress.

Family communication patterns can be traced across three and four generations on genograms (family trees depicting family relationships and interaction patterns). Unique family heritages and cultural norms influence the communication patterns passed through generations. Family meanings commonly emerge from patterns in the following areas: communication rules, narratives, and rituals.

Family Communication Rules

Every family develops and conveys rules for its members. Rules involve shared understandings of what communicative practices are appropriate in various circumstances. Relational rules indicate expectations for behavior between and among family members. Children are taught what can be talked about, how it can be talked about, and who is allowed to hear. As partners form new families, they often struggle with coordinating the different rules they learned in their previous family experiences. Rules are learned implicitly (e.g., a parental disapproving look) as well as explicitly (e.g., "Never tell anyone Dad got a DUI"). Cultural norms influence family communication rules; children raised in Chinese families may learn different rules for disagreeing with parents than do children raised in Jewish families.

Secrets, a critical subset of family communication rules, involve information that one or more members purposely conceals. Rules for creating, keeping, and revealing secrets shape family interaction patterns, establishing boundaries between the family and the outside world or between individual members. Family secrets range from causing pleasurable surprise to poisoning relationships. Secrets serve functions such as bonding members, maintaining relationships, or defending the family. Secrecy is often created or revealed at periods of family change, such as the birth of a child or a divorce. Secrets may be maintained across generations. For instance, families of Holocaust survivors often operate based on rules of silence regarding relatives' experiences; similarly, parents diagnosed with HIV struggle with whether to tell their children.

Family Narratives

Research suggests that family stories serve many functions: remembering key persons and events, creating a family identity, teaching values and expectations, socializing new members, providing family stability by connecting generations, and entertaining members. Stories remind members of their heritage and reinforce family themes, such as "The Carsons Stick Together." For examples, survival narratives frequently are found in stories about overcoming adversity, such as immigration stories. These are told to the next generations, reinforcing family roots and values. Many family

stories are lost because of circumstances such as divorce or relational distancing. Historically, secrecy developed around issues such as adoption, criminal behavior, and violation of family values; the silence results in lost or inaccurate stories. Researchers who study how family members tell their stories report different styles of storytelling by married couples, ranging from skilled joint performances to individual performances marked by member disagreements. A recent study of family triads telling stories revealed that the most common family narratives depicted dealing with stress.

Family Rituals

Family rituals communicatively connect and maintain relationships while reinforcing family values. Rituals may involve two or three members, such as a father and his young children making pancakes together every Sunday morning, or extended family groups, such as birthday gatherings. Additionally, rituals connect families to cultural practices, for example, Thanksgiving dinner or Kwanzaa. Intergenerational rituals may involve attending sporting events or sharing a summer vacation home, which connect generations. Frequently grandparents develop their own rituals with grandchildren. Weddings, graduations, and funerals serve as family ceremonies providing opportunities for significant member interaction involving storytelling, reminiscing, and catching up.

Family rituals may create complications. Many newly formed blended families struggle to learn how to selectively enact some of the family traditions from the former family while developing their own identifying rituals. Although family rituals are usually positive, families may sometimes enact negative rituals, such as when one or more members are repeatedly hurt by others' behavior. When living with alcoholism, drug abuse, or aggression, members often encounter painful ritualistic arguments or physical violence. Ritualistic verbal or physical abuse can damage adult-child or sibling connections.

A central communicative function of family life is to manage predictable tensions or relational dialectics. A dialectic approach to family communication suggests family life involves managing constant tensions as members manage their relationships through their give-and-take on multiple competing

issues, such as separateness and connectedness, novelty and predictability, and openness and closedness. These tensions raise questions such as the following: How much openness or privacy works for each of us in this relationship? What levels of closeness or distance create a workable relationship for us? Family members manage dialectical tensions through a variety of communicative strategies. These strategies include choosing one of the opposing poles (e.g., disclosing everything and rejecting personal privacy), adapting behavior to varying contexts or circumstances, or switching between one pole and the other. Although most dialectical family research addresses interfamily interactions, other tensions may play out as a sub-unit (e.g., partners) relates to outsiders, such as a boss or friend, while managing tensions around personal disclosure or spending time with others.

Relational Maintenance and Intimacy

Maintaining family relationships is a significant communicative task that involves keeping a relationship in satisfactory condition or repairing a damaged relationship. Usually family members interact according to patterns without consciously considering their behaviors. Occasionally, members consciously enact certain communication behaviors to nurture and maintain relationships. Research demonstrates that people who engage in ongoing relational maintenance behaviors, or make efforts to support the relationship and each other's needs, tend to stay together and find greater satisfaction. Studies of marital maintenance by Daniel Canary and Laura Stafford reveal five key maintenance strategies—(1) expressing positivity and avoiding criticism, (2) being open or self-disclosing and sharing feelings about the relational issues, (3) giving assurances of commitment to a future connection, (4) sharing social networks of family and friends, and (5) sharing tasks. Many of these strategies can apply to other family ties within the immediate or extended family. Siblings may work to maintain their relationships through strategies such as visits, humor, aggression, and role modeling. John Gottman's research reveals that marital maintenance can be helped by a "5:1 magic ratio of positivity to negativity." In other words, partners in stable couples

were characterized by making five times more positive communicative behaviors toward each other than negative behaviors.

Intimacy involves a strong sense of commitment, connection, and devotion. Family members develop intimate relationships that reflect the nature of their bond (e.g., grandparent–grandchild) and the caretaking behaviors each person brings to their relationship. Developing and maintaining such intimacy requires effort and attention to the needs of the other. For example, sharing relational currencies, or messages that express affection, contributes to family intimacy. Relational currencies arise from family-of-origin patterns for sharing affection and may differ across family life stages and cultures. Some currencies, such as positive verbal statements, listening, touch, and adult sexuality, send direct messages about the level of caring. Other currencies, such as money, favors, staying in touch, or spending time together, require more careful interpretation. Satisfaction comes when both parties agree on the meaning of the act—when a sister understands that her brother’s regular e-mails are a way of showing he cares. However, if the sister needs to hear compliments or endearments from her brother, his desire to demonstrate care via e-mail is lost.

Voluntary self-disclosure, another example of a relational currency, may deepen relational ties among family members old enough to appreciate the risk and level of commitment involved. Adult partners build intimate ties, in part, by sharing deep feelings with each other and expressing honestly their positive or negative feelings about issues that affect the relationship. In functional families, parents and children learn to share more personal and private information during periods of late adolescent and adulthood. Openness may result in feelings of sadness or anger in other members, necessitating discussion and, possibly, forgiveness. The act of forgiveness affects relational longevity and connection. Sometimes forgiveness implies an explicit renegotiation of a relationship through metacommunication, or communicating about the way one or more family members communicate.

Family Typologies

Family typologies provide one way to generalize about groups of families with similar characteristics.

Early research identified *open*, *closed*, and *random* family types. Closed families are characterized by predictability and regularity, open families by flexibility and variability, and random families by fluctuations and unpredictability. More recently, Mary Anne Fitzpatrick and L. David Ritchie described four types of families based on the family’s orientation to conformity and their orientation toward open communication. Orientation toward conformity and orientation toward communication can be thought of as being on two axes. *Consensual* families are high in both conversation and conformity strategies. Their communication is characterized by pressure for agreement after an expression of ideas or desires. *Pluralistic* families are high in conversation and low in conformity, support open communication, and avoid pressuring for conformity. *Protective* families resist open communication and value regulation and conformity. Finally, members of *laissez-faire* families value individualism, interacting little because of their pattern of nonconformity and their lack of support for conversation. Such family communication styles affect the adults’ partnering and parenting practices as well as children’s communication practices.

Conflict and Challenges

Conflict, a source of distress and growth, is a necessary and predictable part of family life. A total absence of conflict may lead to negative long-term consequences because differences are suppressed. Everyday family life often involves the exchange of hurtful messages such as accusations, teasing, or negative evaluations. Family members may respond to hurtful messages through confronting the statements, acquiescing, or appearing invulnerable. Recurring patterns characterize marital and family conflict; couples conflict over the same issues approximately 70 percent of the time. Nonproductive, repetitive family conflicts tend to move through stages beginning with a predictable trigger, followed by frustration awareness, active confrontation, temporary solution or nonsolution (e.g., leaving the room), and routine follow-up behaviors. Gottman’s research identifies a pattern of marital distress and dissolution beginning with criticizing, followed by contempt, defensiveness, and stonewalling, although over time couples may

display certain distress patterns more frequently. Unless outside circumstances change or members work together to eliminate such patterns, they will continue indefinitely. Conflict produces growth when members can manage their differences with respect and flexibility. The capacity to forgive and to accept forgiveness remains central to ongoing marital and family satisfaction.

Power, Influence, and Decision Making

Families' daily interactions are affected greatly by how power and influence are used and how decisions are made. Each family member holds some power over his or her and often others' behavior. This power is generally mutually constructed—for example, a child may have power over his parents by acting out to get attention. If the parents instead choose to ignore the child's poor behavior, the child loses power. Each family member may rely on different resources for power. A father might use his role as breadwinner to assert power over the family's financial decisions; a child might discover that her ability to make others laugh gives her power to avoid punishments for breaking rules.

Influence, or using power to try to change or modify another family member's beliefs or behaviors, is central to a family's daily interactions. A parent may try to persuade an adult child to bring her husband and children home for Christmas, or a child may try to persuade an older sibling to lend him money. Researchers have identified a variety of strategies used in trying to influence family members, including bargaining, begging, and emotional appeals through pouting or "sweet talking."

Family life requires frequent decision making. Smaller, routine decisions (e.g., which brand of orange juice to buy) may be made routinely by a family member assuming a certain role. Other, larger decisions (e.g., where to go on a family vacation, how to spend an income tax refund) may be made only after much discussion and input from various family members. Decisions may ultimately be characterized as any of the following: (a) consensus—all family members agree on the final decision after discussion and often compromise; (b) accommodation—some family members just "give in" to others to end the discussion; or

(c) *de facto*—no agreement is reached and one family member acts despite that.

Family Communication Challenges

Recent developments in areas of health and technology confront many families with unforeseen challenges. In particular, families face challenges in managing members' health as life expectancy increases. Currently, communication researchers are studying the ways in which family members discuss health-promoting practices (e.g., brushing teeth and exercising) and health risk-reduction behaviors (e.g., moderation in drinking or practicing safe sex). An examination of a family's health rules and how those rules guide adolescent behavior reveals that highly expressive families rate lower on health compliance and conformity-oriented families rate higher on shared understanding of health rules.

Ongoing research on marital couples reveals that the quality of married couples' interactions affects physical health through changes such as blood pressure or heart beats per minute. Conflict has a particularly negative effect on wives' health. Research reveals identifiable communication patterns, such as verbal (name calling) or nonverbal (eye rolling) displays of contempt that characterize families affected by alcoholism, drug abuse, eating disorders, or mental illness. Any time a family member is diagnosed with a disease ranging from cancer to Alzheimer's disease, other family members experience pressures from new roles, such as acting as a patient advocate or becoming a caregiver. Ongoing genetic research affects family interaction. Family discussions about genetic risk center on identifying who is at risk, deciding whether and how to disclose this risk to family members, and supporting family members managing genetic diseases.

Technological advances, such as the Internet and other interactive technologies, have altered family life significantly. Traditional family hierarchical structures are experiencing role reversals as more children develop skills and acquire information unfamiliar to their parents. Adolescence and young adulthood no longer imply powerful generational separations as cell phones, e-mail, text messaging, and tracking devices increasingly

involve parents and offspring in continual interaction. As adult siblings and extended family members develop unique ties through technology, a key adult no longer must serve as the communication hub of an extended family network. Unique family applications of technology include sharing family news or health information on family Web sites, blogs, or through round-robin e-mails. Research indicates that some family members use e-mail instead of face-to-face interaction to address painful topics or conflicts.

Family communication patterns and practices vary by a family's developmental stage, culture, and stresses. As families are confronted with the challenges of the 21st century, they will need to commit to making efforts to sustain their relational ties, engage in communication strategies that reinforce their family commitments, and evidence a willingness to adapt to cope with the challenges that they encounter

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See also Maintaining Relationships; Marital Typologies; Parent–Child Communication About Sex; Parenting; Sexuality; Work–Family Conflict

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FAMILY DATA, ANALYSIS OF

Family data analysis involves the application of statistical analysis methods to those particular relationships found in families; for example between spouses, parent–child, and sibling relationships. Most research in the social sciences considers the outcome for only one individual; for example, studies of childhood depression. In this case, standard statistical analyses can be used to test hypotheses. However, in studies of the relationships among family members, interdependence can make the outcomes of different family members systematically similar to—or different from—one another. When the outcomes of two or more people are being studied and those outcomes are correlated, researchers say that there is non-independence of observations. *Independence of observations* is a requirement for most common, statistical methods, so special analytic methods are often required for family data. This entry focuses on the unique characteristics of family data, sources and patterns of nonindependent outcomes, and models for the statistical analyses of these patterns.

Family Roles

In textbooks about families, one of the first issues considered is “What is a family?” This discussion often leads to controversy regarding which roles should be included in the definition of the family. Mother, father, and child are the conventional roles associated with family, but gay and lesbian

couples also raise children together; some families include adoptive or stepparents, natural siblings, and stepchildren; and many households consist of single parents. For the purposes of this discussion, it is not important to define the family by specific roles, but the fact that there are distinguishable roles remains important. Most family research is organized around family roles (e.g., mother, father, parent, child, and sibling).

Levels of Analysis

Statistically, family group data are typically studied as a two-level system. The family as a group is considered level 2, and the individuals within the family are considered level 1. Put differently, individuals are nested within the family, just as students may be said to be nested within a classroom. This is important statistically because the sample size differs at the two levels. Fifty couples may be observed in a study of marital relationships, a relatively small sample, but there would be 100 individuals in the study, a relatively large sample. The ability to detect a significant relation between two variables (i.e., the statistical *power* of the analysis) depends heavily on the sample size. The level at which a problem is analyzed, for example group versus individual, is called the *level of analysis*.

In family research, the level of analysis is usually the family or the *dyad* (a two-person group) even though the *unit of analysis* (i.e., the level at which measurements are made) may be the individual (e.g., a personality measure) or a particular relationship (e.g., how much one family member trusts another). This is so because, as mentioned earlier, the outcome scores of individuals within the group are usually correlated or nonindependent. To the extent that the scores are correlated, they cannot be counted as two separate individuals statistically (i.e., the *N*, or sample size for the analysis, must be adjusted). Some statistical procedures (e.g., *hierarchical linear modeling*) make these adjustments automatically and are capable of simultaneously testing predictions at both the group and individual level. It is important to include enough families or dyads in a sample so that effects at the group level can be reliably estimated.

Sources of Nonindependence in Family Data

Historically, the fact that family members' scores are correlated has been considered a nuisance because ordinary statistical procedures cannot be used. To avoid the issue, researchers will sometimes combine the outcomes of all the individuals at level 1 (e.g., husbands and wives) and just analyze the data at the group level. Unfortunately, when there is an outcome for more than one person in the group, such a process sacrifices information about individual-level effects. A more interesting and informative approach is to *model* the sources of the nonindependence within the analysis. To model the sources of nonindependence means to include in the analysis any variable that might be causing the scores to correlate. Including such variables within the analysis has the effect of controlling for these factors so that they do not bias the statistical results.

There are three primary sources of nonindependence in family members' scores; common fate, partner effects, and feedback loops. *Common fate* occurs when two people are both affected by the same factor. For example, a parent and a child may be similar in some respect because they share a certain gene. After controlling for the effect of this gene, their responses (e.g., friendliness toward each other) may no longer be correlated. By modeling factors that cause nonindependence, two things are achieved. First, the explanation for the similarity of their scores is elucidated. This may be of key theoretical importance in itself. Second, the effects of other factors that may affect fathers' or children's friendliness toward each other (e.g., personality traits) can be estimated without bias. To have an unbiased estimate of the effect of one variable on the outcome, the effect of other causes of the outcome must be controlled. This is one reason why the guidance of a good theory is so important. Theory tells us what variables need to be controlled in the model.

Partner effects occur when the behavior of one individual in the family is affected by the behavior of another individual in the family. In the previous example, the child may have been friendly toward the father because the father has the personality trait of agreeableness. The effect of the father's agreeableness on the child's friendliness is a partner effect. If father's agreeableness makes him

friendly toward the child and also makes the child friendly toward the father, then the father and child friendliness scores would be correlated and nonindependent. To obtain an unbiased estimate of the partner effect for father on child, other factors affecting child friendliness must be included in the model. One of these factors may be the child's own agreeableness. When a person's own characteristics predict their own outcome, it is called an *actor effect*. In general, when one wants to test for partner effects, actor effects should be included in the model, and when one wants to test for actor effects, partner effects should be included in the model. When theory suggests that both people affect each other (i.e., there are partner effects for both individuals), then actor effects for both people should also be included in the model. A two-person model with both actor and partner effects for each person (e.g., parent and child) is called the *actor-partner interdependence model*, one of several techniques for dyadic data analysis.

In all likelihood, researchers will not know or be able to measure all factors that may make two family members' scores correlated. When this is the case, the *residual variances* (i.e., the variance in the dependent variable scores that is not explained by the independent variables) will still be correlated. Some statistical procedures (e.g., *structural equation modeling*) allow one to include these residual correlations in the model. Inclusion of the residual correlations in the model helps control for these unknown sources of nonindependence so that the estimates of the actor and partner effects and the effects of other independent variables are not biased.

Feedback processes are a third source of nonindependence in family members' outcomes. Feedback occurs when each person's outcome has a direct effect on the other person's outcome. For example, if the child is friendly toward the father because the father is friendly toward the child, and correspondingly, the father is friendly toward the child because the child is friendly toward the father, there is a feedback loop. In the actor-partner interdependence model, it may be that only one of the partner effects is significant (e.g., father influences child), so there is not mutual influence. When there is feedback, mutual influence exists by definition. Feedback processes can be modeled statistically, but the procedures can be quite

complex. A simple version of such an analysis in two-person relationships is called the *mutual influence model*. Imagine that the father's agreeableness does not affect the child's friendliness but only affects his own friendliness. In other words, there is an actor effect but no partner effect. Imagine also that this is true for the child; that his or her agreeableness affects his or her friendliness toward father, but does not affect father's friendliness. In this situation, it is possible to test the mutual influence model to see whether each person's friendliness affects the other's friendliness. In general, if a researcher expects partner effects, the mutual influence model should not be tested. Advanced statistical methods (i.e., structural equation modeling or hierarchical linear modeling) are used to test this model. The actor-partner interdependence model and the mutual influence model are generally applied to data from two-person relationships or dyads. When studying family groups that include three or more people (e.g., mother, father, and child), the Social Relations Model is generally more appropriate.

The Social Relations Model

When relationship specific measures (e.g., interpersonal trust) are taken from each family member about his or her relationship with each of the other family members (i.e., a *round-robin design*), the Social Relations Model (SRM) can be applied to the data to obtain interesting and important information about patterns of family relationships. According to the SRM, one person's relationship with another family member is a function of characteristics of the family as a group (*a family effect*), characteristics of the person from whom the observation is taken (*an actor* or *perceiver effect*), characteristics of the partner in the relationships (*a partner* or *target effect*), characteristics of the unique relationship of the particular actor to the particular partner (*a relationship effect*), and errors of measurement. For example, how much the mother trusts the father will be the result of the overall level of trust in the family (the family effect), how trusting the mother is of other family members in general (mother's actor effect), how much the father is trusted by other family members in general (i.e., how trustworthy he is, a

partner effect), and the degree to which mother's trust of father is unique to her relationship with him (the mother-to-father relationship effect). Each relationship in the family is partitioned into these components, so that in a two-parent two-child family, there will be 1 family effect, 4 actor effects, 4 partner effects (one of each for mother, father, older child, and younger child), and 12 relationship effects (one for each person's relationship with each of the other 3 family members).

The SRM also tests whether people get what they give in their family relationships (i.e., *reciprocity*). Using a sample of families, the correlation of the actor and partner effects for each role (for example, mother's actor effect and mother's partner effect) tests reciprocity for individual roles in the family (e.g., are trusting mothers trusted by other family members?). Similarly, the correlation of relationship effects for each dyad in the family tests whether there is reciprocity that is unique to particular relationships (e.g., if mothers trust fathers, do fathers trust mothers?). It is also possible to test similarities between members of the same generation by correlating their actor or partner effects. For example, a negative correlation of mother and father partner effects for ratings of "influenceability" suggests that the more one parent is experienced as influenceable (or permissive), the less the other parent is experienced as influenceable (i.e., more strict). The family SRM provides a comprehensive snapshot of the family system, but it can only be tested using advanced statistical methods (e.g., structural equation modeling or hierarchical linear modeling). However, it is the most sophisticated model of family relationships that has ever been specified in a measurable, refutable, manner.

William L. Cook

See also Assessment of Families; Dyadic Data Analysis; Families, Definitions and Typologies; Quantitative Methods in Relationship Research; Systems Theories

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FAMILY FUNCTIONING

When discussing the institution of the family, in general terms, or individual families in specific terms, the discussion often hinges on issues surrounding the structure of the family and how the family functions. *Family structure* refers to the type of family being discussed, with a wide variety of terms used to describe family structure. *Family functioning*, on the other hand, refers to the roles family members play and the attitudes and behaviors they exhibit in their relationships with each other. This entry focuses on family functioning, the difficulties in studying it, and the range of frameworks that have been developed for understanding it, with special emphasis on the Circumplex Model and the Family Strengths Framework.

Toward a Better Understanding of How Families Function

Studying how families function poses significant challenges for researchers because so much of what happens in families goes on, literally and figuratively speaking, *behind closed doors*. To compound this problem, many people are often reluctant to invite social and behavioral scientists into this most intimate of environments. The difficulty for researchers is magnified when the family behavior under study is especially intimate, stigmatized by society, or indicative of significant family problems that members are not especially eager to expose. In short, people do not always tell the truth when being interviewed and do not always act "normal" when being observed.

Investigators interested in how families work, fortunately, have proven to be creative in devising ways to navigate the closed and private nature of

family functioning. These research methods for developing a better understanding of family relationships can be broadly divided into studies from an *insider* perspective or from an *outsider* perspective. An insider perspective when studying family functioning relies on what family members themselves have to say about how well the family is functioning. An outsider perspective emphasizes what professional observers and analysts have to say about the family after observing the family in action or studying written testimony or test results. Both insider and outsider perspectives have their strengths and weaknesses, and studies marrying the two approaches can yield important findings. In these types of studies, the investigators look closely at what family members themselves have to say about the family, they observe the family in action in a relatively normal environment, and the investigators make their own judgments about the family's functioning, based on professional training and experience.

In the final analysis, families are remarkably difficult to study because of their closed nature and the challenges of obtaining valid data (which actually measures what researchers think they are measuring) and reliable data (which passes the test of being able to stand up over time, even though by nature families are likely to be constantly evolving and changing). These difficulties, fortunately, make the work of family researchers enduringly fascinating.

Conceptual Frameworks for Understanding Family Functioning

Theoreticians, researchers, and practitioners have developed many conceptual frameworks to help us better understand family functioning. Several that are relatively prominent today will be briefly discussed here.

Family Systems Framework

The family systems framework for understanding family functioning is especially popular today among theoreticians and researchers and valued by many family therapists working to help strengthen relationships. From a systems perspective, everything that happens to any family member has an impact on everyone else in the family. Besides

being a system in itself, families live in a hierarchy of interconnected systems: The family system is connected to systems in the community (school systems, business systems, work systems, medical systems, and so forth); and the family system is connected to systems on the national and international level as well (government systems, justice systems, political systems, economic systems, and so forth).

Family systems theorists describe families that are relatively flexible and capable of making changes, calling these *open* or *morphogenic systems*. Other families avoid change and struggle to always maintain the status quo. These families can be labeled *closed* or *morphostatic systems*. Using family systems terminology, couples and families often struggle to maintain a workable balance between separateness as individuals and togetherness as a group. Some members strive for a greater sense of closeness, whereas other members seek more time outside the group to develop their own sense of individuality.

Communication is especially important in families, and systems theorists describe feedback loops that can either be positive or negative. *Positive feedback* in families is intended to create change, whereas *negative feedback* minimizes change and keeps things the same.

Family Development Framework

The family development perspective was created to help researchers understand how family members deal with various roles and developmental tasks within the family as it moves through relatively predictable stages. In the 1950s, Evelyn Duvall originally identified eight stages: (1) the newly married couple (adjusting to each other, adjusting to each other's family of origin), (2) child-bearing, (3) preschool children, (4) school-age children, (5) teenagers, (6) launching youth into adulthood, (7) middle-aged parents (refocusing on marriage), and (8) aging family members (adjusting to retirement, selling the family home, coping with death and living alone). Later theorists focused on the considerable diversity of experience regarding couple and family development, noting that not everyone marries or has children and that divorce, single parenthood, and remarriage make matters much more complex when trying to

describe relatively predictable stages. Other theorists have created stage theories with as few as 4 stages and as many as 24. Though the family development framework cannot adequately describe the complexity of life in families today, thinking about families from a developmental perspective does help us understand that couple and family relationships are likely to change over time and these changes are often linked to common events in many people's lives, such as marriage, parenthood, divorce, retirement, and so forth.

Symbolic Interaction Framework

A family is *a unity of interacting personalities* from the symbolic interaction perspective, which emphasizes the importance of individual perceptions of the interactions that occur. Family members are likely to see what is happening in the family in different ways. Within the family, each member occupies a position or positions (e.g., first child, father, grandparent) to which a number of roles are assigned (e.g., role model for younger children, provider, caretaker). Each individual perceives the assigned role(s) and role expectations held by other family members in her or his own way. This attention to shared meanings and interactions helps us understand why, for example, parents and adolescents perceive communication and family dynamics differently. It also suggests that family functioning cannot be understood simply by observing a family. To understand what is happening in the family, the investigator needs to learn how each individual's *definition of the situation* may differ from everyone else's definition.

Another concept derived from this framework is the *looking-glass self*, the notion that your feelings about yourself are derived from how others react to you. One's self-concept emerges in childhood as a reaction to others' perceptions of who you are and your value in the family. A child who is devalued by parents and siblings is likely to feel worthless inside.

Feminist Framework

Women are exploited, devalued, and oppressed, according to the feminist perspective, and societies around the world should commit to equality for men and women in political, economic, and

social spheres. Family functioning is a key area for feminist-oriented researchers, focusing on ways in which women are sometimes forced into roles that as individuals they might not wish to play. When the current wave of feminist thinking in the United States began in the 1960s, it was seen as *normal* for women to want to marry, have children, and stay at home to focus on marriage and motherhood. With the publication of Betty Friedan's groundbreaking book, *The Feminine Mystique*, a national and international discussion began once again regarding Friedan's belief that women needed a more active voice in decisions that affect them.

Friedan was reacting, in part, to a culture that sanctified the thinking described by the *structural/functional framework* for understanding family functioning, which was developed in the 1950s. This approach, created by academics such as Talcott Parsons, assumed that the family was most functional when husbands played the *instrumental role*, being in charge of tasks, and wives played the *expressive role*, being nurturing in the home.

Some men today are offended and feel threatened by feminist thinking, which argues that women have the right and responsibility to grow and develop without regard to social traditions that may try to dictate what is proper *feminine* behavior. On the other hand, other men today feel they have received significant benefits from feminist thinking in terms of family relationships. These men argue that feminism has encouraged men to express their feelings, to share wage-earning responsibilities and power with their partners, and to focus less energy on winning in their careers and more energy on loving their children and wives. Two wage-earners in a family reduces the pressure wage-earners often feel, and two actively involved coparents ease the strain while giving both parents the opportunity to enjoy seeing children grow.

Social Construction Framework

Human beings are profoundly immersed in a social world, and how we think about this world is a product of our social interactions. Similar to symbolic interactionism, social construction theorists believe that because the self is a product of social processes, individuality is difficult to develop

because our lives are caught up in a social environment. Social construction theories are closely related to current postmodernist and multicultural intellectual movements. Postmodernism posits skepticism in regard to questions of truth, meaning, and historical interpretation. Our view of the world is colored by the social environment in which we live. In effect, we do not see the world *as it is*; rather, we see the world *as we are*, but we fool ourselves into believing that we really see the truth with a capital T.

Regarding family functioning, then, the truth about who a particular family is and what the family does can change as time passes. A troubled family can learn to create a new, more positive story about who the family is and where family members are going in life. *Narrative therapy*, an approach to family therapy that grew out of social constructionist and postmodernist thinking, helps a family develop a new way of looking at itself and creating a new story line for a better future.

From a social constructionist perspective, this encyclopedia entry is not necessarily the truth about family functioning, but more realistically speaking simply the work of three family scholars who have spent a good deal of their lives observing, thinking, reading and writing about families. This entry, thus, is colored by the experiences of the writers and by the social environment in which they have lived, and another team of writers would most likely come up with a considerably different perspective.

Circumplex Model of Marital and Family Systems (Couple and Family Map)

Heavily influenced by family systems theories, David H. Olson and his colleagues created the Family Circumplex Model, also described as the Couple and Family Map. This framework, which is illustrated in a graphic, map-like form, describes how families function (see Figure 1). This perspective uses three broad dimensions: cohesion, flexibility, and communication. The basic hypothesis of the Family Circumplex Model is that families that are *balanced* (central areas of the model) tend to function better than families that are *unbalanced* (more extreme areas of the model). Another hypothesis is that balanced families tend to have

better communication compared with unbalanced families. More 1,000 studies have been conducted using the self-report assessment called Family Adaptability and Cohesion Evaluation Scales (FACES) and the observational Clinical Rating Scale that strongly support these hypotheses.

Cohesion is a feeling of emotional closeness with another person. Cohesion is achieved by balancing separateness and togetherness. Extremely low cohesion in a couple or family is called *disengaged*. Extremely high cohesion is called *enmeshed*. Olson believes that healthy couples and families are balanced in the amount of cohesion they demonstrate. Couples and families often struggle to maintain a workable balance between separateness and togetherness.

Flexibility, the second dimension in the Family Circumplex Model, focuses on a balance between stability and change. Flexibility is the ability of the family to change over time. Families need a basic foundation of beliefs and behaviors that give them stability. But they also need to be open to change, especially in a time of crisis when a change in thinking and actions can be of benefit. The two extremes on the dimension of flexibility are a *rigid* family system, indicating a low degree of change in the family, and *chaotic* family system, indicating an extremely high degree of change. Couple and family systems that have a more balanced level of flexibility tend to function better over time.

Communication, the third dimension of this model, is the grease that smoothes frictions between family members. As the reader will recall, cohesion and flexibility are best in medium doses, not too much and not too little of each quality. Communication, on the other hand, is directly related to the strength of the couple and family relationships.

The findings of two other prominent research groups bear mentioning here, in relationship to Olson's work: the Beavers System Model focusing on family competence and the McMaster Model focusing on healthy or normal families. Both approaches have long, rich traditions. The Beavers Model looks at many dimensions of family functioning, including the following: centripetal/centrifugal interactions (interactions that either push family members apart or pull them together), closeness, parent coalitions, autonomy, adaptability, egalitarian power, goal-directed negotiation,

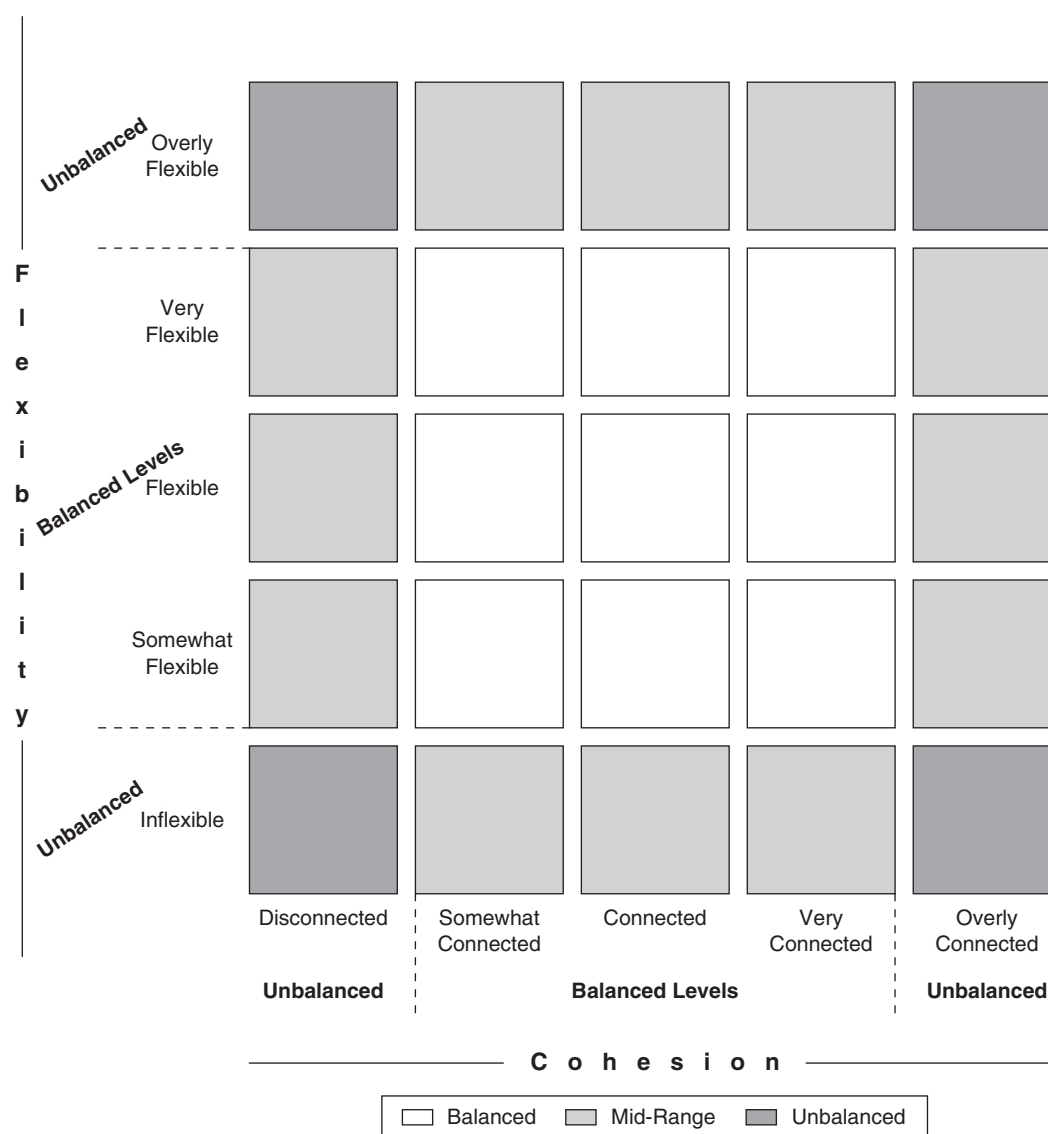


Figure 1 Circumplex Model of Marital and Family Systems

Source: Courtesy David H. Olson.

the ability to resolve conflict, clarity of expression, range of feelings, openness to others, and empathic understanding. The McMaster Model team posits that studying healthy or normal family functioning may be “a fool’s errand” because of the complex nature of family interaction, and focuses on the dimensions of affective involvement, behavior control, and communication. In this context, note the similarity of the elements of family functioning under study by the different research teams. Though each team approaches the task at hand from different perspectives and uses different

research techniques, the basic elements of healthy family functioning deemed worthy of study by each group of researchers are remarkably similar.

Family Strengths Framework

The family strengths approach to understanding family functioning has roots in the work of Herbert Otto in the 1960s and was further developed by Nick Stinnett, John DeFrain, and many colleagues. The researchers have focused on better

understanding the strengths of families that describe themselves as strong, happy, and satisfied with their life together, and believe they love and care for each other well. So-called strong families exhibit six major clusters of qualities:

- *Appreciation and affection for each other:* friendship, respect for individuality, playfulness, humor.
- *Commitment to the family:* trust, honesty, dependability, faithfulness, sharing.
- *Positive communication:* giving compliments, sharing feelings, avoiding blame, being able to compromise, agreeing to disagree.
- *Enjoyable time together:* quality time in great quantity, recognizing good things take time, enjoying each other's company, sharing fun times.
- *Spiritual well-being:* living a meaningful life, hope, faith, compassion, shared ethical values, oneness with humankind, oneness with the world.
- *Ability to manage stress and crisis effectively:* adaptability, seeing crises as challenges and opportunities, growing through crises together, openness to change, resilience.

Today, this model has evolved into the International Family Strengths Framework, which demonstrates how family strengths, community strengths, and cultural strengths are woven together in a seamless fabric: Strong families contribute in positive ways to the health of the communities in which they live and the cultural values of the nation of which they are a part. Likewise, the health of the nation and local communities is essential to the healthy development of individual families. Family strengths researchers argue that the family, in all its remarkable diversity, is the foundation of all known societies in the world; that family strengths, community strengths, and cultural strengths are remarkably similar from country to country; and that these similarities give human beings common ground for creating international relationships and organizations that support the well-being of families worldwide.

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See also Affection and Affectionate Behavior; Commitment, Predictors and Outcomes; Community Involvement; Family Communication; Feminist Perspectives on Relationships; Resilience; Stress and Relationships; Symbolic Interaction Theories; Systems Theories

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FAMILY LIFE CYCLE

Family scholars from sociology, psychology, demography, and economics have employed the concept of the family life cycle (FLC) to examine family relationships. The concept provided researchers with a meaningful way to look at how families changed over time by outlining a series of stages through which families passed across the life course. Although there were different versions of the FLC model in terms of the number of stages proposed, most included the major transition points in the formation and dissolution of the family such as marriage, childbearing, childrearing, empty nest, and widowhood. A family's location in the family life cycle was thought to influence family interaction patterns and, hence, members' satisfaction with the quality of their relationships.

Although popular for more than four decades (1947–1990), the concept has largely fallen out of favor as a result of conceptual and empirical problems. Nevertheless, many family therapists continue to use the FLC as a guide to practice and research. Feminist scholars argue that the continued use of the concept is problematic because it stigmatizes those who are not a member of a traditional nuclear family. Proponents of the FLC argue that the concept describes at least half of the families in the United States (i.e., those who are not divorced) and therefore is still useful. Further, depending on how the concept is operationally defined, proponents believe the FLC can be applied to alternative family forms such as blended families and single-parent families.

This entry describes the historical background of the FLC concept, its conceptual and empirical problems, a feminist critique, and concludes with directions for future research.

Historical Background

The original impetus for studying family change was the unprecedented rates of unemployment during the Great Depression. Research by Charles Loomis revealed that changes in family size and composition were correlated with household income. Families were at greatest risk of poverty

when their children were too young to work and when the parents were too old to work after their children had been launched. After World War II, researchers such as Paul Glick, Evelyn Duvall, and Reuben Hill further developed the idea by delineating specific stages that families went through based on family size, births, ages, launching of children, and the retirement of spouses. Early studies found that the length of family stages was related to age at first marriage, duration of childbearing, and number of children. For example, couples that married late in life would be more likely to have children soon thereafter and consequently would not remain in the childless stage of the family life cycle as long as would couples who married early in life. Similarly, couples who chose to have a large number of children would remain in the childbearing stage of the family life cycle longer than would couples who chose to have fewer children.

Early Conceptual and Empirical Challenges

Although it was initially used by demographers for descriptive purposes, family developmentalists continued to advance the concept. The continuing evolution of FLC was met with excitement because it provided a dynamic view of families to replace the previously static one. On the basis of the epigenetic principle of developmental change, families were viewed as going through a sequence of stages over time. Each stage built on the immediately preceding stage. Only after families mastered the tasks specific to one stage could they proceed successfully to the next stage and its tasks. A succession from one stage to the next was considered normal development.

Although widely accepted, the value of the FLC had not been empirically evaluated. When researchers examined it, they were disappointed with the results. For example, one classic study investigated the predictive power of FLC relative to two other measures of family development—marriage cohort and birth cohort—and found that FLC was no better at predicting a variety of variables related to family development. Another classic study found that the relationship between FLC and family variables disappeared when length of marriage or presence of children was controlled.

Further, life-course scholars argued that the FLC perspective failed to recognize that historical events such as wars and depressions could interrupt the timing, length, and sequence of family stages. The developmental approach to the FLC did not address the ways family relationships are influenced by historical context, and other life-course scholars pointed out that calculating the average timing and duration of stages obscured social class and ethnic group variations as well. Further, not all families followed a linear progression through the stages.

Finally, changes in the demography of families also forced a reevaluation of the FLC perspective. Initially, the concept of FLC had been used to examine differences between generations in the timing and duration of major events of a “typical” family. The concept was based on common marital patterns of the time: intact, nuclear families with one wage earner. However, eventually demographic changes challenged the exclusion of stages previously considered atypical. By the 1980s, premarital birth, separation, divorce, remarriage, and single parenting had become commonplace, making it necessary to expand the FLC to include these variations in its stages. However, even when less traditional family transitions such as divorce and remarriage were included in analyses, the findings showed that the FLC explained only a small amount of the variance in subjective evaluations of life.

Significance of FLC for Human Relationships

How useful are the stages of FLC for the study of human relationships? Some say FLC stages are useful if they are considered as guidelines for following the progression of family careers; however, it is important that these stages not be reified. Other family scholars say there is value in searching for common patterns in family life-course stages because they provide an indication of the pressures families face. As families move from one stage to the next, the progression changes role relationships and families must adapt. Consequently, the quality of family relationships, as indicated by such measures as marital satisfaction, can be influenced. Feminists argue, however, that the significance of the FLC is that it stigmatizes those who do not engage in normative behaviors.

The Feminist Critique of FLC

Feminists are critical of the concept of the FLC and its treatment of gender and divorce. They argue that although FLC has been the conceptual model for the fields of family development and family therapy for decades, it is largely mythological.

The FLC perspective assumes that the normative family is intact, White, middle-class, and male-headed; this is the family form against which all others are compared. The FLC approach uses a deficit comparison model, where any variation from the normative family form is viewed as inadequate. Thus, single-parent families are problematic from the FLC approach because it is assumed that women would not choose to raise children alone. Contrary to the FLC model, which views divorce as an indicator of social decline, feminists view female-initiated divorce as a sign of women’s resistance to the oppression they have experienced in traditional families.

Even though family theorists eventually added new phases to the FLC framework to accommodate single-parent families as well as divorced and remarried families, they continued to compare these new family forms to two-parent nuclear families using a deficit model.

Feminists argue that by relying on marriage and the presence of children to define family, the FLC approach eliminated the legitimacy of choosing not to be married or not to have children and be a family. Its emphasis on intact, married, nuclear families disenfranchised the experiences of individuals and families who did not conform to these stages, including those in poor families, minority families, and gay and lesbian families. These latter families are marginalized and deemed deviant by comparison. Thus, the feminists’ critique of the FLC concept echoes those coming from a life-course perspective: The concept ignores the fact that family events are shaped by historical and cultural context. These mounting criticisms led to a severe decline in the popularity and use of the concept.

Conclusion

What is the future of the FLC concept? Recently, the usefulness of the FLC has been empirically

reexamined. New proponents of the concept argue that previous researchers did not adequately test the FLC. Rather than using family-relevant dependent variables, past researchers used the stages in the FLC to predict demographic variables or individual level variables. To provide a true test of the usefulness of the concept, new proponents argue it is necessary to examine the relationship between the FLC and *family* variables. In their reevaluation, the new researchers found that FLC stages did predict family commitment—a family variable—even after controlling for age and length of marriage. But FLC did not predict marital satisfaction—an individual variable—as they expected.

These researchers also suggested that the FLC could be applied to complex, blended families, as well as to single-parent households, if the concept was operationally defined in terms of the age of the youngest child. Researchers stated that because the rearing of young children is extremely time consuming, the age of the youngest child could provide valuable information about the role demands faced by the parent(s). Such an operational definition could also be used with cohabiting heterosexual or gay and lesbian couples that have children. Thus, this research could potentially reinvigorate interest in the FLC concept.

However, feminists argue that even this operationalization of the FLC is problematic because it suggests that adults who are childfree, whether by choice or not, are not part of a family. Feminists point out that the FLC concept privileges the family of procreation over the family of origin. Consequently, childfree individuals are seen as not having a family and as not moving through family stages.

Thus, the challenge for future researchers is to determine whether the FLC can be operationally defined in a way that can accommodate the vast range of family arrangements that exist in today's society.

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See also Change in Romantic Relationships Over Time; Families, Definitions and Typologies; Families, Demographic Trends; Life-Span Development and Relationships; Marital Satisfaction and Quality; Marriage, Historical and Cross-Cultural Trends; Stage Theories of Relationship Development

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FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS IN ADOLESCENCE

No aspect of adolescent development has received more attention than family relationships. Much of the research indicates that despite altered patterns of interaction, relationships with family members remain important social and emotional resources well beyond childhood. Yet it is a challenge to reconcile this conclusion with the widespread perception that family relationships decline in quality and influence over the adolescent years. This entry summarizes theories that address the origins of transformations in family relationships during adolescence, followed by a summary of research on these alterations. The entry concludes with an assessment of the impact that changes in family dynamics have on adolescent development.

Theories of Relationship Transformation

Conceptual models of adolescent family relationships vary in whether their primary focus is on the adolescent or on the relationship. One set of theories holds that adolescent maturation undermines

patterns of interaction established during childhood, whereas another set of theories emphasizes enduring bonds that are assumed to be the foundation for continuity in the relationship. Most theories focus on parent–child relationships; less attention has been given to sibling relationships during adolescence.

Theories Emphasizing Individual Change

Maturation models focus on relationship disruptions caused by adolescent physical, social, and cognitive maturation. These models hold that changes in adolescents provoke changes in families. Diminished closeness and heightened conflict are expected to accompany adolescent maturation and continue until parent–child relationships are renegotiated. Sibling relationships may undergo similar transformations.

Puberty is central to many models. Psychoanalytic theorists assume that hormonal changes at puberty give rise to Oedipal urges that foster rebelliousness and distance from the family. Evolutionary views also link puberty to relationship transformations, such that physical and cognitive advances encourage adolescents to separate from the family to seek mates elsewhere.

Other maturation models give cognitive development a central role in relationship change. In these accounts, advances in abstract and complex reasoning foster egalitarian views that are inconsistent with the unilateral organization of relationships with parents and siblings. As a result, adolescents increasingly aspire to reciprocity and equal power, which may create conflict and curtail closeness. Eventually, familial roles are renegotiated to acknowledge the adolescent's enhanced status and maturity.

Systemic theorists argue that as relationships with firstborn children change, so too must relationships with later-born children. According to the spillover model, relationships with later-born children deteriorate and are renegotiated concurrent with (or shortly after) relationships with firstborn children. The Learning-from-Experience Model posits that parents hone their skills with firstborn children and are thus better able to cope constructively with developmental changes in later born children. According to this view, the

magnitude of change in parent–child relationships differs between firstborns and later-borns, rather than the timing of that change.

Theories Emphasizing Relationship Continuity

Alternative models of family relationships focus on forces that promote stability. The most prominent example, Attachment Theory, emphasizes the strong emotional ties between parents and children. As a mutually regulated system, parents and children work jointly to maintain the relationship in a manner consistent with cognitive representations derived from their history of interactions. Attachment in adolescence is different from attachment during earlier age periods, but the functions are similar. Whereas security facilitates exploration of the immediate environment for young children, security affords adolescents a sense of confidence in family support for explorations outside the family, including those that involve the formation of new relationships. Children and parents with a history of sensitive, responsive interactions and strong emotional bonds should maintain these positive features throughout adolescence. Children and parents with a history of difficult, unresponsive interactions should also experience continuity in the quality of their interactions, however unsatisfactory they may be.

Interdependence or social relations models describe close relationships characterized by frequent, strong, and diverse interconnections maintained over an extended time. In an interdependent relationship, partners engage in mutually influential exchanges and share the belief that their connections are reciprocal and enduring. These interconnections are internalized by participants and organized into mental schemas that shape expectations concerning future interactions. High levels of interdependence characterize most adolescent relationships with parents and siblings. As the child becomes more autonomous, the degree to which relationships change depends on the degree to which participants consider their exchanges to be jointly beneficial, which is closely linked to perceptions of relationship quality. Increased conflict may occur in poor quality relationships, along with a decline in closeness, as adolescents express a growing dissatisfaction with treatment perceived

to be unfavorable. High-quality relationships may change little during adolescence, or may even improve, as participants build on beneficent interactions to adjust exchanges in a mutually satisfactory manner.

Patterns of Relationship Transformation

Family relationships vary across the adolescent years in the content of interactions, the distribution of positive and negative exchanges, and the cognitive and emotional responses of individuals. There is widespread acknowledgement that family members experience their relationships differently. A much higher percentage of mother–child interactions fall into the category of mundane socialization than is true for father–child interactions. In contrast, fathers devote a higher proportion of their time with adolescents to recreational activities. Simply put, mothers spend relatively more time telling adolescents to pick up their socks, whereas fathers spend relatively more time in activities that don't involve wearing socks. These distinctions are amplified by the number of children in the household.

Perceptions of sibling relationships vary according to the relative age of the child; older siblings have a wider variety of experiences outside of the household than younger siblings have, which means that the former may place less emphasis on family relationships than the latter. Family members interpret their interactions according to their experiences; fathers minimize socialization hassles with children, whereas mothers invest considerable emotion in mundane interchanges. This means that fathers experience fewer ups and downs in relationships with adolescent children relative to mothers.

Changing Expressions of Closeness

Most families report that parent–child and sibling relationships are quite positive. Of course, manifestations of closeness change as the child matures. Intimacy, as expressed by physical affection, decreases during the transition into adolescence, whereas conversations in which feelings are expressed increase. Companionship is also modified. As children get older, they are more apt to

watch TV with their families and less apt to share meals and go out together.

Adolescents spend more time with their mothers and are more likely to share feelings and disclose personal matters to them. Fathers may be somewhat distant figures, who tend to be consulted primarily for information or advice and instrumental or material support. Sons and daughters have similarly warm relationships with mothers, but fathers are typically closer to sons than to daughters. These commonalities notwithstanding, views of the family are notable for their divergence, particularly during early adolescence. Where mothers and fathers see distinctive relationships with children, adolescents see monolithic relationships with parents. Mothers tend to appraise the family in positive terms, routinely reporting more warmth and affection among family members than do adolescents, which may be an attempt to ward off the decline in maternal life satisfaction that accompanies adolescent detachment.

Younger siblings report greater warmth and affection toward older siblings than older siblings report for younger siblings. Those who perceive differential treatment or favoritism from parents report worse relationships than do siblings who see parental treatment as equal.

Developmental changes in closeness are well documented. Although perceptions of relationships remain generally warm and supportive, both parents and children report that they spend less time together and that they are less likely to express positive emotions across the adolescent years. Relative to preadolescents, adolescents perceive less companionship and intimacy with parents and report lower feelings of acceptance by parents and less satisfaction with family life. Decreases in closeness appear to be steepest from preadolescence to mid-adolescence, tapering off or even rebounding by late adolescence. Warmth expressed by daughters declines more than that expressed by sons, partly because the former start from a higher level than the latter do. Birth order appears to moderate these trends. Firstborn children report the warmest relationships with mothers and fathers across adolescence, but firstborns also report the steepest drops in warmth from early adolescence to mid-adolescence.

Descriptive data on age-related declines in closeness probably overstate the significance of changes

in parent–adolescent relationships. Declining dependence is not synonymous with erosion in the salience of the relationship. It is not uncommon for late adolescents to name a parent as their closest relationship partner. In most cases, parents remain the most influential of all relationships, shaping important decisions that confront children, even as parents' relative authority over prosaic details of adolescents' lives wanes. Thus, adolescents turn to parents for advice about school, work, and careers and expect parents to help them out when significant troubles arise; peers hold sway over issues such as appearance, leisure activities, and media preferences.

Sibling relationships undergo similar transformations. As young people spend less time with the family, closeness between siblings declines. Few adolescents indicate that their most important relationship is with a sibling, yet most adolescents report high levels of interdependence with siblings. These relationships are remarkably resilient; adolescents will frequently turn to siblings for advice and comfort in times of trouble, particularly when experiencing difficulties in relationships with parents or peers. Across the adolescent years, sibling relationships become more egalitarian. Older siblings are often admired by younger siblings, and in these circumstances, they may be particularly salient sources of influence. There is some indication that adolescents are closer to same-sex siblings than to opposite-sex siblings, but the latter may be considered uniquely important because of the advantages they proffer in navigating the currents of romantic relationships.

There is considerable continuity between positive features of relationships during adolescence and those earlier in life, despite the normative transformations of adolescence. Indeed, the best predictor of family warmth during the second decade of life is family warmth during the first. Most families capitalize on greater adolescent maturity by fostering interactions that promote a psychological closeness that is no longer tied to the frequency of interactions. Families with a history of interpersonal problems, however, may lack the adaptive patterns needed for new forms of closeness during a time of relative distance. Longitudinal evidence is consistent with the notion that some families experience greater diminutions in warmth and support than others. Young people who report

high levels of warmth from parents at the outset of adolescence experience little or no decline in perceived support across adolescence, whereas those who perceive low initial levels of warmth report steep drops in subsequent perceived support. Thus, stereotypes of adolescents as uncommunicative, withdrawn, and disengaged from families overstate the case in all but a few extreme instances.

Changing Expressions of Negativity

Conflict, which is ubiquitous in all close relationships, is especially prominent between family members. Surveys of adolescents indicate that disagreements are most common with mothers, followed by siblings, friends, and romantic partners, then fathers; angry disputes arise more frequently with family members than with close peers. Rates of conflict and levels of negative affect are highest in mother–daughter relationships. Most parent–adolescent disagreements concern daily hassles, so-called garbage and galoshes issues; siblings tend to disagree about possessions, control of electronic media, and annoyances. Disagreements between family members are usually resolved through submission or disengagement; compromise is relatively rare. Negotiation is more common with mothers than with fathers; disengagement is more typical of conflict with sons than of conflict with daughters. Adolescents report that most conflicts with parents and siblings have few negative repercussions for their relationships. Disagreements are more constructive when they involve one parent than when they involve both; fathers and sons are particularly likely to alter conflict behaviors in the presence of another parent.

Contrary to popular views, family conflict does not rise and fall across the adolescent years. Instead, the highest levels of conflict are during preadolescence and early adolescence. Evidence from multiple studies reveals linear declines in the frequency of conflict from early adolescence to late adolescence. Significantly, however, the anger associated with these conflicts increases from early adolescence to mid-adolescence, with little change thereafter. Thus, conflict rates fall as negative affect rises, leaving families with the perception of worsening discord. Conflict rates decline more in mother–child relationships than in father–child relationships, but gender does not moderate

changes in affective intensity. Parents appear to become either more skilled or less invested in changes in relationships with later-born children as compared with firstborn children; alternatively, later-born children may learn how to navigate relationships with parents by watching their older counterparts. In any event, second-born children report less conflict during early and mid-adolescence than firstborn children do during these age periods. Less is known about conflict with siblings, although there is some indication that it too decreases during adolescence. Coercion declines in both parent-child and sibling relationships, accompanied by an increase in disengagement and, during late adolescence, compromise.

Important changes in views concerning family authority and decision making stem from disagreements with parents. Across the adolescent years, but particularly during early adolescence, parents and children renegotiate domains of authority. Adolescents come to view an increasing number of issues as personal matters outside of parental authority (e.g., the cleanliness of one's own bedroom), whereas parents continue to see the same topics as matters that fall within their jurisdiction. These disagreements prompt families to renegotiate roles and responsibilities. The upshot is a dilution of maternal authority as mothers cede control over day-to-day matters to their adolescent children. Fathers tend not to be involved in this area of socialization, and their authority over other domains remains relatively undiminished. Not coincidentally, mothers also report the most negative repercussions from conflicts with adolescent children. Parents and children view these developmental trends somewhat differently. Parents may regard changing patterns of interaction as signs of rejection and deteriorating relationships, whereas adolescents may regard them as evidence of enhanced maturity. The fact that parent and child reports of conflict grow more consonant during late adolescence suggests that disagreements, though often unpleasant, play an important role in aligning expectations and facilitating communication among family members.

More than any other form of social interaction, disagreements offer family members an opportunity to reconsider and revise expectations and relationships. Most families successfully meet the challenges of adolescence, drawing on healthy

patterns of interaction and communication established during earlier age periods. Difficult relations during the teenage years are generally limited to families that had difficult relations during childhood—estimates put the figure at somewhere between 5 percent and 15 percent of the population. Families with histories of ineffective communication are at risk for dysfunctional discord as they encounter pressures to realign relationships in response because they lack the resources for constructively addressing the developmental demands of adolescence.

Implications for Development

A large body of literature links parenting practices to maladaptive adolescent outcomes. Antisocial behavior and substance use are best predicted by an absence of behavioral control; self-esteem and an absence of internalizing problems are associated with high levels of warmth and autonomy granting; school grades are uniquely and positively linked to warmth, autonomy granting, and behavioral control. The impact of family conflict appears to vary as a function of the perceived quality of the relationship. Conflict is inversely related to well-being if the relationship is perceived to be poor, but moderate amounts of conflict may be beneficial for those whose relationships are good. The negative tenor of conflicts in relationships perceived to be unsupportive undoubtedly plays a central role in these deleterious outcomes.

Perceptions of differential treatment by parents have an adverse impact on siblings, particularly if that treatment is perceived to be unfair. The quality of sibling relationships suffers as a consequence of differential treatment, and many young people report depressed mood and heightened anxiety. Other aspects of sibling relationships have been tied to adolescent well-being, but the magnitude of these effects tends to be quite modest. Far more important is the quality of the parents' marital relationship. Aside from the infant and toddler years, parents report that the adolescent years take the greatest toll on marital satisfaction. Poor marital relationships tend to adversely affect parent-child relationships, which, in turn, have a debilitating effect on adolescent development.

Marital conflict often leads to conflict between parents and adolescents, and links between marital distress and adolescent internalizing and externalizing problems tend to be mediated by harsh discipline and parent–child discord.

Conclusion

As families adapt long-standing patterns of interaction to the maturational changes that accompany adolescence, communication may falter for a time, only to recover much of its fluency, albeit in a different form. Emotional ties in most families are quite stable. A small minority of families experience significant perturbation, but these households are noteworthy for dissonance before adolescence. Far more typical are families who cope constructively with the challenge of revising relationships during adolescence, setting the stage for interconnections that endure well into adulthood.

Brett Laursen and Chris Hafen

See also Family Relationships in Childhood; Friendships in Adolescence; Parent–Child Relationships; Sibling Relationships

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FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS IN CHILDHOOD

Among all developmental contexts, families provide the most direct and extensive environment for the growth of children. Families generally encompass the earliest and longest lasting relationships for children. Although each child, and eventually each teenager and adult, holds a different view of his or her family, these important contexts do share certain roles and functions. Common across families are the expectations that children will be cared for and provided with what they need until they become independent enough to care for themselves. Families also share the responsibility of teaching children about their culture and history, often through the sharing of stories, rituals, and traditions. A much more variable function of families is how they fulfill these expectations. The ways in which families accomplish these expectations and functioning largely occurs through family relationships and interactions among family members. The characteristics and qualities of these family relationships are important because of their linkages with children's growth, health, and adjustment, both individually and relationally, across the life span. This entry describes the central relationships of children in families, including interparental (or relationships between parents), parent–child relationships (or children's relationships with parents), sibling relationships (or children's relationships with siblings), and children's relationships with grandparents and other extended family members. In addition, this entry will highlight common approaches or methodologies to studying these family relationships along with major research findings. Finally, future directions in the study of family relationships in childhood are addressed.

Interparental Relationships

The committed relationship between a child's parents, in the form of either marriage or cohabitation, plays a critical role in family functioning and child development. Among parents' many roles in the family, at least among U.S. families, are expectations that they maintain and develop their romantic relationship as a couple and play complementary roles to one another, serving as coleaders of the entire family as they jointly raise their child(ren). The relationship between parents in an intact family sets the stage for the quality of connections among all family members. Interparental relationships directly and indirectly socialize children to how relationships between people function, including those that occur within and outside of the family system.

Substantial evidence indicates that how parents manage differences or resolve the conflicts that arise between them has widespread effects on family relationships and family members. Interparental conflict directly affects children. Partners who consistently resolve their conflicts through hostility, criticism, and anger tend to have higher levels of conflict and issues that remain unresolved and have children who themselves tend to show more anger or withdrawal. Further, children may blame themselves for parents' high levels of conflict or try to serve as resolution mediators, especially when parents argue over childrearing or family-related issues. Conversely, conflict that is resolved, and that does not include high levels of hostility or personal attacks, serves as an example to children that differences between people are manageable and as a model for how their own interpersonal disputes should be handled. Importantly, children who experience most of their interparental conflict handled in this way tend to feel more emotionally secure about their family and themselves.

As interparental relationships demonstrate higher levels of hostility and unresolved conflict, other family relationships such as parent-child relationships and sibling relationships have higher levels of negativity themselves. As examples, marital discord experienced in childhood is associated with greater differential treatment of young siblings (through tendencies to favor one child over another) and with higher levels of rivalry and jealousy among adult siblings. Although parents may

compensate for an unsatisfactory marital partnership by being overly positive with or connected to their child, most family relationships share similar qualities. As the interparental relationship flourishes or suffers, so too will relations among all other family members and subsystems.

Parent-Child Relationships

Relationships between parents and children are nonreciprocal in that parents are expected to fulfill many roles for children, whereas children are not expected to serve the same or as many functions for parents. Parents are children's first teachers and socialize them to guidelines and expectations within and outside the family. Parents encourage children to develop appropriate and timely behaviors through reinforcement and modeling. Parents' ability and success in such roles depends largely on the quality of early relationship established with their child. In other words, parent-child relationships with positive qualities (such as feelings of closeness and support) tend to promote more effective developmental success, whereas those with negative qualities (such as conflict and alienation) are linked with more problematic growth in multiple child outcome domains. A child's development in the context of a positive parent-child relationship is linked with more optimal outcomes in the areas of behavioral and emotional development, relationships with siblings and friends, and academic achievement.

The foundations for enduring parent-child relationships are generally set in motion by infancy attachment. Attachment refers to the close, enduring emotional bond between parents and children. As attachment figures, parents serve as a secure base for children, providing a sense of security that encourages safe exploration of environments and safety and reassurance in times of stress. The laboratory-based test developed by leading attachment researcher Mary Ainsworth to assess this security is known as the Strange Situation. In a series of separation and reunion paradigms, observations are made of how young children respond to and interact with their primary caregivers (usually their mothers). Most children demonstrate behavior consistent with a secure attachment and positive relational qualities; they seek and obtain safety

and comfort when reunited with their caregiver after stress and separation. Children who demonstrate an Insecure/Resistant (also known as Ambivalent) attachment respond to their caregiver's return in a clingy manner. They may initially seek a connection with their mother after the separation, but are not soothed or comforted by it. Children who demonstrate an Insecure/Avoidant attachment style seem indifferent toward their caregiver upon being reunited. These children tend to ignore their caregivers following the stressful situation. Children who display a Disorganized or Disoriented attachment style show no clear or consistent way of interacting with their caregiver when reunited following a separation. These children may want to approach their mother but also seem fearful of doing so. Children with a Disorganized or Disoriented attachment style show contradictory expressions, such as smiling then freezing. Research indicates that how children fare during the Strange Situation tends to correlate with their attachment behavior at home.

Extending these descriptions of attachment styles, children's earliest relationships with their parents also depend on parental sensitivity and responding. Parents who are able to accurately identify their child's needs and provide them in a loving way establish close connections with their child. These connections have been shown to predict how children function within the family, how their peer relationships develop, and their feelings about self across the life span. Similarly, parenting qualities tend to be consistent across childhood; that is, sensitivity and responsiveness during infancy is linked with parental effectiveness later in childhood, which continues to affect how children think of themselves and what they expect of other interpersonal relationships within and outside of the family.

As young children move beyond infancy and grow into more active and independent family members, parental behavior takes on an increasing role of control or authority. Accounting for parent-child relationships in terms of the two essentially separate dimensions of responsiveness (or warmth and support) and demandingness (or control and structure), Diana Baumrind described four resulting parenting styles. First, an *authoritarian* parent is low on warmth and high on control, resulting in a harsh and demanding style.

This type of parent lays out rules or punishments without explaining why. Second, a *permissive* or indulgent parent is high on warmth and low on structure. This type of parent responds to his or her child's emotional needs, but does not set limits that help children develop appropriate regulation and control. Third, an *authoritative* parent is high on both warmth and structure. Thus, this type of parent sets appropriate limits and controls and explains why. Authoritative parents also demonstrate affection and respect toward their child, allowing the child freedom to act within appropriate limits, thereby developing a sense of autonomy and independence over time. Fourth, *neglectful* or rejecting parents (also known as uninvolved) are low on both warmth and control. They do not monitor children's behavior or respond emotionally, often remaining more focused on their personal needs rather than on those of their child. These parenting styles set the emotional tone for children in the family and relate to many domains of child development. Children of parents who are high on both control and warmth (consistent with an authoritative style) generally have higher levels of academic and social outcomes compared with children of parents with other parenting styles.

Mothers and fathers may experience differences in parent-child relationships. As examples, mothers tend to spend more overall time with their children, but fathers tend to spend more time playing with children than mothers do. Overall, fathers interact with children of all ages less than mothers do. However, new research suggests that mothers' behavior may encourage or inhibit fathers' involvement with their child: Fathers with partners who engaged in low levels of criticism and high levels of encouragement were rated as relatively more competent and involved in child-care activities.

Sibling Relationships

Although not all children develop alongside siblings, most U.S. families have more than one child. Children who are raised with and without siblings generally do not differ on a whole range of development outcomes, including behavior and emotional adjustment, peer relationships, and academic

functioning. However, for children raised in the context of brothers and/or sisters, these sibling connections are a particularly important type of family relationship.

Siblings contribute both positive and negative influences during childhood. Brothers and sisters serve as important sources of companionship, learning, and cooperation, on the one hand, and conflict and competition for resources, on the other hand. Siblings affect child development directly (through their roles of teacher or playmate) and indirectly (through effects they have on parents). Younger children may benefit from having siblings to engage with during play and fantasy and to model behaviors and conversations. Children may benefit from growing up with siblings who are more similar to peers than parents are, thus providing early examples of friendship. Having close emotional connections with siblings offers opportunities for children to learn how to manage negative feelings and to foster mutual attachments. Although sibling relationships consist of both positive and negative feelings, they tend to improve with time. As would be expected, the quality of sibling relationships tends to covary with the quality of the parents' marital relationship and parent-child relationships.

Discordant sibling relationships are more likely to occur if siblings experience differential treatment from parents. That is, the extent to which parents treat children in unequal ways has been linked with higher levels of sibling rivalry, jealousy, and conflict. In addition, families in which parents demonstrate higher levels of negative and unresolved conflict tend to contain more disrupted sibling relationships.

Even though siblings share the same status as children in a given family, they may experience different developmental contexts. First, each child has a unique family experience. This may stem from either parental treatment or birth order. Firstborn children receive more time alone with their parents. Oldest-child status may foster a greater sense of responsibility that comes from caring for younger siblings. Oldest children typically rely more on parents for developmental needs, whereas younger children learn to rely on both parents and other siblings. Younger children, however, tend to be more socially extraverted compared with older children.

Relationships Between Children and Grandparents or Other Extended Family Members

Although relatively understudied, many children's family relationships include close connections with grandparents and other extended family members such as aunts, uncles, and cousins. Extended family-member relationships may replicate the role of parental relationships in socializing children. Relationships with extended family members may fill in for relationships that children lack. For example, an only child may develop relationships with cousins that serve similar roles to sibling relationships, including providing sources of learning, companionship, and cooperation, on the one hand, and conflict or competing interests, on the other hand.

Future Directions

Family scientists continue to highlight the contributions of family relationships to childhood by designing increasingly complex research studies. These investigations typically include multiple family members and relationships. In addition, by conducting longitudinal studies, or those that capture family dynamics over time, family scientists are able to identify how relationships are linked to children's development across the life span. Although these types of research designs are time consuming and expensive, they provide rich sources of information about how children develop in the context of family relationships. Individuals in families and the relationships among them should be examined together for obtaining the clearest view of family dynamics and family functioning.

Family scientists continue to expand investigation of the diverse contexts that encompass family relationships. As examples, families' cultural backgrounds and connections have been linked to many of the relational qualities described earlier, with different cultures varying in how much they emphasize closeness among family members or express conflict. A recent study comparing Argentine, Italian, and U.S. mothers found that Italian mothers were more sensitive toward their child and optimally structuring of their child's activities, and Italian children were more involving and responsive

than occurred with mother–child dyads from Argentina and the United States. Such findings may reflect differential importance placed on individualism, social responsiveness, and warmth by societies and cultures. In addition, families' economic stress and pressures may increase conflict and tension between family members, thereby impairing the quality of family relationships in childhood. Socioeconomic status is related to family socialization processes, including marital quality, parental emotional distress, and parenting behaviors, and with child health and well-being. Studying multiple contextual influences on families sheds light on variations on family relationships and their links to childhood development.

Family studies are increasingly including genetic components to account for family members' shared environments and shared heredity. Research has indicated genetic influences on factors such as how children express social and physical aggression and on how marital discord affects child behavior problems. Thus, behaviors of family members and relationships among family members draw from both nature and nurture influences. By including both components in family studies, researchers can delineate further the sources of influence in childhood and across the life span.

Researchers' scope of families continues to broaden as children are raised in more diverse types of families. For example, more children in the United States now are raised in blended families that combine multiple primary families following parental divorce or death and in single-parent households. In addition, children tend to experience more transitions into different family structures. Thus, children now have a higher likelihood of being members of multiple family systems during their childhood and thereby experiencing multiple instances of these central family connections, including sibling or parent–child relationships. Finally, the trend of children being born to older parents might change the impact of relationships with extended family members. For example, future research will need to explore whether children have less opportunity and time to develop relationships with grandparents when born to later-age first-time parents and how this relates to their longer term development within and outside the family.

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See also Adulthood, Sibling Relationships in; Assessment of Families; Attachment Typologies, Childhood; Aunts and Uncles, Relationships With; Extended Families; Family Functioning; Grandparent–Grandchild Relationship; Intergenerational Family Relationships; Parent–Child Relationships; Stepfamilies

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FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS IN LATE ADULTHOOD

Changing demographics and societal beliefs offer new opportunities for maintaining and expanding family relationships in late adulthood. Early definitions of aging families focused on relations between husbands and wives, parents and children, and, to a lesser extent, grandparents and grandchildren and siblings. With the aging of the baby-boom generation, a shift occurred in describing the variety and complexity of family connections in the second half of life, generating a more multifaceted view of family relationships. In 1997, Victoria Bedford and Rosemary Blieszner defined aging families to include relationships determined by biology, adoption, marriage, and social designation, and existing even in the absence of contact or emotional involvement, and in some cases, even after the death of certain members. This entry focuses on the structure, dynamics, and salience of family relationships in late life.

Demographic and Societal Shifts Shaping Aging Families

More persons are living to older ages than ever before because of advances in medical care and technology, improvements in nutrition and sanitation, and decreases in infectious disease. Thus, many older adults will be members of three-, four-, and even five-generation families. This means that family members have the opportunity to experience a variety of roles and relationships for a longer time than ever before. For example, more than 60 percent of all older adults are married and approximately 90 percent have living children; of those with adult children, about

94 percent have grandchildren and 60 percent have great-grandchildren. These percentages vary according to age, gender, race, and ethnicity.

Because of increases in the number of years people live and declines in the number of births per year, a change is occurring in the age structure of the population. Through most of the 19th century, the shape of the population structure by age in most industrialized nations, including the United States, was that of a pyramid, with a large base of children tapering to a small group of persons aged 65 and older. Families typically had many small children, fewer middle-aged adults, and no or only one or two older members. By 1990, the age pyramid began shifting to more of a rectangular shape, reflecting "beanpole" families with more generations alive concurrently within families, but with fewer children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, siblings, and other extended kin in each generation than in previous times. By 2030, the population age structure will be rectangular, with similar numbers across all ages from bottom (young children) to top (older adults).

The progression from pyramid families to beanpole families has important implications for family functions and relationships in late life. The increased life span of older family members in recent decades results in more years of shared lives across generations. That is, although the number of kin within families is declining, the likelihood that families have members from multiple generations is increasing. For example, less than one-fourth of persons born in 1900 had a living grandparent when they turned 30; for individuals born in 2000, more than three-fourths will have at least one living grandparent with whom to celebrate their 30th birthday. Thus, the availability of aging members brings greater opportunity for greater family continuity, stability, and support across generations. At the same time, younger family members may face extended years of caregiving for dependent older adults.

There also is increasing diversity in the composition of aging families. Divorce, remarriage, long-term cohabitation, childlessness, single parenthood, nonmarital childbearing, and gay and lesbian marriage and parenthood are prominent features in the contemporary families of older adults. In addition, older adults interact with and rely on persons not related to them by birth or marriage, but whom

they converted or upgraded to kin-like relationships. For example, an older person may view a neighbor as being “like a daughter” when describing a relationship that is important and supportive. Because families play a key role in providing help and emotional support, as well as long-term care to their older members, it is uncertain how these changes in family structures will influence interactions and support patterns. For example, will adult children feel an obligation to care for both biological and stepparents? Will persons who choose not to have children be at risk of having fewer family resources? Will society acknowledge and accept family-like relationships as important sources of support and caregivers for elders?

Family Dynamics and Support

Family members provide one another with information, help with personal tasks, and emotional support. The type, frequency, and amount of support provided or received vary depending on individual needs and abilities, the type of relationship, and personal resources. Social and cultural norms or beliefs also strongly influence the extent and type of support and care provided by family members. In contrast with the majority White U.S. culture, which emphasizes democracy and individuality, the needs and well-being of the family unit are of utmost importance and a driving influence in the lives of many minority families in late life.

Social exchange theorists assert that people constantly evaluate their relationships, based on the comparability of the support exchanged. In mutually dependent relationships, such as those between family members, the costs (e.g., time, money) and rewards (e.g., personal satisfaction, companionship) occur in the context of reciprocal exchanges that take place over the course of the relationship. That is, reciprocity, when defined by familial norms, is a generalized process that does not require that exchanges occur at the same point in time and does not necessarily involve giving and receiving the same things. For example, family members in the middle stages of life tend to be the net givers of support; they provide more types of support to younger and older generations than they themselves receive. Families most often view this give-and-take of assistance and support across

generations and time as normative or routine practice rather than as a special or burdensome response to family members’ needs.

Receiving emotional support and assistance from family members often promotes and enhances older family members’ positive feelings about themselves. Emotional support, more so than actual help, acts as a buffer against the negative effects of stressful situations such as failing health or relationship disruptions. This may be because of the general societal belief that family members should provide tangible help to each other in times of need. Thus, whereas older adults expect assistance from their children and grandchildren, they value equally and perhaps benefit even more from the emotional support they receive from these relationships.

For older adults experiencing chronic health problems, having meaningful family relationships helps minimize symptoms of depression and promotes greater well-being and life satisfaction. However, not all relationships result in positive outcomes. Older adults’ desire for independence may color the intent of the help and support provided by family members, thereby increasing their feelings of distress and unhappiness. When older adults receive help that is undesired or perceived as excessive, it reinforces feelings of vulnerability, dependence, and incompetence. If they view their family members as overbearing, older adults use a variety of strategies to reduce the frequency of negative interactions. Such strategies include embracing family members’ assistance with gratitude, enabling a peaceful relationship that supports their ability to care for themselves; accepting their help with mixed emotions that occasionally generate tension, potentially compromising their ability to manage their daily lives; or refusing family member help and concealing their health problems or concerns. Thus, older adults’ response to the assistance provided (or lack thereof) depends on a variety of individual factors including their beliefs about the need for help and how they interpret the help provided by their family members.

Couples

For older couples, spouses or partners are often the primary source of daily help and support. When either person experiences the onset of a disabling health condition, it transforms the life

patterns and roles of both individuals. The way in which older persons and their partners relate to one another and the degree to which they adjust to health-related changes have considerable influence on their relationship and overall well-being. Most late-life couples are satisfied with the help and emotional support they receive from one another. However, when they receive more assistance from their partners than perceived as necessary, seemingly helpful behaviors may actually result in less satisfying relationships.

Parents and Adult Children

Although older parents often wish that their children lived nearby, it frequently is not possible. Although geographic distance may limit face-to-face contact, it does not influence the quality of the parent-child relationship in late life. Regardless of where they live, older parents typically have at least weekly contact with at least one of their adult children and view their relationships with their children as positive. Older parents hesitate to differentiate their feelings for their children, although they may favor some children over others in feelings of closeness and exchange of help and emotional support. As is true for many relationships, parents have higher levels of closeness and lower levels of conflict with adult children to whom they are more similar. The mother-daughter bond is the strongest and most enduring filial connection. Perhaps this is because older mothers believe that their daughters are more sensitive to their feelings and concerns than are their sons.

Older parents express a desire for affection, thoughtfulness, and communication from their adult children more than they want their children to provide direct care for them. Both aging parents and adult children frequently report a mutual exchange of help with tasks, financial assistance, and emotional support and assess their interactions as positive. Some parents, however, report tensions and ambivalence in their relationships with their children, with feelings of exclusion, discrepancies in perceived need for assistance, and undesirable personal attributes contributing to both overt and suppressed conflict between older parents and their adult children.

Individual and family circumstances and history influence patterns and expectations for assistance

to and from aging parents. For example, young-old parents (i.e., persons aged 65 to 74) and those with no or minor health problems often provide routine assistance to their adult children. In addition, financial assistance more commonly flows from aging parents to adult children than in the reverse direction. Adult children who are financially insecure are more likely to receive support from their older parents and to receive more of it than are siblings with fewer financial needs. Those children who return home to coreside with their aging parents usually do so because of a change in their marital, employment, or health status. These are often less than reciprocal relationships, with adult children benefiting greatly from the support of their parents. In some families, parents never stop providing direct care and oversight for their children. For examples, parents of children with developmental disabilities and mental illness frequently are lifelong caregivers.

Grandparents and Grandchildren

Although older adults consider relationships with grandchildren to be meaningful, grandchildren are often peripheral to their everyday lives. Grandparents' direct involvement with their grandchildren depends on the interplay of multiple variables such as geographic distance from grandchildren, grandparents' health, and the quality of the relationships between the grandparent and parent generations. In general, the power of parents to facilitate cross-generational relationships remains strong throughout the family life cycle. Additionally, almost one-half of grandparents will become great-grandparents; little is known about the function and meaning of this relationship whose members are potentially separated by more than a half century.

Siblings

Sibling ties in later life represent perhaps the longest kin relationship, one built on a shared family history that provides a basis for mutual emotional support and understanding. Gender, marital status, number and proximity of siblings, and family structure encourage as well as constrain interactions between siblings' relationships in later life. Ties between older sisters appear stronger than do

ties between brothers or sisters and brothers. For older men, having a sister increases the likelihood of contact and support among siblings. Having multiple siblings allows for selectivity and discretion concerning contact and frequency of interaction with any one sibling. Siblings typically provide more emotional support than physical help in late life, frequently serving as confidants and companions for one another. Brothers and sisters value their relationships with one another and typically assess their interactions as positive. However, some siblings also report conflict in their relationships, as earlier rivalries and hostilities often endure into late life.

Family Caregiving

When older persons' need for personal assistance and emotional support is required for their daily well-being, caregiving emerges as a distinct type of family support. Nearly three-fourths of older adults who need assistance with daily activities rely exclusively on family members for care. Housekeeping, meal preparation, and shopping are common caregiving tasks, and more than one-half of family caregivers regularly help their older members with feeding, bathing, dressing, and using the toilet. Older adults' preference for family care follows a predictable pattern known as the "hierarchical compensatory" model of care. Spouses are most preferred and most likely to provide care, but if unavailable because of disability or death, help from adult children is accepted, with daughters more likely than sons to take on the duties. Alliances and bonds among family members also often influence the likelihood that a particular person will provide care for another. Older adults typically adjust their expectations for care to reflect the specific realities of their family members' lives, whereas adult children must balance the needs of their dependent elders with those of their entire family. For example, more than one-half of caregivers have children living at home and juggle work with caregiving responsibilities to meet both their immediate family's financial obligations and the costs of caring for their aging parents.

Although caring for a spouse or parent is increasingly common practice in older families, a

family care situation receiving increased attention recently is that of grandparents assuming full-time parenting responsibilities for their grandchildren. Approximately 2.4 million grandparents have primary responsibility for their grandchildren. These custodial grandparents assume the care of their grandchildren for a variety of reasons including parental illness, divorce, incarceration, and substance abuse. Although older families representing all race and ethnic groups are raising grandchildren, minority grandparents are two to three times as likely as are their White counterparts to assume parenting roles. Regardless of race, ethnicity, or social class, though, few grandparents plan, anticipate, or are prepared for a second parenthood. When they assume responsibility for raising their grandchildren, they often confront several personal and social challenges as they make adjustments in their daily lives to accommodate their acquired parental roles. Many grandparents feel as if they have to manage their situation alone and report feeling judged, criticized, and abandoned by their family, friends, and community.

Regardless of which generation is providing care, there are differences in burden according to race and ethnic identification, with White caregivers typically reporting feeling greater burden than do caregivers in minority families. Differences in the level of perceived burden may be a result of stronger feelings of family obligation and greater acceptance of the caregiving situation often found in minority families. Conversely, members of race and ethnic minority groups may be experiencing similar levels of burden as that of their White counterparts, but may be less likely to express or admit to feelings of burden and stress.

Family dynamics also shape the caregiving experience for late-life families. Family caregivers of all ages often report feeling as though they have no time for themselves or others. Isolation and feelings of loneliness may result from a loss of social contacts or, perhaps more devastating, the loss of normative roles and relationships (e.g., husband-wife; parent-child; grandparent-grandchild). Although there is a tendency to focus on the negative outcomes of caregiving, family members acknowledge the positive benefits of the caregiving experience, including personal growth (e.g., gaining medical knowledge and health care skills), appreciating the elder's contributions to the

world, feeling that one is repaying an elder for care provided during earlier times in life, and more satisfying relationships.

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See also Aging Processes and Relationships; Caregiving Across the Life Span; Couples in Later Life; Family Relationships in Middle Adulthood; Grandparent–Grandchild Relationship; Intergenerational Family Relationships; Kin Relationships; Negative Interactions During Late Life

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FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS IN MIDDLE ADULTHOOD

Family life for a midlife person is busy time, with significant changes and role transitions. Generally regarded as encompassing the years between 40 and 60, people during midlife typically experience significant changes in their family relationships, including caring for their parents and grieving their deaths, launching their young adult children, maintaining marriage/couple relationships, and becoming grandparents. In this entry, middle adulthood is defined, and then family relationships during this time are outlined, including relationships with children, grandchildren, partners, siblings, and parents.

Middle Adulthood Defined

A brief demographic portrait of midlife adults using U.S. Census data indicates that most are married and have children. Racial diversity exists, however, in marital status. Although 79 percent of Caucasian men and 74 percent of Caucasian women between the ages of 45 and 54 are married, only 62 percent and 51 percent of African-American men and women, respectively, are married. African-American midlife adults are more likely than are Caucasians to be either never married or divorced. Seventy-eight percent of midlife adults have at least two children, with 13 percent having five or more. A national study of midlife found that 70 percent of those married were in their first marriage, and 30 percent were remarried. In addition, 5 percent of the never-married, divorced, or widowed midlife adults were cohabiting.

Midlife is a demanding period of time for most adults. The number of significant roles a person occupies is related to increased role conflict, role strain, and overall stress. Adults accumulate roles in early adulthood, reaching a peak in midlife. Adult child, partnership, parenting, grandparenting, occupational, and community roles converge to create substantial strain in the lives of midlife adults. The time demands of midlife were highlighted in a recent national study of midlife couples. These couples, aged 40 to 50 years, were

asked what they would change in their marriage relationship if they could change one thing. The most common theme was a wish that they could spend more time with their spouses. Twice as many responses addressed this theme rather than others such as children, sex, and money. Thus, many couples value their relationships and enjoy spending time together, yet the busy nature of their lives may interfere with couple time.

Relationships With Children

Midlife parent relationships with children are diverse. Although some parents have small children during this time, many have adolescent and emerging adult children. In addition, many middle adulthood parents have foster, adoptive, and stepchild relationships.

Parent-child relationships can be somewhat strained during middle adulthood because both parents and children are negotiating different levels of control, support, autonomy, independence, and responsibility. Regarding these goals, research has indicated that the well-being of parents in middle adulthood is related to the assessments they make of their children's accomplishments. Teenage and young adult children who mature, complete their education, gain experience with work and romantic relationships, and prepare to leave the home contribute positively to parental well-being. As children launch from the home, most parents experience a successful transition. In addition, parent-child relationships typically improve after children leave home.

Relationships With Grandchildren

Many parents transition into the grandparent role during middle adulthood. Although grandparents take different styles and approaches to interacting with their grandchildren, most are satisfied with these relationships. Often, the approach grandparents take is linked to the meaning that they derive from the relationship. For many, grandparenting is a formal experience, with occasional interactions, some indulgence, and little discipline. Others prefer a fun-seeking approach, engaging in the relationship with playfulness. Grandparents can become involved in their grandchildren's lives

to the extent that they provide daily care and discipline. This is especially so among African-American and Hispanic households. About 6 percent of grandparents provide custodial care of their grandchildren, and this phenomenon is growing. Even though the stress of custodial grandparenting is associated with physical and emotional strain, grandparents find satisfaction in this role and report they would take in their grandchildren again if needed.

Several additional factors influence grandparenting in middle adulthood. Grandparents in middle adulthood have more visits and phone contact with grandchildren than older grandparents have. Middle-aged grandparents, however, also report that their relationships with grandchildren are more tiring. This is likely because they have younger grandchildren who require more physical supervision. The salience of grandparent-grandchild relationships is most strongly influenced by the relationship of the grandparent with her or his child (the grandchild's parent). When these relationships are strong, grandparent-grandchild relations also tend to be strong. Grandparent-grandchild relationships also tend to be stronger when the middle-generation link between the grandparent and the grandchild is female. Proximity, or the distance between grandparent and grandchild residences, influences the amount of contact grandparents have with grandchildren and the degree of involvement they experience in each others' lives. Lastly, ethnicity plays an important role in grandparent-grandchild relationships. Specifically, African-American grandparents often play a more integral role in the lives of their grandchildren than do Caucasian grandparents, many times providing direct care for the grandchild. Hispanic grandparents are also typically involved to a greater degree than are Caucasian grandparents and sometimes live in multigenerational households. In summary, grandparents in middle adulthood often have an active and satisfying relationship with their grandchildren.

Relationships With Partners

Although couple relationships in middle adulthood are quite diverse, romantic relationships at this stage are most commonly found in the form

of marriage. In a life-course context, marital satisfaction generally declines slightly with time, yet may improve in the later years. Research suggests that this early decline may be because of the presence of children (resulting in increased workload and less time together) and role demands associated with family, work, and community. As midlife couples move into their later years, they generally have fewer role demands associated with parenting, which allows for more time together as a couple. In addition, research by Laura Carstensen suggests that couples experience fewer negative interactions and more positive ones in their relationship as they get older.

Midlife often introduces physical challenges and health concerns to the marital relationship. Common age-related health problems such as Type II diabetes, cardiovascular problems, and arthritis may require adjustment in marriage. Some health changes related to intimacy also occur during middle adulthood. The most common of these is menopause, where hormonal changes in women can influence mood, physical comfort, and sexual functioning. Conversely, intimacy among postmenopausal women and their partners may improve as worries about pregnancy are no longer an issue. For men, cardiovascular functioning can also lead to changes in intimacy, such as with erectile dysfunction. Available medications and hormone replacement therapies can sometimes assist with the health changes women and men experience in middle adulthood.

Divorce

Divorce is most common among couples during the early years of adulthood, but it also affects a number of midlife couples. In the United States, 27 percent of divorces in a given year involve men between the ages of 45 and 64, while 18 percent of divorces involve women between the same ages. In contrast, 71 percent of men and 80 percent of women experiencing a divorce are under the age of 45. Only 2 percent of divorces involve either men or women older than 65 years. The probability of future divorce is 23 percent among 40-year-old men, 8 percent among 50 year olds, and 2 percent among 60 year olds. Among women, the probability decreases from 18 percent at age 40, to 6 percent at age 50 to 2 percent at age 60.

However, the divorce rate in midlife is increasing. The divorce rate among 45 to 49 year olds has doubled since 1971, and it has tripled among those aged 50 to 54. Predictors of mid- and later-life divorce include higher education, discrepancy in spouses' marital history, being in a second marriage, older ages of children, and having a small number of siblings. A recent national study of people who divorced after age 40 found that women initiate the divorce most of the time. The most frequent reasons for divorce among women were, in order, verbal, physical, and emotional abuse; different values and lifestyles; infidelity; and alcohol or drug abuse. For men, the most common reasons were falling out of love; different values and lifestyles; verbal, physical, and emotional abuse; and infidelity.

Marital dissolution generally has negative economic and psychological consequences. One study found that divorced men between the ages of 50 and 73 who had been married at least 15 years experienced a 61 percent decline in income, while women suffered a 66 percent decline. Thirty-five percent of the women and 21 percent of the men in a national study of midlife divorce reported suffering significant symptoms of depression following the divorce, with 31 percent of the women and 18 percent of the men having been diagnosed with depression by a physician.

Evidence suggests that people divorcing in midlife have an easier adjustment than do those who divorce earlier in adulthood. Women divorcing after age 40 are less likely than younger women to suffer from depression and feelings of hostility. Among those who have been divorced at least twice, 53 percent of the men and 42 percent of the women in one study reported that their first divorce, when they were younger, was more difficult, usually because of the emotional and legal complexities of having younger children.

Divorce in mid- and later life affects intergenerational relationships, especially among midlife fathers. Research has consistently found that divorced midlife men experience deteriorated relationships with their adult children. They have substantially less contact with their children, and adult children report significantly worse relationships with their fathers after their parents' divorce in later life. One study found that adult children whose parents are divorced are 33 percent more

likely than are adult children of married parents to have a detached relationship with their father. In summary, divorce affects family relationships in middle adulthood in numerous ways.

Relationships With Siblings

Sibling relationships are often the longest family relationships a person experiences. In some ways, sibling relationships in middle adulthood may be characterized by patterns established earlier in life, such as extent of competition or playfulness. In other ways, life changes influence patterns of sibling interaction and emotional closeness.

Competition among siblings often continues into middle adulthood. This competition may play out in vocational success, closeness to parents, and accomplishments of their children. At the same time, previous conflicts among siblings have often been overcome by the time siblings reach middle adulthood.

The frequency of contact between siblings in middle adulthood follows a different trajectory to the emotional connections siblings share. Some have suggested that contact between siblings across the life course follows an hourglass shape, with the most frequent contact in childhood and later life and less interaction during middle adulthood. The distance in middle adulthood is often caused by role demands of having spouses, children, work demands, community involvement, and so forth. When role demands decrease, such as with launching children, retirement, and divorce or widowhood, sibling interactions often increase. Caring for aging parents also often encourages siblings to interact more frequently than before and to work together for a common cause. Although sibling interaction and contact may decrease in middle adulthood because of these role demands, sibling relationships, in general, remain emotionally close, and may even become closer with time. Closeness in sibling relationships is influenced in middle adulthood by transitions such as divorce and (re)marriage, launching children, retirement, caring for aging parents, and the death of parents. Sibling relationships are sometimes close as a result of being encouraged by parents. When this is the case, after aging parents die, sibling relationships tend to dissipate. In addition, sibling relationships

among sisters are typically stronger than among brother pairs or brother-sister pairs. In summary, sibling relationships in middle adulthood consist of less interaction than at other times in life, yet emotional closeness often remains stable or increases.

Relationships With Parents

Middle adulthood is a time of both stability and change in relationships between adult children and their aging parents. Regarding stability during this stage of life, adult children and their parents can potentially enjoy mature, positive, and companionable relationships. Regarding change, it is common for midlife adults to assume the responsibility of providing care for a disabled parent. In many cases, the older parent's spouse is the primary caregiver, with middle-aged children serving as secondary caregivers. Although they may not provide day-to-day personal care, they help with transportation, perform household upkeep and repairs, and provide respite for the primary caregiver. In families where the older parent is single or the spouse is physically unable to provide care, adult children generally assume primary caregiving responsibilities.

Caregiving

A recent national survey of primary caregivers indicated that 68 percent of child caregivers were between the ages of 45 and 65 and an additional 14 percent were over the age of 65. Slightly more than half of them reported coresiding with their parent. They typically cared for their disabled parent 7 days a week, averaging 25 hours of primary care each week.

Providing care for parents is stressful. Research comparing caregiver children with similar midlife adults who do not have caregiving responsibilities indicates that caregivers are more likely to suffer from depressive symptoms and experience health problems. Although stressful, most adult children report deep satisfaction in their caregiver role. An exception occurs if the relationship between the parents and the child is strained; in these instances, the caregiving obligations may create resentment. Caregiving also often creates stress with work

situations. In one study, more than half the adult child caregivers reported that their jobs had been negatively affected by their caregiving responsibilities, with nearly one-fourth of them taking time off from work without pay to care for their parent.

Bereavement of Parents' Death

Midlife is the most common stage in which a person's parents die. Ninety-five percent of 40-year-old adults have at least one living parent, while only 25 percent of 62 year olds have a living parent, suggesting that parental loss is most commonly a midlife experience. This can be one of the most stressful, traumatic events in a person's life, with surviving children of deceased parents experiencing symptoms of grief, including depression and physical ailments. Moderators resulting in less intense and complicated grief include having a positive relationship with the deceased parent, being married, being religious, anticipating the death, and providing extensive care for the parent before death. The last moderator is due to the buffering effects of being relieved of demanding caregiving responsibilities. Having an ambiguous, hostile, or distant relationship with a parent leads to a more complicated grieving process.

Published research suggests that the death of a parent of an adult in midlife can have a negative impact on the quality of the midlife couple's relationship. In a cross-sectional study, after the death of a mother, 20 percent of the midlife respondents reported an increase in conflict with their spouse. The death of a father resulted in 29 percent of the adult children reporting increased conflict with their partner. More specifically, 11 percent of the couples reported that the death of a parent contributed directly to their decision to divorce or separate. The most common reason cited was that they no longer felt the need to remain together because of parental expectations. Many respondents also stated that their significant other was unable to understand the depth of their grief or provide the needed support during this difficult time. In 1995, Debra Umberson's analysis of longitudinal data confirmed the impact of parental death on midlife marital quality over time, showing that marital relationship quality declined when either a father or a mother died. Analysis of the open-ended interview data suggested that the

relationship stress was largely the result of the unbalanced nature of the grieving process. Typically, only one partner went through an intense grieving process, which put the partners in different emotional states. The relationship stress, though, was usually temporary because the relationship regained emotional balance as the intensity of the grieving process diminished.

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See also Adulthood, Sibling Relationships in; Caregiving Across the Life Span; Couples in Middle Age; Dating and Courtship in Midlife and Later Life; Empty Nest, Effects on Marriage; Parent-Child Relationships

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FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS IN YOUNG ADULTHOOD

Early adulthood is marked by exploration and experimentation in new roles, and frequent, fast-paced, life-course changes. Most young adults have not “settled down,” but experience frequent changes in life circumstances, including home-leaving, moving into and out of romantic relationships, jobs, and educational settings.

Consistent with Glen Elder’s notion of the dual dynamic of individual and family change—the simultaneous and mutual influence of family members’ individual developmental paths and change in the family system—research has made clear that offspring’s individual development and family relationships are mutually influencing during early adulthood. Moving into adult roles reshapes sons’ and daughters’ network of family relations. At the same time, family relationships may support or impede young adult development and transitions. This entry describes the family relationships of young adults, ages 18 to 25. The review focuses on relations with parents, on which the bulk of research has been done. Relations with siblings and grandparents are also discussed.

Changing Relationship With Parents

In early adulthood, the parent–child bond evolves toward a relationship between two adults rather than between adult and child. This is marked by a growing ability of youth to express differences and separateness while remaining emotionally close to parents. Nonetheless, parent and young adult offspring have not become equals in the relationship. Jeffrey Arnett’s research with U.S. youth suggests that most young people in their late teens and early twenties will not think of

themselves as fully adult, but as between childhood and adulthood. Goals for youth during this phase include increasing their independence from parents, taking responsibility for their own decisions, and becoming financially self-sufficient. At the same time, most young adults need both emotional and material support from parents to thrive. Research in this area has focused on U.S. and Western European youth. Its applicability to developing and non-Western countries has not been determined.

The interplay between young adults’ needs for both autonomy and continued dependency on parents may be one of the strongest forces reshaping family relationships during this phase. The tasks that face both young adults and their parents often involve reconciling contradictory impulses. Parents need to acknowledge the adult status of their sons and daughters, relinquish control, and, at the same time, remain ready to provide the care and material support their offspring need to thrive. Young adults need to pursue independence from the family of origin while still relying on support from parents or other kin to enhance their ability to explore new roles. Parents and offspring need to negotiate their expectations about family obligations as young adults move toward financial and residential independence and establish their own families and households.

Maturity for young adults also means coming to understand their parents as individuals in their own right. Referred to as *filial maturity*, this involves adult children’s growing ability to understand their mother and father apart from their parent roles, to appreciate a parent’s unique life history, and to develop a deeper understanding of a parent’s needs, desires, and worldview. Filial maturity implies becoming dependable to parents (rather than dependent on them) and is a precursor to becoming a source of support for parents in later life. Children’s felt obligation to support parents grows stronger in early adulthood and is linked to increased reciprocity in parent–child exchanges of support.

Continuity in Parent–Child Relationships

Social Learning Theory and Attachment Theory provide a basis for expecting continuity between

earlier patterns of parent–child interaction and parent–child relationships in early adulthood. Social Learning Theory holds that patterns of interaction ingrained when children were younger will be repeated as children and parents enter a new life stage. Attachment Theory suggests that the attachment relationship with parents formed in early childhood may become a stable aspect of personality influencing later styles of interaction. Empirical evidence for these theoretical notions is mixed. Data from longitudinal studies have shown modest levels of continuity over time but a substantial capacity for change. Research by Jay Belsky that followed children from age 3 to age 26 in New Zealand found that interaction patterns from early and middle childhood were unrelated to relations between parents and their 20-something offspring. There was some evidence of continuity from adolescence into early adulthood, with parent–adolescent relationship quality positively associated with young adults’ closeness to parents. Although significant continuity effects have been found in several other longitudinal studies, these effects tend to be modest. The New Zealand study showed that parent–adolescent interaction patterns explained less than 4 percent of the variance in parent–young adult relationships when measured from the young adult’s perspective. William Aquilino’s longitudinal research using the National Survey of Families and Households showed slightly larger continuity effects from adolescence into early adulthood when relationship quality was measured from the parents’ perspective. Parent–adolescent conflict predicted higher levels of parent–adult child conflict and accounted for about 10 percent of the variance in adult conflict.

The moderate influence of past interaction patterns suggests that grown daughters and sons can establish relationships with parents that are qualitatively different from those of earlier stages. The changing life course of parents and children provides the impetus for a reappraisal and renegotiation of the parent–adult child relationship. Children’s transitions into adult roles furnish an opportunity for parent and offspring to forge new patterns of interaction. Home-leaving may be the most critical transition. Leaving home marks the end of direct parental supervision and daily contact with parents. This opens the door to a deeper

understanding among parents and offspring that their relationship has changed, or needs to. Home-leaving has been linked to adult children’s heightened feelings of autonomy and more warmth and less confrontation with parents. The influence of parent–adolescent relations on parent–adult child relations diminishes after children leave home.

A substantial body of research has shown that changes in family composition and custody arrangements during childhood have long-term effects on parent–child relations in early adulthood. Conflict between parents, before and after marital dissolution, results in children feeling reduced intimacy with parents in adulthood. The negative effects tend to be especially strong for adult children’s connections to the noncustodial parent, but lasting negative effects are not inevitable. When noncustodial parents maintain strong relations with their offspring after the divorce, children tend to experience less anger toward the parent and less sense of loss in early adulthood. Parental divorce that occurs after children are grown also weakens adult child–parent relations, resulting in reduced contact and intimacy, especially with fathers. Father–daughter relations appear to be more vulnerable to later-life parental divorce than any other parent–child dyad.

Emotional Bond With Parents and Young Adult Outcomes

Family relationships affect young adults’ psychological well-being, transitions to new roles, capacity for intimacy, and individuation from the family of origin. Important aspects of the emotional bond between adult child and parent include levels of involvement, warmth, support, and mutual acceptance.

In early adulthood, a parent–child relationship marked by strong attachments and emotional closeness will foster sons’ and daughters’ autonomy from the family and their ability to function independently. Research on adolescence during the past several decades has shown that continued connectedness to parents, rather than repudiation of parental ties, facilitates individuation from the family of origin and successful transitions into adult roles. Parental acceptance and support for independence lead to higher self-esteem among grown children. Parental resistance to children’s

growing autonomy slows individuation from the family and contributes to psychological distress and impaired social functioning in early adulthood. Sons' and daughters' achievement of independence proceeds best when they feel connected to parents, understood and loved in their families, and secure in being able to call upon parents for support.

Relations with parents may affect young adults' capacity for intimacy. Longitudinal studies that have tracked young people from the teenage years into early adulthood have found that parental behavior marked by warmth, support, acceptance, and involvement is associated with young adults behaving in a more supportive and less hostile manner with their romantic partners. Cohesion and a flexible style of control in the family of origin have been linked to young adults reporting more happiness in their romantic relationships. Research with never-married adults age 19–35 has shown that parental divorce can lead to difficulties in romantic relationships for young adults, more so for women than men. Women with divorced parents reported less trust and satisfaction, and more ambivalence and conflict, in their intimate relationships. For some young adults, however, the consequences of experiencing a parental divorce for their own intimate relationships can be positive. The capacity for positive effects depends on how well the adult sons and daughters come to understand their parents' divorce. Youth with a more integrated understanding of their parents' divorce, involving an awareness of the complexity of their parents' relationship and an appreciation of their mother's and father's viewpoints, report higher levels of intimacy and enjoyment in romantic relationships.

Family Economic Support and Young Adult Outcomes

Parents who provide financial support to their young adult offspring enhance their children's success in the transition to adult roles. Parents' financial backing results in increased educational attainment and higher living standards for their adult children. Parents may provide economic support in a number of ways, including paying tuition for college or other postsecondary education;

providing financial subsidies that enable young adults to live independently (e.g., paying monthly bills); allowing adult children to coreside in the parental household; paying for health and auto insurance; and providing other necessities to their grown offspring, whether they live with parents or reside independently.

Parents' capacity to offer economic support to adult children varies positively with parental income and education and is negatively related to family size. Other factors affecting the propensity for parents to make financial transfers to adult offspring include parental divorce and remarriage. Family disruption during childhood and the transition to a stepfamily weaken parental feelings of obligation to support adult children economically. Stepchildren receive less parental economic support than do children from two-biological-parent households.

Some parents have been shown to use their economic leverage to achieve more control over the behavior of young adult children, especially with regard to transitions into and out of the parental home. Parents can facilitate their son's or daughter's home-leaving by helping to pay for the child's daily living expenses, thus making it more feasible for youth to establish an independent household. When young adults live independently, parents who are unhappy with a child's lifestyle or who doubt his or her ability to make sound decisions may try to nudge the child back into the parental home by cutting off the financial subsidies that enabled independent living.

In the United States, it is common for youth in their early to mid-twenties to live in their parents' households. According to U.S. census data, 56 percent of men and 43 percent of women age 18 to 24 lived at home with one or both of their parents in 2000. One in four young adults leave home for the first time after age 22. Returning to live with parents after a period of independent living is also common. About 40 percent of youth who first leave home between ages 17 and 20 later return to live with parents. These returns are usually for a limited time, less than 2 years, while making the school-to-work transition or while changing jobs.

Adult child coresidence can be considered a form of parental economic support even though it may not involve direct cash transfers to children. Most adult children live rent-free in the parental

home, and relatively few make monthly monetary contributions to the household budget. Data from the National Survey of Families and Households showed that fewer than one quarter of coresiding young adults made room and board payments to parents.

Similar to direct financial transfers, the economic benefits of coresidence with parents may be advantageous for the prospects of sons and daughters making the transition to adulthood. Modern labor markets have increasingly favored job seekers with more education, skills, and training. Young adults can use the secure base of the parental home to gain more time and have more resources needed to prepare themselves for achieving financial independence. Money saved by residing with parents will make attending college or acquiring other postsecondary training more feasible. Without the burden of monthly bills when living independently, young adults can undertake a fuller exploration of career options in which changing jobs or switching career paths will not result in a financial crisis.

Among young adults from poor or lower socioeconomic status families, living at home, with minimal living expenses, will make attending a local college or technical school more feasible. It will be easier for young adults to combine part-time employment with postsecondary education when they are not also responsible for sustaining an independent household. Among youth not attending college, coresidence provides for their basic needs as they negotiate a difficult job market and gain experience in low-paying, entry-level jobs. Lower socioeconomic status families may also benefit from the economic contributions coresident offspring make to the household.

Research has shown that parent–adult child relations during periods of coresidence are generally good, as long as parents perceive that their offspring are making progress toward independence by furthering their education, developing new job skills, or seeking employment. Parental satisfaction with the living arrangement increases when coresiding adult children contribute to their own upkeep by paying for some or all of their own transportation, clothing, insurance, and entertainment expenses. Parental reactions to adult–child coresidence tend to be most negative when offspring appear to be floundering in making progress

toward independence, such as when youth are simultaneously not employed and not pursuing further education or training. The most difficult coresident situation for parents is when sons or daughters bring their own children into the home as well. The three-generation household thrusts parents into caring for young children, a role most had happily relinquished as their own offspring moved toward adulthood.

Naomi White's qualitative research on Australian youth who returned home revealed a number of difficult interpersonal issues that challenged both parents' and adult children's satisfaction with the return home. Both parents and children struggled with establishing emotional boundaries and often lamented the loss of privacy they previously enjoyed when living apart. Despite their dependence on parental resources, offspring wanted to be recognized by parents as independent adults. Resentment surfaced when parents attempted to set rules for overnight visitation, curfew, and contributions to housework.

Other Family Relationships: Siblings and Grandparents

There is little empirical research on sibling relationships in early adulthood. This is one of the least studied relationships in the family system. There is conflicting evidence in prior research about whether sibling relationships are important to young adults' social networks and whether sibling relationships contribute to well-being in this life stage. Although some research suggests that young adults are nearly as close to their siblings as to their parents, other evidence suggests that friends become more central to the social networks of young adults than siblings do. College students tend to share more interaction and communication with friends than with siblings. However, sibling relationships appear to strengthen with age. In middle age and later life, adults increasingly look to their siblings for support.

Observational research by Joann Shortt and John Gottman has provided insights into processes that facilitate strong sibling relations in early adulthood. To build strong bonds in adulthood, siblings need to move beyond the asymmetrical relationship characteristic of childhood sibling

relations, where age differences are critical and older siblings often dominate, and establish a more symmetrical relationship between equals. When the power differential between siblings remains an issue, similar to the power relations between children of different ages, research has shown that conflict and defensiveness are more likely to interfere with the establishment of strong bonds and open communication among siblings in early adulthood. Eliminating the power imbalances that characterized childhood interaction may be a critical task necessary for siblings to enjoy supportive relations in early adulthood.

There are also relatively few studies of young adults' relationships with grandparents. Gender and race are two factors that appear to strongly influence the nature of grandparent-grandchild relations in early adulthood. Because women often function as "kin-keepers" in the family and maintain stronger ties to their extended families than do men, it is common in the United States for children to grow up feeling closer to their maternal grandparents than to their paternal grandparents. In addition, the granddaughter-grandmother relationship tends to be the closest compared with other gender pairings. As grandchildren move into adult roles such as employment, marriage, and parenthood, their relationships with grandfathers improve.

Research suggests that grandparents can play an important role in providing support to young adult grandchildren. Most studies in this area have focused on minority youth, with particular attention to the African-American family. Among college students, African-American youth are more likely to engage in supportive exchanges with grandparents than are White students. African-American grandparents are more likely than are White grandparents to act as surrogate parents to grandchildren. To understand more fully the family resources and support available to youth during the transition to adulthood, research should include the contributions of grandparents and other extended kin. This appears to be especially important for understanding the prospects of African-American and other minority youth. Research is needed to illuminate the extent of grandparents' economic support to adult grandchildren, the impact such support may have on the early adult life course, and the factors that affect the likelihood of young adults receiving support from grandparents.

Conclusion

Frequent and fast-paced changes in the young adult life course transform family relationships, leading to new styles of interaction with parents and other family members. At the same time, family relationships shape the individual life trajectory of sons and daughters in early adulthood. The quality of relationships with parents and kin and the availability of emotional and material support from the family of origin play a critical role in young adults' achievement of autonomy and maturity. Family support bolsters the young adult's prospects for success in the transition to adult roles. The tension between the young adults' drive for autonomy and their continued dependence on family support reshapes the terrain of family relationships during this life stage.

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See also Attachment Theory; Connectedness, Tension With Autonomy; Family Relationships in Adolescence; Intergenerational Family Relationships; Parent-Child Relationships; Sibling Relationships

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FAMILY ROUTINES AND RITUALS

Families organize their collective lives through the structure of routines and impart what it means to belong to the group through its rituals. This entry provides a general definition of routines and rituals and charts how they change through the family life course.

Routines are behaviors or activities that involve a sequence of highly ordered steps. For instance, routines around dinnertime might include a set time and place for dinner, roles (e.g., who puts napkins on the table), and assigned seats. Routines are repeated over time with little change in sequence. *Rituals*, however, are highly symbolic and provide a sense of belonging for family members. Elements of such symbolic gatherings are anticipated and thought about long after the event concludes. For instance, the family may have a special Sunday evening meal that is anticipated by all family members. The emotion and affect accompanying such a special gathering might be the subject of stories told long after the event.

Families have a life course that involves various phases as the family develops over time. The family life cycle typically moves from being a married couple, to living with young children, parenting adolescents, and then the absence of children in the home. However, not all families follow a nuclear family structure; there might be other family members (e.g., cousins, grandparents) living with the family. Further, these life phases are not rigid because divorce, remarriage, extended family moving into the home, and even death may prompt the family to experience one or more of these phases again or concurrently. Transitions from one phase to another are often stressful, so routines and rituals can promote healthy adaptation and continuity across the life cycle. Routines and rituals provide the family with a sense of structure and meaning that allow family members to anticipate future events and look forward to them even in the midst of stressful times.

Early Marriage

During early marriage, couples choose new routines and rituals, as well as deciding which routines and rituals from their upbringings will carry forward into their life together. For many couples, this will involve agreeing on the meaning and incorporation of religious observations and rituals. Interviews from married couples suggest that there are several types of marriage rituals including couple-time rituals (hobbies, sports, movies), which often involve the couple setting time aside to be alone together (coffee on Sunday mornings). Other types of rituals may be idiosyncratic or symbolic (favorite television programs, celebrations), daily routines (household management, meals), and communication rituals (daily phone calls).

Transition to Parenthood

With the birth of a child, the couple must adapt to new routines and schedules (e.g., feeding, bathing). These new routines also provide infants the opportunity for social interaction. For instance, when a parent responds to an infant's cry for food, the parent is aiding the child in developing a sense of awareness about how its actions influence others. Feeding routines help the infant develop a wake-sleep cycle that can lead to regular sleeping routines and generally better self-regulation. When routines become stable for an infant, the infant is easier to soothe and care for. This, in turn, may ease the transition to parenthood. Cultural variations in routines are seen in many different specific behaviors, for example, the incorporation of high chairs during feeding. High chairs are especially prominent in Western cultures, whereas a Puerto Rican mother is more likely to hold the infant in her lap during feeding.

Parenting Preschool and School-Age Children

Young children practice various routines including daily routines such as mealtime and bedtime, household duties, discipline routines, and homework routines. As the child develops both cognitively and behaviorally, negotiation and problem solving occur between parent and child, allowing for more variations in routines among preschool

and early school-age children. Between the ages of 3 and 6 years, interactions within the family allow for language development through joint book reading and dinnertime conversations. Structured routines during this period also help prepare the child for routines during the school day and contribute to better behavioral adjustment. Routines allow children to reliably expect and depend on a sequence of events, which ultimately facilitates better adjustment among children. Culturally, variations in mealtime discussions are noted where U.S. families tend to focus more on daily events and are more child-centered, whereas other cultures, such as Japanese American, focus more on past events shared by the family.

Parenting Adolescents

Although adolescents seek autonomy, family routines and rituals continue to be important sources of stability for the adolescent. Adolescents may perceive routines as an indication of parental emotional investment in the family and develop a stronger sense of self from such routines. Further, the structure supplied by family routines often reduces the adolescent's feelings of anxiety and even exposure to risk-taking situations. Adolescents experience less anxiety because the familiarity of a particular routine and may also be less likely to deviate from such certainty into more risky situations. Although the time spent engaging in such routines might decrease, the meaning and importance of family rituals for the adolescent may not. For example, many religious rituals, such as bar or bat mitzvahs, serve as a means for the family to recognize simultaneously the independence of the adolescent and the adolescent's strong family connections.

Children as Older Adults

As children become adults and move out of the home, there tends to be a decrease in the practice of routines in the home. Further, with children no longer in the home, rituals tend to be centered on religious and community-linked events (e.g., holidays), rather than on those that were unique to the family. When the couple later becomes grandparents, there is often the desire to pass rituals on to the next generation.

In sum, routines aid families as they transition from one part of the life cycle to the next, create a context that is conducive to social and emotional development, and when repeated over time become part of the family's ritual life. Passed down across generations, these rituals encourage family, personal, social, and even cultural identity, which let individuals know that they belong to an important group.

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See also African-American Families; Asian-American Families; Belonging, Need for; Families, Intergenerational Relationships in; Family Functioning; Family Relationships in Adolescence; Family Relationships in Childhood; Hispanic/Latino Families; Parenting

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FAMILY THERAPY

Families represent one of the most important contexts for human relationships. Although individuals experience many types of relationships during their lifetimes, both lay persons and experts in the field generally agree that family relationships are among the most influential and complicated. For instance, there are countless studies in developmental psychology demonstrating that the quality of key family relationships has important and long-lasting impact on the development of virtually every personality characteristic and form of psychopathology. When family relationships function well, they are one of the most satisfying experiences a person can have. However, when family relationships do not function well, they are one of the most distressing experiences a person can have. When family problems emerge, families are

increasingly turning to family therapists for help. In fact, family therapy is one of the most common forms of mental health treatment. This entry discusses how family therapy is defined, reviews existing research about the efficacy of family therapies and about family therapy process, and explores current research to further understanding of the effectiveness of family therapy.

Definition

Defining *family therapy* is a difficult task for several reasons. Family therapy is sometimes labeled by virtue of the presence of multiple family members in the therapy room, but also is at times labeled by the presence of a systemic perspective in any therapy format that emphasizes the family system in the therapeutic work. For instance, Bowen Therapy is an example of a one-person family therapy. As scientists have refined their conceptualization of family therapy, consensus has grown that what matters most is whether or not the therapy was family-based rather than who was present in the therapy room.

Further, many family therapies today are actually multicomponent treatment packages that may involve the use of medication, group sessions for a client presenting with a specific problem, sessions with family members excluding the client, individual therapy sessions for the client, psychoeducation, and therapy sessions with all family members. There is also debate about whether couple and family therapies should be grouped together because they both involve treating multiple family members at the same time. Still, some believe that couple and family therapy differ sufficiently enough to merit separating the two. For present purposes, this entry uses *family therapy* to describe therapy methods that use a systemic focus on the family.

Family Therapy Principles and Models

To understand family therapy, it is important first to understand the basic tenets that underlie family functioning. A family typically involves two to four generations. A family is influenced and facilitated by the opportunities and constraints of its social context. To ensure its own existence, a

family adapts available resources to normal and abnormal transitional and crisis stress events. Family resources involve the ability of family members to contribute tangible help such as material support, income, childcare, and household maintenance and nontangible aid such as expressive interaction, emotional support, instruction, and social training and regulation. All families have explicit and implicit rules that govern their interactions, and those rules usually promote robust patterns of interactions. How well a family functions depends on such aspects of family life as the clarity of its communication, rules, and ability to actualize family resources during a time of crisis.

A family systems perspective is central to family therapy. From this perspective, individual problems occur in the broader context of the family. Therefore, family therapy focuses primarily on interpersonal interactions rather than on intrapsychic phenomena. For instance, the goal of family therapy for depression is to change the relationship patterns between a husband and wife to mitigate depressive symptoms, the rationale being that depression can cause relationship problems and that relationship problems can cause depression. This contrasts with traditional Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for depression where the focus is on altering an *individual's* thoughts and behaviors. Moreover, family therapists have historically understood causality in family interactions through cyclical causal patterns—that is, sequences of ongoing, interactional behaviors that have no clear beginning or end.

Each family system comprises a number of subsystems, which affect one another. “Wholeness” highlights that the whole is more than the sum of its parts, with the implication that there is little point in considering one part of the family system without regard to the rest of the system. Family therapists believe that such properties of systems affect individuals within the system. In earlier views, systems, much as in the context of physics, were seen as homeostatic, that is, moving to reduce change. However, more recent views have seen the family as a source of resilience more than of homeostasis. Today's family therapists believe that families possess the ability to rally their resources to restore healthy family functioning.

Family therapists go about understanding symptomatic behavior in many different ways. Some

view symptoms as a result of the family under stress, others look for the meaning or function of the symptom, and still others view symptoms as a result of repeated use of the same flawed solution. Such different ways of understanding symptomatic behavior in one or multiple family members is closely related to the theoretical orientation of the family therapist. *Psychodynamic models* focus on the family as an integral context in the etiology of adult personality and believe that to solve family problems, it is necessary to understand intrapsychic processes within the individual, to understand early parent-child relationships, and to understand the evolution of family problems across generations. *Experiential models* focus on increasing the family's sensitivity and sharing of feelings. *Structural family therapy* focuses on patterns of interaction within the family to understand its basic structure and organization. *Strategic models* use paradoxes as a technique for changing family patterns and interactions. Therapists using *narrative* and other *postmodern models* believe that there is no objective reality; rather, people construct their realities and focus on understanding the family's shared definition of the problems. *Cognitive behavioral models* use principles from learning theory and social exchange theory to understand family processes. Each of these viewpoints has evolved into a school of family therapy.

Most recently, a movement away from specific theoretical orientations has developed in favor of identifying a set of generic strategies or principles that cut across theoretical orientation. Most family therapy today, in part, uses strategies that work with family structure; strategies that work with cognitions, narratives, or attributions; strategies based in psychoeducation; and strategies for working with affect. Hence, the field of family therapy has moved toward a both/and paradigm rather than an either/or paradigm. Current views of Systems Theory allow the therapist to examine causal processes, to examine the differential impact of family systems processes on different family members, and to examine the impact of intrapsychic processes of individual family members on the larger family system. Although systemic conceptualizations have changed over time, the ultimate goals of successful family therapy remain the same: to resolve the family's difficulties and add to adaptive functioning by rectifying a family's

dysfunctional, repetitive interactions, communication, and problem-solving skills.

Effectiveness of Family Therapies

With now about 40 years of research on the efficacy of family therapy, it is clear that family therapy is effective. Research has shown that clients in family therapy are better off than approximately 70 percent of clients not receiving treatment. Research also shows that family therapy is at least as effective as other treatment modalities, such as individual therapy. There is more evidence for the efficacy of family therapy for specific problems (e.g., conduct disorder in children and adolescents) than there is evidence that specific types of family therapy are better than any other specific type (i.e., structural vs. strategic family therapy). Family therapy has been shown to have a particularly powerful role in the treatment of adolescent substance use disorders and delinquency, schizophrenia and bipolar disorders, and eating disorders. For example, research has found that family treatments result in approximately 80 percent of adolescents being drug-free at termination and that family treatments produce twice as many drug-free adolescents at termination when compared with group therapy or family-based drug education programs. Other research has shown that family therapy focused on reducing expressed emotion, which is characterized by high levels of emotional intensity and criticism of the patient, reduces relapse and symptomatic behavior when used in conjunction with medication and skills training in the treatment of clients with schizophrenia and bipolar disorders. Rates of recidivism have been reduced by as much as 50 percent through the addition of such family treatment strategies. Both these threads of research show that with some problems, family treatment is far more cost effective than are individual therapy, hospitalization, and standard, nonfamily treatments.

Family Therapy Practice: How Family Therapy Works

What happens both inside and outside of therapy sessions that leads to desired outcomes such as

improved functioning, improved communication and relationships, and decreased symptoms? This is a topic about which research has only recently begun to emerge. One important finding is that a strong alliance between the therapist and the family is central for positive change to occur. This therapeutic alliance includes each individual family member's alliance with the therapist, as well as the family's alliance as a whole with the therapist and each family member's view of the therapist's alliance with the other family members.

Family therapists tend to take a more assertive and active role in therapy than do most individual therapists. When family members make positive changes in therapy, the changes tend to cross the dimensions of cognitive, affective, and behavioral change. The effectiveness of a family therapy session is influenced by the family's level of cooperation and family members' active participation in the problem-solving process.

Balancing the needs of multiple family members and working in the best interest of the family system can be challenging. What may be in one family member's best interest may not be in the best interest of another family member, nor is it necessarily in the best interest of the entire family.

Further research is needed to understand to the role of culture in families and the diversity of family forms: What may be aberrant in one cultural context may be normative in another. Increasing attention to culture in family therapy has led to renewed attention to the vital importance of context in understanding and working with families.

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See also Contextual Influences on Relationships; Couple Therapy; Families, Definitions and Typologies; Family Data, Analysis of; Family Functioning; Family Life Cycle; Family Therapy for Adult Psychopathology; Family Therapy for Noncompliance in Children and Adolescents

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FAMILY THERAPY FOR ADHD IN CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS

Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, or ADHD, is one of the most common behavioral disorders of childhood. Once thought to be a disorder of childhood that could be “outgrown,” modern research has indicated that for most children, symptoms are likely to continue into adolescence, possibly increasing in severity. For some, symptoms will continue into adulthood. Intuition suggests that any chronic problem of health or behavior experienced by a child possesses potential to negatively affect immediate family members.

With ADHD, however, family members carry a greater burden. They are at the fore in experiencing the problems and stress of the disorder, and the individual characteristics and response patterns of family members, particularly parents, may influence the intensity of symptoms. Thus, parenting behavior or style might not *cause* ADHD, but family members can significantly influence the severity of ADHD symptoms over time. Additionally, parents and family members have been shown to fill a significant role in the successful treatment of ADHD. This entry provides a brief review of ADHD diagnostic criteria, prevalence rates, comorbid concerns, and prevailing theory regarding the cause of ADHD as a premise for considering the importance of family involvement in treatment of the ADHD child. The final portion of the entry summarizes specific therapeutic roles often assigned to parents as a component of treatment for ADHD.

Diagnosis, Prevalence, and Comorbid Concerns

Diagnostic criteria for ADHD are outlined in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, fourth edition, text revision (DSM-IV-TR). ADHD criteria are largely based on empirical data although the consensus among most experts is that diagnostic refinement is necessary. Evidence of chronic, maladaptive, and developmentally inappropriate levels of inattention (e.g., failure to attend to details, difficulty sustaining attention) and hyperactive (e.g., constantly moving or fidgety) or impulsive (e.g., impatient, interrupting, reactive) behavior must be present for a diagnosis to be made. Such behaviors must be present across settings and have persisted since childhood. Finally, impairment must negatively affect function within typical childhood domains and cannot result from an alternative mental disorder.

Prevalence rates of ADHD vary dramatically depending on measurement and sampling. However, when rigorous methods are employed, prevalence estimates typically fall between 3 and 6 percent. Prevalence rates vary by age and sex of the child with younger male children exhibiting the highest rates.

Additional clinical concerns often occur comorbidly with ADHD. Rates of comorbidity vary

significantly depending on the methods employed across studies. Estimates in excess of 50 percent are common and have been observed to be as high as 80 percent. The other disruptive behavior disorders of childhood, conduct disorder and oppositional defiant disorder, are most commonly observed comorbidly. However, there is elevated risk that children with ADHD will also develop mood or anxiety disorders. The issue of comorbidity is significant because parental involvement in treatment becomes paramount when additional disorders are present.

Causes

An exact cause of ADHD has not been identified, and this is an area of fervent research. A 1998 National Institutes of Health (NIH) conference of ADHD experts concluded that despite clear links between neurobiological systems and the behaviors typical of ADHD, no clear causal explanation could be specified. Nonetheless, genetic and biological explanatory theories have been advanced and, increasingly, empirical data supports a significant, if not causal, role of biological mechanisms.

Among biologically based theories, none is more prominent than the theory forwarded by Russell Barkley. Barkley argues that ADHD reflects the child's failed ability to self-regulate, or maintain internal control over behavior. This failed ability reflects disruption of specific executive functions of the brain that require behavioral inhibition as the base from which they operate (e.g., the ability to disrupt an ongoing motor response given negative feedback). Thus, a developmental delay in behavioral inhibition sets the stage for subsequent cognitive processes to go awry.

Although ADHD may be best accounted for by genetic and neurobiological factors, inconsistent findings across these domains have led many to conclude that ADHD may result from multiple causal pathways that give rise to the varied symptom presentation observed among children.

Family Involvement in Treatment

Family involvement, usually meaning parents, is supported by multiple sources of data and is

logically consistent with current understanding of the disorder. In practice, parent involvement often takes the form of traditional behavioral parent training (BPT), which emphasizes the parent's role in managing the home environment and effectively responding to childhood misbehavior. In contrast, treatment strategies that emphasize participation of all family members have not been endorsed as a recommended practice guideline and there is a relative dearth of research examining their effectiveness in treatment of ADHD. Nonetheless, logical arguments can be made for involving all family members at certain points during treatment.

A substantial body of research has established BPT as effective in the treatment of disruptive behavior disorders. However, in the case of ADHD, questions have arisen regarding the degree to which treatment gains maintain across settings and their effectiveness in addressing the core symptoms of ADHD relative to the use of medication. Such concerns have resulted in clinical trials to assess the relative effectiveness of independent and combined or multimodal approaches to treatment. To date, the most authoritative clinical trial has been conducted by the National Institute of Mental Health and is referred to as the Multimodal Treatment Study of ADHD. Results from studies of this type have indicated that medications, parent training, and combined treatments are effective for ADHD children. Medications seem to be most effective in addressing the core symptoms (impulsivity, hyperactivity, inattention) of ADHD. In contrast, parent training appears to be less effective in addressing core symptoms, yet advantageous in that comorbid behavioral concerns improve. Parents also express greater satisfaction with this approach. These results have led many to conclude that multimodal treatments that combine medication management and BPT may be optimal.

Additional support for parent training as an effective treatment for ADHD has been attained from research designed to assess which forms of psychotherapy are most effective for children and the degree to which family involvement in therapy facilitates positive treatment outcomes. Across studies, this research has revealed that parental involvement is essential and that therapies that emphasize behavioral management strategies tend to be more effective, especially for disruptive behavior disorders.

To summarize, there is widespread acknowledgment that family members, especially parents, should be involved in the treatment of ADHD. Accordingly, the American Psychological Association has included BPT on its published list of evidence-based treatments for ADHD. Similarly, the American Academy of Pediatrics has included behavior therapy, implemented by parents, as a critical component of their clinical practice guidelines in the treatment of ADHD. An additional conclusion drawn from the NIH consensus conference on ADHD was that multimodal treatment of ADHD is an empirically supported practice that likely possesses merit beyond the use of medication alone.

Therapeutic Roles

Not all approaches to BPT or multimodal therapy require family members to fill identical roles. Variability may reflect differences in the conceptualization of treatment and the emphasis of treatment (e.g., problem-solving versus behavior management).

Available data implicate a genetic contribution to the development of ADHD. Thus, in some families, parents or siblings may also struggle with ADHD or comorbid problems and may need treatment. At a minimum, ADHD is likely to alter family interaction styles and cause burdensome familial stress. Parental involvement in therapy can lead to the development of parenting skills and strategies that will minimize stress in the home environment and aid parents in properly caring for themselves. Traditional family therapy may also be a method for securing valuable treatment for multiple family members and has been incorporated in some multimodal treatments that hold promise in ADHD treatment.

Parents also can facilitate treatment success by providing external prompts and guides that encourage the child's engagement in acts of behavioral inhibition. In this sense, parents may cue a child's appropriate response in a challenging situation and reinforce appropriate behavioral display, thereby increasing the likelihood of similar behavior over time. Additionally, parents can engage the child across settings, which is hypothesized to promote generalization of the child's adaptive behavior.

Education regarding the cause, nature, and prognosis of ADHD is an important aspect of treatment. Participation in learning about ADHD is a relatively universal role of family members during treatment. Through this process, parents and siblings can become advocates for the child with ADHD, misconceptions of the disorder can be corrected, and family members are able to experience a degree of empowerment as understanding is enhanced and problem behavior becomes more predictable.

Participating in BPT is a common role of parents in therapy and involves teaching parents to understand and manage problem behavior that is often pronounced and disruptive among ADHD children. Parents are (a) trained to manage their attention carefully and use BPT strategically to shape childhood behavior, (b) encouraged to utilize developmentally appropriate commands and implement positive and negative consequences (e.g., praise, time-out) in relation to compliance, (c) provided information regarding the effective use of home rules, and (d) instructed in maintaining a home token economy (a system of behavior modification based on the principles of operant conditioning that is carried out by family members at home), in managing problem behavior in community settings, and in partnering with school administrators to address issues related to homework and school performance. Length of treatment within a BPT framework varies but usually requires between 10 to 20 hours of direct therapeutic contact. Therapy is typically implemented in a stepwise fashion wherein parents attend weekly therapy sessions, are trained to implement core strategies within the home environment, and are provided ample opportunity for practice via role play and feedback within sessions. Parents then implement strategies within the home environment between sessions. In most instances, weekly data are collected to monitor treatment progress and therapy typically concludes when core behavior management skills have been implemented and child behavior has markedly improved.

It is not uncommon for older children and adolescents with ADHD to exhibit social skill deficits and experience social isolation. Social skills training is a common treatment target for older youth and may represent an opportunity for family participation in therapy. As a result of participation, parents and siblings are able to model appropriate

social skills in home environments and can directly engage the target youth in social skills practice and feedback outside of therapy sessions to promote generalization. Similarly, family members may be trained in methods of effective communication and may gain experience in implementing useful problem-solving strategies. For families of adolescent youth with ADHD, such strategies may be crucial for minimizing stress and parent-child conflict while facilitating solution-oriented interactions. Indeed, in the absence of family involvement in the treatment of ADHD, negative effects of the disorder would likely be compounded as family members would remain at risk for misunderstanding and reacting in an unhelpful or ineffective manner.

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See also Behavioral Parent Training; Family Therapy for Noncompliance in Children and Adolescents; Parenting; Psychopathology, Genetic Transmission of; Psychopathology, Influence on Family Members

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FAMILY THERAPY FOR ADULT PSYCHOPATHOLOGY

Psychiatric disorders, like physical illnesses, can have a profound effect on the family, and conversely, family support can have a major impact on the course and outcome of both types of disorders. Family therapy for adult psychopathology describes the use of psychotherapeutic treatments focused on the entire family, rather than just on the individual, to improve the management and outcome of a mental illness in one or more of its members. This entry begins with a brief history of early theories of mental illness that suggested the family played a key role in the cause of psychiatric disorders. Next, the emergence of the stress-vulnerability theory of psychiatric disorders is described, which posits that the onset and course of psychiatric disorders is the result of a dynamic interplay between biological factors, individual psychological factors, and the environment, including the family. This more modern and broadly accepted model provides a general framework for understanding the role of the family in the treatment and management of psychiatric disorders. The goals of family therapy in the treatment of mental illness, based on the stress-vulnerability model, are described. Finally, methods and approaches to working with families are described, concluding with a description of a typical family therapy session.

The term *family therapy* has been used by some to refer to psychotherapeutic approaches designed mainly to explore family dynamics and develop insight into the nature of their problems and by others to refer to a broader variety of treatments. This entry adopts a broader definition of *family therapy* to include a wide range of treatment methods, including providing family members with information about psychiatric illness (or education), teaching skills for reducing stress in the family and improving the quality of communication, addressing conflict between members, involving family members in the treatment of a member's psychiatric disorder, and helping individuals develop insight into issues such as relationship problems and the effects of mental illness on family dynamics.

Brief History of Family Therapy for Psychiatric Disorders

It has been known for more than 100 years that most psychiatric illnesses “run in families”; that is, someone with a mental illness is more likely to have a similarly afflicted relative than is another person with no such illness. In addition, it has long been recognized that families who have a member with a psychiatric disorder often have dysfunctional and stressful relationships. These two observations were pivotal in leading to early theories that proposed mental illnesses were the product of disturbed family interactions and relationships. For example, one influential theory hypothesized that schizophrenia was the result of aberrant childrearing by a “schizophrenogenic mother,” and a related theory speculated that contradictory messages from parents to a child led to an impasse or “double-bind” for which no rational solution existed, thus leading to psychosis and schizophrenia.

Based on theories that disturbed family relationships were at the root of adult psychopathology, early forms of family therapy sought to address relationship problems by fostering insight and making previously covert beliefs and power structures more explicit. It was hypothesized that helping family members develop insight into these problems would enable members to correct them and thereby eliminate the psychiatric illness.

Central to these approaches to family therapy was the assumption that the disturbed behavior and functioning of a member diagnosed with the “mental illness” reflected underlying problems in the family, rather than simple pathology in the individual himself or herself. Thus, these approaches targeted the whole family, rather than the individual with a psychiatric disorder. Although the ill member was conceptualized as “the identified patient,” the whole family was actually understood to be ill. For example, using a family systems approach, the therapist may prompt a family to recognize that the parents have become distant from each other and have substituted close relationships with their children to meet the parents’ emotional needs. As they grew into adolescence and adulthood, the children may have experienced the tension of striving for independence while not wanting to leave their parents unsupported. Within a family systems approach, this tension may have led to any of the psychiatric illnesses that often develop in late adolescence or early adulthood (depression, substance use, schizophrenia, eating disorders), and it is thought that these may improve if the parents become closer again and rely less on their children to meet their emotional needs.

Although family therapy models based on these theories dominated until the 1960s and 1970s, a confluence of factors led to a gradual shift in how mental health professionals conceptualize the role of families. First, growing evidence indicated that many psychiatric disorders have a biological basis, with vulnerability to specific disorders often passed down through genetic transmission, although it was also understood that environmental factors played a role in the specific expression of the underlying genetic defect. Research showed that the biological children of a mother with a mental illness were at increased risk for developing that illness, even if they were reared by an adoptive mother. These findings provided an alternative explanation for the observation that psychiatric disorders tend to aggregate in families. Other findings bolstered the hypothesis that biology, especially prenatal and natal factors, played an important role in the development of psychiatric disorders. For example, in research conducted on the survivors of World War II, it was found that the children of mothers who experienced severe distress (perhaps because of lack of food or death of a partner) during the second

trimester of pregnancy had subsequent higher rates of psychiatric illness than do those who experienced this stress in the first or third trimester. The unique impact of distress in the second trimester was thought to be because this is when the baby’s brain is developing the most. Similarly, in the 1950s and 1960s, a range of different psychotropic medications were discovered to reduce or eliminate some of the most severe symptoms of psychiatric disorders, including psychotic symptoms (e.g., delusions, hallucinations), depression, anxiety, and severe mood swings. The dramatic effects of these medications on psychiatric symptoms suggested biology played a significant role in the development and maintenance of many psychiatric disorders.

As more was learned about the biological nature of mental illness and its interactions with the environment, mental health professionals began to shift from viewing the family as a culprit toward seeing relatives as potential allies in treating psychiatric disorders. One key to this change in approach was the emergence of the stress-vulnerability model of psychiatric disorders, which provided a new conceptualization of the role of the family in the treatment of psychiatric disorders. This theory is broad enough to encompass most serious psychiatric disorders and is briefly described in the following section.

Stress-Vulnerability Model of Psychiatric Disorders

The stress-vulnerability model proposes that the onset and course of psychiatric disorders is determined by a combination of biological vulnerability and environmental stress. According to the model, biological vulnerability to a specific mental illness is a necessary condition for someone to develop that disorder, with vulnerability being determined by a combination of genetic and other biological factors, such as obstetric complications. Biological vulnerability interacts with stress in the individual’s environment to increase the chances that he or she will develop a psychiatric disorder and to worsen the course of the disorder. Biological vulnerability can be reduced by medications or worsened by substance abuse. Furthermore, substance abuse can lessen the protective effects of medication on vulnerability.

Just as biological vulnerability can be modified, so can absolute levels of stress, as well as sensitivity to stress. High levels of conflict and stress can worsen outcomes (e.g., frequent fighting in the home, criticism of the ill person). However, the effects of stress on vulnerability can be reduced by increasing social support from family members and others, as well as by enhancing the individual's skills for coping with stress and symptoms and for achieving personal life goals.

Goals of Family Therapy

The stress-vulnerability model points to a variety of ways to improve the outcomes of serious psychiatric illnesses, and many of these involve the family. Family therapy teaches the family to reduce biological vulnerability and stress, while increasing social support and coping. Common goals of family therapy across different psychiatric disorders are described in the following sections.

Stress Reduction

Psychiatric disorders are characterized by a combination of abnormal and dysfunctional feelings, thoughts, and behaviors and their negative effects on relationships, self-care, and functioning at work or school or as a parent. The social nature of psychiatric disorders, combined with the natural interdependence and caring among family members, means that when mental illness develops in one person, most other members of the family are affected. Family members may be frightened, bewildered, frustrated, angry, or sad when their loved one begins to act and function differently. The illness may require relatives to attend to the ill family member's needs, to compensate for lost roles the person used to play in the family, such as worker or homemaker, and to divert time and money toward helping the relative. Thus, stress in relatives of people with a mental illness is common, which can increase stress on the person with the illness and inadvertently worsen the psychiatric symptoms and increase the likelihood of relapses. Reducing stress through family therapy can improve everyone's quality of life, as well as the course of the psychiatric disorder.

Improving Adherence to Recommended Treatments

A wide range of interventions is effective for the treatment of different psychiatric disorders, including medications, individual or group therapy, and psychiatric rehabilitation approaches such as supported employment and social skills training. People with these disorders who do not take their medication regularly or fail to develop coping skills are prone to frequent symptom relapses and psychiatric hospitalizations, which can be upsetting and disruptive to everyone in the family. By understanding what treatments are recommended for the relative's mental illness, family members can support the person's adherence to treatment, and receive the benefits of fewer symptoms and better functioning.

Minimizing Alcohol and Drug Use

Alcohol and drug abuse and dependence are common problems in the adult population, affecting about 15 percent of people over their lifetimes. Among people with a psychiatric disorder, rates of substance abuse and dependence are much higher, typically ranging between 25 and 50 percent over the lifetime. The increased rate of substance use problems in people with a mental illness is partly caused by their biological vulnerability to the psychiatric disorder, which makes them more sensitive to the effects of even modest amounts of substance use. In addition, people may attempt to cope with or escape their mental health problems by using substances. Family therapy aimed at reducing substance use and promoting sobriety in the person with mental illness can improve the management of the disorder and the person's psychosocial functioning.

Fostering the Development of Coping Skills

For people with a psychiatric disorder, effective coping can reduce the impact of stress and persistent symptoms and improve adaptive functioning. Individual and group therapy approaches often focus on helping people with a mental illness improve their coping and social skills. These individuals may also benefit from the support and help of their relatives in learning and practicing new coping skills. A common goal of family therapy is

to facilitate the ability of family members to help a loved one improve his or her coping skills.

Supporting the Individual's Pursuit of Personally Meaningful Goals

Having a mental illness can cause enormous disruptions in an individual's life, and interfere with daily functioning, close relationships, school, and work. Psychiatric disorders are often episodic in their course, with symptoms varying over time in severity, making it difficult to achieve consistent optimal functioning. The chronic nature of psychiatric disorders is often discouraging and demoralizing, leading some people to give up hope for improving their lives and achieving their goals. Illness education for relatives can help them play an invaluable role by believing in their loved one's ability to improve over time, instilling hope for the future, and helping their loved one articulate and pursue personal goals. Family therapy can rally the family around helping a member with mental illness develop a meaningful and rewarding life, even when symptoms persist.

Approaches to Family Therapy

Some family therapy focuses primarily on teaching participants skills and providing information on helping a relative with a mental illness. Other therapies may take a more family-systems approach, helping family members better understand their own family system, how the mental illness has affected it, and how they can better help their relative. Family therapy based on modern and scientifically informed understanding of mental illness has been shown to be effective at improving the course and functioning of individuals with a variety of different psychiatric disorders, including schizophrenia-spectrum disorders, mood disorders (e.g., bipolar disorder, major depression), and anxiety disorders. It is important to clarify what is meant by the term *family* here. In newer models of family therapy, the term applies to both families of origin as well as marital or conjugal-like dyads. In some models, it may also include adult siblings or children of ill persons or even close non-kin relationships (e.g., friends, pastors, 12-step sponsors of self-help groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous).

Family therapy approaches vary in their format, duration of treatment, and the settings in which they can be provided. Usually the patient and relatives attend together. Some approaches have families attend by themselves, but sometimes they attend in groups where they can see how other families successfully meet challenges and obtain support from others. Family therapy programs may be short term, such as several weeks to several months, or longer term, lasting 9 months or more; longer term programs are typically related to better outcomes in serious mental illnesses such as schizophrenia or bipolar disorder. Family therapy can be provided in a local community mental health center, in a psychiatric or general hospital, at a private practice office, or in the family's home.

Although different methods are used in family therapy programs, many approaches include a core set of features designed to help the family facilitate the treatment of the member's mental illness. These key features of most effective programs are briefly described here.

Illness Education

Mental illness is often not recognized and is poorly understood by people, which can lead to blaming the individual for being lazy, selfish, reckless, or undependable. Family therapy programs often seek to legitimize psychiatric disorders as genuine illnesses and to familiarize the family with the characteristic symptoms and principles of treatment. Reducing blame, increasing acceptance of the mental illness, and teaching families about treatment can reduce stress in the family and enlist the support of relatives for the member's participation in treatment.

Collaborative Stance With Treatment Providers

Early approaches to family therapy for psychiatric disorders often led to tension between family members and mental health professionals. Modern approaches aim to develop a collaborative relationship with the family. Such collaboration recognizes that families have much to contribute to helping a loved one manage a mental illness and make progress toward recovery, and that involving relatives in treatment planning and helping a

member follow through on recommended treatments can optimize outcomes. Furthermore, in the absence of collaboration, and lacking understanding of the psychiatric disorder, families may inadvertently undermine a relative's adherence to treatment. The collaborative aspects of family therapy include involving family members in treatment planning, teaching them how to monitor the illness and to develop relapse prevention strategies, providing them with easy access to treatment providers to obtain information and alert providers to significant changes in their relative's disorder, and helping them develop strategies for facilitating their loved one's adherence to recommended treatments, such as taking medication, attending individual/group therapy appointments, participating in psychiatric rehabilitation programs, and following through on therapeutic homework assignments to practice specific skills related to their treatment.

*Focus on the Here-and-Now and Future,
Rather Than on the Past*

The primary emphasis of most newer effective models of family therapy for a psychiatric disorder is on the present and the future, positing that there are limited benefits to dwelling on the past, and that the preponderance of work to be done involves helping the family develop the knowledge and skills to manage the mental illness and promote improved functioning for the relative.

Improving Communication and Problem Solving

All families have to deal with conflicts and problems, and difficulty handling problems effectively can lead to strain, even in the absence of a mental illness. When a close family member has a mental illness, the number of problems often multiplies, increasing stress and tension, and resulting in a breakdown of effective communication and problem-solving skills. This added stress can contribute to relapses of the psychiatric disorder, further worsening the strain on all members. Family therapy programs typically aim at improving the quality of communication between members and their ability to solve problems cooperatively.

Format of a Typical Family Therapy Session

There are many kinds of family therapy. However, a typical 50-minute individual family therapy session, often attended by the patient and two or three relatives, might have the following structure: The session might begin with the therapist inquiring if there had been any emergencies or problems during the week and addressing them, and then asking about completion of any homework assignments (e.g., practice on a communication skill taught the previous week). The therapist and family would then review how family members had used the skills during the week, and each would get a chance to practice (i.e., to "role-play") the skill in the office to ensure he or she could use it well; other family members would give constructive feedback. The therapist would then introduce another skill—perhaps another communication skill or an effective method to do problem solving—and everyone in the family would then practice that skill in the session, with members giving feedback on what each did well or might improve. The therapist would then ask the family to practice the skill at home and might provide homework sheets to record their efforts for review at the next session.

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See also Disabilities, Chronic Illness, and Relationship Functioning; Mental Health and Relationships; Psychopathology, Genetic Transmission of; Psychopathology, Influence on Family Members; Systems Theories

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FAMILY THERAPY FOR NONCOMPLIANCE IN CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS

Noncompliance (NC) is generally defined as a child's failure to follow directions, instructions, or commands and reflects disregard toward authority figures. In research contexts, NC is operationalized using specific details that promote reliable measurement (e.g., the failure to initiate an appropriate or expected response within 5 seconds following a command). In fact, there are many different forms of NC (e.g., NC to commands, NC with rules).

NC is a relative term that must be considered within a developmental context and requires that *compliance* is possible. For example, the absence of compliance with instruction from a 1-year-old child is rarely viewed as noncompliance and is qualitatively different than the response of a 2-year-old child who says "no" when told to do something he or she prefers not to do. However, each describes a possible outcome when considering the defining characteristics of early childhood developmental processes (e.g., emerging verbal ability, establishing identity, display of self-expression, emerging autonomy) relative to the complexity of the command (e.g., use of familiar terms, simple, direct, meaningful).

NC becomes a behavioral concern with clinical implications when it occurs (a) outside of expected developmental stages, (b) with significant frequency, or (c) when it is experienced as unmanageable. In these circumstances, NC may be viewed as atypical.

Certain types of NC, direct (blatant acts of defiance accompanied by anger) and passive (ignoring), are of particular concern because they may reflect limited social development and are predictive of later disruptive behavior problems. Atypical NC has been referenced in the research literature as a *keystone* behavior in the development of disruptive behavior disorders because it is a stable, behavioral precursor of emerging antisocial behavior. Within this entry, NC is considered from a diagnostic perspective and prevalence rates and comorbid concerns are briefly reviewed. Hypothesized causes of atypical NC are considered along with the importance of family involvement in its management. Finally, the therapeutic roles of family members are considered within the context of evidence-based approaches to treatment.

Diagnosis, Prevalence, and Comorbid Concerns

NC is a negative behavior often observed among children and is most prevalent during preschool years. In fact, disruptive behaviors (e.g., noncompliance, tantrums, sibling conflict) are the most common concerns voiced by parents to pediatricians during pediatric primary care clinic visits and persist as the most frequent referral concern among older children referred for mental health services.

Research suggests that a substantial portion of youth who display chronic and severe disruptive behavior during later childhood and adolescence also displayed significant behavior problems during early childhood. This has lent empirical support to the notion that early, chronic, disruptive behaviors (e.g., NC) may be developmental precursors of subsequent antisocial behavior.

Most children exhibit occasional NC. It has been reported that 50 percent of parents of children (ages 4–7) in nonclinical samples indicate that disobedience is a problem in the home setting, but 85 percent of parents of clinic-referred children (age 4–7) indicated that NC is a concern. There is little disparity across nonreferred and referred samples of preschoolers, with nearly 60 percent of all children displaying disobedience at least occasionally. However, there is a decided shift among school-age children: Approximately only 40 percent of nonreferred children and nearly 75 percent

of referred children continue to display problems with disobedience.

Most children exhibit at least occasional NC. Research has also estimated *how often* children who exhibit NC do so. Nonclinical samples of preschool children have been observed to be non-compliant to nearly 40 percent of parental commands whereas clinic-referred pre-school children fail to comply at a rate of nearly 60 percent. In sum, it appears that most young children display NC as a response to approximately half of appropriately delivered commands. Further, higher rates of NC are displayed by clinic-referred children.

NC is a behavior with which many parents must contend. Recall that atypical NC (e.g., developmentally inappropriate, frequent displayed, experienced as unmanageable) is more likely to trigger clinical concern and may be the primary target of clinical intervention but does not function as the independent basis of formal diagnosis. The primary comorbid concerns associated with NC are additional disruptive behaviors (e.g., tantrums, verbal aggression). Formal diagnosis of a disruptive behavior disorder requires clustering of multiple disruptive problems within a limited timeframe.

The *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* specifies criteria for the primary disruptive behavior disorders of childhood, including oppositional defiant disorder (ODD). NC is the prominent feature of ODD, making this the likely diagnosis when atypical NC is the primary clinical complaint. ODD is defined as a consistent pattern of negativity, hostility, or defiance directed toward authority figures such as parents and teachers. Specific diagnostic criteria require that at least four of eight problematic behaviors be present during a 6-month period. Primary behaviors to be considered include loss of temper, arguing with adults, refusing to comply with adult requests, deliberately annoying others, blaming others for one's mistakes, being easily annoyed by others, displaying anger or resentment toward others, and engaging in spiteful or vindictive behavior. In addition to these concerns, impairment (typically social or academic) must be present and problem behavior cannot be better accounted for by some other psychological problem. ODD is most commonly observed among younger children with prevalence rate estimates observed to range from 2 percent to as high as 15 percent.

Causes

The relatively common display of NC during early childhood appears to be closely linked to critical aspects of development. NC is likely to be observed within the first 2 years of life and has been observed to peak in frequency around the third year of life. Subsequently, rates of NC decline, and this is thought to be linked to the child's cognitive (e.g., problem-solving ability, verbal competence) and social (e.g., awareness of others, emotion regulation) development but is undoubtedly also influenced by environmental response (e.g., reactions of siblings and parents).

Evidence has accumulated suggesting that genetic inheritance may contribute to the display of NC. Child temperament (e.g., stable, seemingly reflexive behaviors exhibited in response to environmental stimuli), as an expression of genetic influence, may mediate the display of atypical NC. The exact contribution of temperament to the display of NC remains unclear but behaviors associated with specific temperamental styles (e.g., aggression, emotional reactivity, resistance to being controlled by others) may be involved.

As mentioned previously, NC has been described as a keystone behavior in the development of childhood antisocial behavior. A prominent theory, termed the *coercive model*, posits that significant disruptive behavior problems develop as a result of enduring chronic, negative, and intense parent-child interactions wherein each attempts to coerce or control the other and is reinforced for doing so. The model asserts that the onset of these negative interactions is linked to the child's display of typical misbehavior (e.g., noncompliance during preschool years) that parents fail to manage effectively. What begins with ineffective interactions related to something as simple as NC may develop into a display of chronic disruptive behavior. Within this model, a number of risk factors have been identified (e.g., child temperament, parent psychopathology, family discord, limited attachment), and it is hypothesized that the combination of a subset of these along with problem behavior (e.g., NC) and ineffective parental response yields a pattern of future disruptive behavior problems.

Family Involvement in Treatment

NC may be the sole target of treatment; however, it is more likely to be part of a cluster of behavioral concerns related to the diagnosis of ODD. Nonetheless, NC is a primary target of treatment given its hypothesized prominence in the eventual development of behavioral concerns. The most effective treatments for ODD align closely with the coercive model that was described previously and are designed to directly target parenting skill deficits. Thus, parents and the target child are primarily involved in treatment, although parents are encouraged to incorporate siblings as warranted. Treatment is generally referred to as behavioral parent training (BPT), and although there are multiple types of BPT programs, they overlap considerably in their approach to treatment. The primary goal of BPT is to enhance parent understanding of disruptive behavior (e.g., NC, tantrums, aggression) and to promote mastery in implementing basic behavioral management skills within the home environment. BPT is considered to be a “best practice” in the treatment of ODD and is usually offered as the first line of treatment. Data indicate that BPT is more effective than a variety of other therapies (e.g., parent or child individual psychotherapy, play therapy) in treating ODD.

The typical format of BPT requires attendance and participation of parents and the target child. Both parents may not be required to attend, although this is usually strongly encouraged. Therapy sessions are typically 1 to 2 hours in length and families are asked to attend anywhere from 6 to 20 sessions. Treatment progress is carefully monitored and is a primary factor determining the duration of therapy. A typical session involves a review of treatment progress and completion of therapeutic homework since the last session; direct instruction with parents in the use of a target parenting skill; and within-session application of the skill via a combination of modeling, role-playing, and direct interaction with the target child. Therapeutic homework typically involves home and community implementation of the target skill. For example, parents may be coached to deliver effective commands as a skill that promotes compliance. As homework, parents would then be expected to practice and record their success in using this skill within the home environment.

Therapeutic Roles

Within BPT, the primary therapeutic role of parents is that of *primary treatment provider*. BPT acknowledges that few measurable changes in parent or child behavior are actually achieved within therapy sessions. Rather, treatment gains are achieved as parents implement effective skills and strategies with consistency, within natural living environments. Thus, parents manage and implement the treatment, and the therapist provides training and support for the parents.

As the primary treatment agent, parents are taught to fill key parenting roles. These roles include (a) monitoring their child’s behavior across settings to detect instances of appropriate and inappropriate responding, (b) using positive consequences (e.g., praise, attention, tangible rewards) to strategically encourage prosocial behavior, (c) using positive and negative consequences (e.g., timeout, privilege loss) to alter environmental contingencies and teach new behavior, and (d) engaging in family-based problem solving as needed, while (e) maintaining positive parental involvement (e.g., developing family traditions, scheduling family activities, participating in the child’s extracurricular activities) over time.

Family dysfunction (e.g., parental psychopathology, marital dissatisfaction/conflict, low socioeconomic status) yields increased risk that a child will develop atypical NC or drop out of treatment prematurely. However, addressing such familial concerns is beyond the scope of BPT. Consequently, BPT may be combined with various other treatment strategies in an approach that is termed *behavioral family therapy* (BFT). Within BFT, parents and siblings may fill expanded treatment roles that directly benefit the target child and the family system. For example, a parent may participate in individual psychotherapy to address a personal addiction, parents may participate in marital counseling to improve aspects of their relationship, or parents and siblings may become involved in accessing community resources to relieve specific family burdens (e.g., participating in afterschool study programs, using public mass transportation).

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See also Behavioral Parent Training; Parenting; Psychopathology, Genetic Transmission of; Psychopathology, Influence on Family Members

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FAMILY THERAPY FOR SUBSTANCE ABUSE IN ADOLESCENTS

Adolescent substance abuse research has emerged from the shadows of the adult drug abuse field and entered a new developmental stage. Policymakers, treatment providers, and funding agencies now recognize this scientific area for its uniqueness, theory base, clinical model diversity, and accumulating body of basic and applied research. These constituencies have become more interested than ever in supporting adolescent substance abuse research. However, as is the case with all new developmental periods, this one has unique risks, opportunities, and challenges. This entry discusses family therapy—one of the most exciting advances in the adolescent drug abuse specialty.

New Conceptual Approach to Teen Drug Problems

Steady professional, lay public, and media interest has been fueled by the continuing problem of

adolescent substance abuse and related difficulties, by its far-reaching public health implications, and by a growing awareness that adolescent drug problems are best understood as a set of complex, multilevel behaviors. Simultaneously occurring problems—interpersonal difficulties, family, school, and legal problems—interact, and in clinical samples are more often the norm than the exception. As a heterogeneous disorder, there are multiple pathways to drug taking and drug abuse, and it has multiple short-term and longer term consequences for interference in development as well, involving many aspects of adolescent functioning. Basic science advances in nosology, classification, assessment, and life-span human development have enhanced treatment, but made it more complex to do. The challenges for teaching this kind of therapy and transferring it to nonresearch settings are just beginning to be recognized.

The use of developmental knowledge to guide understanding of adolescent problem behaviors and adolescent substance abuse has been transformative. Today, clinicians and researchers base their work on specific developmental principles derived from developmental psychology and psychopathology. The importance of parental monitoring in the context of the ongoing and emotionally involved and supportive parent-teen relationship, the growing influence of peers throughout the adolescent years, and how this fact, among other developments, necessitates a renegotiation of the parent-adolescent relationship are examples of essential knowledge for clinicians. The variety of new, clinically useful knowledge that has been developed is impressive. In addition to the systems level content just mentioned, researchers have established that individual level factors, including difficulties in one's assumptions about the unharfulness of drug use or problems of impulsivity and sensation seeking, interact synergistically with familial and environmental circumstances to increase a teen's risk of developing drug problems. Research reveals a simple and rather daunting equation—as the number of risk factors increases, the probability of a teen developing drug and other problems increases as well.

These types of knowledge-building advances in the basic science of adolescent substance abuse and related problem behaviors have established a foundation for significant changes in treatment

development and research. Although the policy implications of these changes have yet to be fully realized, contemporary treatments for substance abusing teens, particularly family-based treatments, differ on many dimensions from previous forms of intervention. Beyond the parameters of today's treatments being different from earlier periods, however, the interventions are more effective as well. Whether one considers engagement or retention rates, the expanded capacity to decrease or eliminate drug taking or behavior problems, how contemporary treatments produce demonstrable increases in protective factors in the teen's and family's life (i.e., putative change mechanisms such as changes in family functioning, increased bonding to school, decreased affiliation with drug-using peers), or the extent to which new interventions are disseminated widely through novel and expanded communication and institutional outlets, contemporary approaches are superior to earlier generation models.

Clinical Methods Target Known Determinants of Drug Use and Problem Behavior

Contemporary adolescent treatments target research-derived, well-defined, and in most cases easily assessable risk factors. Behaviors and contextual circumstances known to be related to the development and maintenance of drug and other problems include such things as the quality of the parent-teen relationship, authoritarian parenting practices, conflict or emotional disconnection in the day-to-day family environment, and the parents' own history of and current substance use, mental health functioning, and criminal justice involvement. These aspects of the teen's proximal social ecology are important to all aspects of youth development and everyday functioning, as well as to atypical development, so these dimensions are prime intervention targets in changing a teen's drug taking. How knowledge about the most desirable treatment targets is used in clinical work pertains to the intervener's abilities, to the approach followed, and to the specificity of the protocols used within that approach to address the target areas. For example, empirically based family therapy models focus on parenting practices, a parent's psychological functioning, and the teen's individual characteristics and developmental deficits.

Family therapy models intervene differentially according to the stage of treatment. The initial individual meetings with a parent focus on motivating that adult to get more involved in the child's life because the teen's development is off track, and long-term well-being is in question. In therapy's second (i.e., middle) stage, clinicians teach, coach, and actively shape a parent's responses to the teen's problems in individual sessions and in meetings with the parent and youth together. Playing both sides of the interaction, clinicians help teens speak their minds and show aspects of themselves to their parents that are not usually experienced by the parents or others inside the family.

Sessions may happen in the home, in the clinic, in the waiting room at court, in the visitor's area of the juvenile detention center, or in a spare room at the school. Therapists use the structural family therapy method called *enactment* to decentralize themselves from family interviews and encourage family members to face each other, literally and figuratively, and discuss important but touchy relationship topics and recent unsettling events. These methods have in-session and longer term goals. The desired proximal outcome may be several things—to develop and practice a new way of relating, resolve past and current conflict, build a foundation for more adaptive future relating and functioning, emotional experiencing, or expand the behavioral range or repertoire in these developmentally important but underfunctioning family relationships. Success in using these methods is fundamental to overall clinical success in family therapy. Changing the individual functioning of a parent and the parent-teen relationship are instrumental to altering the youth's drug taking and other problem behaviors. Although studies have not yet established family therapy's contraindications, clinical situations where families are not physically available perhaps because they live in other countries or other states may represent a contraindication. At the same time, some family therapists have developed systemic therapies that use family therapy principles with individuals and that do not require the physical presence of the family.

Typical Characteristics of Family Therapy Models

Reflecting on these examples alone, one can see how today's treatments have become more

comprehensive. This reflects a growing belief in the field that multicomponent treatments are needed to address interconnected impairment areas in the lives of clinically referred teens. But the clinical usefulness of the risk factor research base is only one element in the evolution of adolescent drug abuse treatments. Today's adolescent treatment models also incorporate knowledge about protective factors. Protective factors are those characteristics and circumstances that combat the harmful and development-detouring processes involved in teen drug abuse. Such factors include success in and connection to school, affiliation with nonusing peers, healthy family relations, and the development-facilitating role of prosocial recreational activities (and the relationships that occur with these activities). Therapy is more than problem removal. Knowledge about teen and family development teaches therapists what to target for reduction or removal, as well as what to target for growth and enhancement. Clinicians help problem solving to improve, but also facilitate positive factors and protective forces in the youth's and family's life. Helping a teen to secure a proper school placement, get free of the juvenile justice system, develop interests in and find new prosocial, fun, non-drug-related activities are examples of the practical activity orientation within most family therapies, as well as intervention foci that "grow" protection in as many areas as possible of the teen's life.

How treatment achieves its effects is a topic of intense and growing interest. And in this regard, process research has illuminated therapy's interior. For example, therapy process studies have revealed the instrumental role played by changes in parent functioning, such as increases in parenting competencies, in determining youth outcomes. Studies have underscored the importance of the contribution of multiple therapeutic alliances in family therapy (vs. individual therapy, where there is only one alliance: therapist-individual client) to engagement and bottom-line outcome. In family therapy, clinicians must develop working relationships with the parent and the individual adolescent, as well as with those outside of the family who are relevant to various corners of the teen's world. This includes school personnel—a vice principal or special education teacher, for example—or relevant people in the juvenile justice system, such as

a probation officer or juvenile court judge. Other process studies have clarified the nature of in-session conflict between family members, charted this conflict, and characterized it by its content, historical roots, and capacity to change when subjected to well-defined and protocol-directed therapist techniques.

Examples of Treatment Outcomes

Large-scale evaluation studies reveal that on average, outpatient treatment outcomes have improved during the past decade. Unfortunately, dropout rates are still unacceptably high, and drug-use relapse, as is the case with adults, is not uncommon. One recent U.S. national-level study found that only 27 percent of youth completed the recommended (by the program director) 3-month (once weekly) treatment dose. Although complete abstinence from alcohol and illicit drugs is the benchmark used most often in determining whether a teen has relapsed during or after treatment, adolescent treatment outcome study reviews document relatively low rates of continuous abstinence following treatment. One review noted that the average rate of continuous abstinence following treatment was 38 percent (range: 30–55 percent) at 6 months and 32 percent (range: 14–47 percent) at 12 months, and another reported a median of 39 percent abstinence (range: 16–54 percent) at 6 months, and a median of 44 percent abstinence (range: 25–62 percent) at 12 months.

Overall, however, many advances have been made in adolescent drug abuse treatment and research. State-of-the-science treatments change the drug abuse of teens (e.g., more than 50 percent reductions in drug use) and key aspects of the teen's environment (family, connection to school). Treatments can maintain these kind of effects, in many cases for a year or more beyond the termination of relatively short-term (outpatient, once a week, for 4–5 months) therapy programs.

Most studies report family therapy as producing significant reductions in drug use following treatment. In one study examining 30 outpatient programs, average drug usage at discharge decreased to approximately 50 percent of pretreatment levels. Other research reported a 50 percent reduction in average drug usage at 9 months' posttreatment

for adolescents in family therapy groups and for those whose parents attended parent support groups. Family therapy studies also typically report changes in other functional areas of the teen's life, including delinquency (arrests, time spent in out-of-home detention or placement) and mental health problems (internalizing and externalizing problems). A recent influential review found family therapy to be more effective than other forms of nonfamily outpatient treatment (individual therapy, adolescent group therapy, family drug education, or meetings with probation officer) in five of six studies.

Important Current Developments

As is often the case, the more the field learns, the more it needs to know. Clinically referred teens have a harder time benefiting from treatment, although clinicians do not yet know if this is because the treatments are not yet sufficiently complex to intervene in all the necessary ways. Adolescents involved in the juvenile justice system need far-reaching services in addition to the core treatment interventions that typically are provided and that target drug use and other individual and family problems. Individually tailored treatments that are culturally or ethnically sensitive or gender specific exist but are thought to be at an early stage of development. Although evidence indicates that culturally specific therapies can be advantageous in some respects (in treatment engagement, for instance), researchers do not know if these therapies are likely to enhance outcomes (e.g., drug abuse) with diverse subgroups of teens.

Conclusion

Family therapy approaches have been involved in some of the most extensive research of all available adolescent substance abuse therapies. Research reviews and meta-analyses have discussed the comparative superiority of family therapy for adolescent substance abuse. Several approaches have been developed in one or more studies, and some of these treatments have been in use for two and a half decades. New models translate this knowledge into clinical interventions for working with parents, teens, and families,

as well as with the teen's extrafamilial psychosocial ecologies. Interventions target the individual parent and teen (cognitive schemas, emotional expression capacities, communication skills, behavioral range in problem solving, and flexibility, for instance), the family transactional patterns, and also the teen and parent relative to their functioning with and interaction in important systems outside of the family. Rigorous research has established the effectiveness of family therapy for teen drug problems, and current studies are testing this method's transfer potential in diverse clinical settings. This new generation of studies may yield a new level and kind of contribution of the family therapies for adolescent drug abuse to the field.

Howard A. Liddle

See also Assessment of Families; Caregiver Role; Family Relationships in Adolescence; Family Therapy; Friendships in Adolescence; Parent-Adolescent Communication; Substance Use and Abuse in Relationships

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FATAL ATTRACTION

Fatal attraction refers to a relationship process in which a quality that an individual comes to dislike in an intimate partner closely relates to one that was attractive and initially appealing. The disliked quality often appears as an exaggerated form of the originally attractive characteristic. This phenomenon is termed *fatal*, not because it is “deadly” to the involved individuals nor necessarily deadly to the relationship itself. Rather, it foretells a sequence in which the initial attraction unlocks an inevitable progression that ends in disenchantment with a partner. The quality that was initially considered attractive becomes undesirable. Fatal attractions are relatively common in intimate encounters, occurring in between 29 and 67 percent of intimate relationships, depending on the sample and research design. This entry provides common illustrations of fatal attractions, provides a social exchange perspective to fatal attraction, and discusses potential ramifications for relationship dissolution.

Following are illustrations of several common types of fatal attractions that have been documented in empirical studies. In this research, individuals report the qualities about a partner that initially attracted them and then later describe the qualities that they now dislike about that same person.

- *Nice to Fake*: Some people report being attracted to their partners because they viewed them as nice, caring, and sensitive. In fatal attractions of this type, they subsequently report that their partners now are overly nice or even fake. In such cases, it appears that seemingly nice, sensitive, soft-spoken, and caring partners are later viewed as having traits that are the consequence of being *too* nice.
- *Confident to Cocky*: Another common fatal attraction occurs when individuals are attracted to confidence and intelligence in another person, but then report that they now dislike their partner’s egotistical, or overly confident, nature. In such cases, it seems that they reinterpret their spouse or partner’s desirable qualities in a negative manner. Originally, the loved one is seen as exuding confidence, but later that same person is viewed as displaying an ego.

- *Fun to Foolish*: Another type of fatal attraction involves qualities related to fun or humor. Individuals report that their partner’s sense of humor initially attracted them, for example, but now complain that he or she jokes excessively or fails to take other people’s feelings seriously. Having a particularly good sense of humor is both the source of attraction as well as the eventual source of friction in these kinds of relationship.
- *Sexy to Slut*: Fatal attractions also occur with regard to the trait of sexiness. In such instances, respondents report an attraction to the many physical qualities, or sexiness, of their partner. Yet when asked what they now least like about their partner, these same individuals complain that their relationship is based too much on physical aspects and in some cases, even refer to their partner in derogatory terms (e.g., “slut”). The positive trait of sexiness, in other words, appears to be interpreted as overly sexy and lustful at a later time.

One of the main theoretical traditions within the relationship field, social exchange theory, can help explain this process of fatal attraction. According to the perspective of social exchange, individuals attempt to maximize the outcomes they gain from their intimate encounters, and satisfying relationships are apt to be those in which the perceived rewards greatly exceed the costs. Disenchantment with a partner’s characteristics is likely when the costs associated with those qualities exceed the inherent rewards. For example, a committed relationship with a mate who is appealing because of his or her drive, motivation, and success at work is likely to have rewarding aspects, such as the possible prestige and money the person can bring to the couple, as well as the potential for stimulating conversations. Yet if the mate’s ambitions interfere with a couple’s time spent together, and intrude on their emotional and physical intimacy, disenchantment is likely because the relationship becomes high in costs. More generally, individuals are apt to be drawn to the noticeable strengths of another person, and those strengths are often closely related to a person’s weaknesses and therefore entail relationship costs.

According to empirical studies, fatal attractions transpire among U.S. college-age heterosexuals, married couples, lesbians and gays, and those from

various race and ethnic backgrounds. Certain romantic relationships are more susceptible to this phenomenon of fatal attraction than are others, however. According to research, individuals often become irritated with the desirable qualities of their partner that are either dissimilar from their own, extreme, unique, or strange, and they are less apt to be disturbed by the similar, appealing qualities of another.

Furthermore, although certain types of fatal attractions are more common than others, they take place with respect to a wide range of personality characteristics. There are instances of fatal attractions when individuals are drawn to any of the following major personality types in a partner: agreeableness, conscientiousness, extraversion, openness, and emotional stability. No strength, it seems, completely lacks a possible, corresponding weakness.

The findings discussed here have potential ramifications for relationship dissolution. Many accounts of breakups imply that these endings are circumstantial and out of an individual's control. Yet fatal attraction research indicates that for a substantial proportion of couples, people may play an instigative role in the demise of their relationship by selecting as a partner someone whose strengths they will eventually find annoying. The potential battlegrounds for couples are also evident. Common complaints about a mate in couples' disagreements include, for example: a lack of seriousness, domineering ways, or unpredictable and irresponsible behavior. The puzzle, of course, is that these types of grievances about a loved one frequently seem so closely related to the features initially found pleasing. The notion of fatal attraction, therefore, raises the intriguing possibility that such objections about a partner, and related dyadic conflict, may be predictable from the initial stages of a relationship. The findings bring to mind the common adage: "Be careful what you wish for."

Diane Felmlee

See also Disillusionment in Marriage; Dissolution of Relationships; Causes; Falling in Love; Interpersonal Attraction; Lust

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FATHER–CHILD RELATIONSHIPS

This entry discusses father–child relationships, which encompass interactions, thoughts, and emotions between a father and his children across the life span of both. Father–child relationships shape the development and life satisfaction of both fathers and children through direct effects of father–child contacts and through indirect effects such as fathers' economic provisions for children, the quality of the father's relationship with the child's mother, and children's peers' attitudes toward parental authority. The quality, intensity, centrality, and perceived importance of father–child relationships fluctuate as both children and fathers develop and experience changes in other aspects of their lives such as schooling, work, friendships, family formation and dissolution, and coresidence. Father–child relationships have become an area of increased focus in social science research and social policy since the mid-1970s, paralleling rapidly changing norms for gender equity in work and family. Decreases in men's earning power have been accompanied by increasing participation of women in paid work. Public attention to fathering has also been fueled by debates about topics relevant to father–child relationships, such as divorce, single-parent households, teen pregnancy, nonmarital childbearing, responsible fatherhood, and paternal rights.

In developed nations, two paradoxical patterns of father–child relationships have increased concurrently: (1) greater involvement by fathers in the lives of their children and (2) growing prevalence of father absence. These trends are moderately associated with, though not solely determined by, economic status, educational attainment, and ethnicity. Middle- and upper-class fathers are generally expected to have increased involvement with their children in comparison with previous generations. Social norms pressure middle-class fathers to be involved in childcare and education in addition

to playing with children and providing financial support. Mounting evidence indicates that, on average, contemporary middle-class fathers are involved in these activities with their children to a greater degree than their own fathers were. In the lower class, by contrast, there is greater risk for father absence associated with a higher prevalence of multipartner fertility, nonresidential fathering, higher incarceration rates, and frequently shifting household composition. Generally, lower educational attainment is associated with decreased employment opportunity and barriers to providing a living wage in the legitimate marketplace. A significant proportion of fathers below the poverty level engage in illicit activities to provide economically for their families. These latter patterns are associated with increased risk for violence and judicial intervention, placing continued father involvement at risk. These divergent patterns of family life account for the simultaneous trends of greater father involvement and greater father absence. Approximately 1 in 4 children in the United States live in father-absent homes and approximately 1 in 20 live in single-father homes. Most U.S. children now spend a portion of their lives in father-absent homes because of divorce, separation or relationship dissolution, or paternal incarceration, placing increased emphasis on research, intervention, and policies that target nonresidential fathers.

Diversity of Father–Child Relationships

Relationships between fathers and their children vary based on characteristics of fathers, children, and the context of the relationships, creating extensive diversity in kind, quality, frequency, and outcomes of relationships. Father–child relationships are embedded within a complex array of changing factors.

Father–child relationships vary by differences in fathers' life circumstances and roles. Men who are acknowledged as fathers may be the biological father of the child (the procreator) or a social father (e.g., foster father, adoptive father, stepfather, father-figure, mother's current significant other). Fathers may be coresidential or nonresidential with their children, or they may alternate periods of residency and nonresidency. These differing

arrangements result in different patterns of availability and absence. They may share legal custody or not and may share physical custody of their children or not. Fathers may be employed full time or part time or be unemployed. They may be the family's sole economic provider, the primary provider, a coprovider, a minor contributor to the family finances, or an economically nonproviding father. Fathers may be primary caregivers, active coparents, or relatively or completely detached from direct interaction with their children. Fathers may be cohabiting, married, separated, divorced, remarried, or widowed. Paternal race, ethnicity, culture, and subculture represent other dimensions of diversity in the father–child relationship.

Men's developmental maturity and personal resources are another source of variability in father–child relationships. Fathers differ in psychological, social, physical, and spiritual characteristics such as mental health, intelligence, interpersonal skills, physical health, and engagement in faith communities. Fathers of different ages have unique patterns of strengths and weaknesses in personal characteristics. Variety in the timing of the transition to fathering is extensive, and men fathering children during their teen years ("early-timing" fathers) must negotiate a different set of resources and challenges than do men who delay fathering until a later age. Men who become fathers during socially defined "on-time" periods have typically completed more of their education and made further progress in establishing work or career than early-timing fathers. Late-timing fathers tend to have more financial and developmental resources than do either early or on-time fathers, but the transition to fatherhood may entail greater life adjustments for them than for "on-time" fathers. Some men view fathering to be a central or primary role in their lives, but other men view fathering to be secondary or less important than other roles or pursuits. Variety in father–child relationships also may stem from fathers' history with their own fathers and the quality and nature of their relationship with the child's mother. Men who continue in ongoing romantic relationships with their child's mother tend to be more involved with their children over time than do those who do not. These sets of characteristics interrelate with one another and are likely to change with time, influencing continuity or discontinuity of paternal involvement

with children as developmental and other changes impinge on father–child relationships.

Similarly, children’s differing characteristics introduce yet more variability into father–child relationships. Sex of the child, birth order, temperament, personality factors, health, and developmental abilities are a few of the primary factors that influence quality and amount of father–child relationship over time.

Father Involvement

Researchers and policymakers have viewed amounts and qualities of fathers’ involvement with their children as central moderators of father–child relationships and subsequent outcomes. Patterns of father involvement are related to the varied contexts of fathering and are known to be influenced by fathers’ psychological factors (e.g., motivation, the centrality of fathering identity in a man’s overall view of himself, self-confidence), biological factors (e.g., health, substance use, mental health), ecological factors (e.g., economic opportunities, cultural ideologies), public policies (e.g., judicial processes, child support enforcement, welfare reform), and social support (e.g., quality and nature of family relationships and friendship networks, fathers’ relationship history with his own parents).

Though there have been debates regarding the specific components and the best ways to understand and quantify father involvement with children, there is widespread professional agreement that developmentally facilitative “good fathering” is associated with positive outcomes for children, for fathers, for families, and for the communities in which they reside. In contrast, father absence, neglect, or maltreatment is associated with negative child outcomes unless ameliorated by consistent and substantive relationships with other caregivers.

For these reasons, recent social policies have attempted to target increasing the involvement of fathers in their children’s lives. By fostering positive father involvement, such policies may yield developmental benefits for children, fathers, and their families. However, forced compliance that exposes children to negative father–child interactions is likely to be associated with deleterious results.

Documented Differences Related to Father–Child Relationships

Linking father–child relationships to specific documented differences in developmental “outcomes” (e.g., child well-being) is challenging. Such differences are difficult to quantify precisely because the development of children occurs in the context of other relationships (e.g., mother, siblings, extended family, peers, teachers, mentors, clergy) and contexts (e.g., extrafamilial care, schooling, mass media, and cultural scripts) that shape development. To unequivocally demonstrate causal links between particular kinds of father–child relationships and child outcomes, experimental studies would be necessary. For ethical and practical reasons, controlled experiments on father–child relationships are not possible. Further, developmental “outcomes” are best thought of as snapshots of functioning at a particular time and as subject to measurement challenges and subsequent change. Nonetheless, a confluence of research studies and theories makes it clear that father involvement contributes to shaping child development outcomes and the kinds and amounts of father involvement influence child outcomes.

Father involvement affects child outcomes differently by gender and age of the child, as well as by the quantity and quality of father involvement over time. Outcomes may be examined in terms of physical, cognitive, psychological, social, and spiritual development in both children and their fathers.

When child well-being is measured in more global and quantitative ways, positive father–child relationships are associated with greater academic attainment in children (test scores, grades, graduation rates), lower rates of juvenile delinquency, fewer conduct problems, less substance use, and lower teen pregnancy rates. In developing nations, father involvement in provision and protection is linked to child survival rates. Measures or assessments that are more qualitative and process-oriented connect positive father–child relationships to better social adjustment and skills in children (e.g., popularity, leadership, life satisfaction), greater self-esteem, and lower depression.

Involved fathers report that they are better people for having engaged in involvement with their children. They describe perceived positive changes in responsibility, maturity, health, and life

satisfaction and meaningfulness. Though involved fathers can articulate personal as well as financial costs of having children, they tend to view the costs to be outweighed by the benefits that they have experienced.

Factors of Importance in Father–Child Relationships

Because of the varied father–child relationships evident across the many contexts in which families live, the social science literature presents many different views of father–child relationships. Yet a careful review of research studies and prominent theories brings a focus to a select set of factors in father–child relationships that always matter, regardless of the gender or age of the child, the context of interaction, or other circumstantial factors. These factors could be identified as (a) the emotional climate of the relationship, (b) fathers' behavior, and (c) the interplay of the relational climate and behavior. When the *emotional climate* of the father–child relationship is focused on mutual warmth, trust, love, attachment, security, provision, involvement, connection, protection, and “being there,” both fathers and children develop more positively than when these factors are lacking or negativity, neglect, or harshness is present. When the father's behavior is characterized by moderate control and high warmth, responsiveness to questions, appropriate interest in their children's lives and interests, monitoring and attentiveness to them, availability, and frequent interactions with the child, father–child relationships are considered to be of higher quality than when these behaviors are not present. Such father behaviors are associated with positive father–child relationships, and better psychological and social adjustment for children. The central attributes of “good fathering” can be partially facilitated and supported through training and intervention programs for families experiencing lack in these areas.

As children mature and can reciprocate fathers' interests and needs, mutually positive father–child relationships can extend across the life span. Both fathers and children report that positive father–child relationships are meaningful in shaping life meaning and satisfaction.

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See also Families, Intergenerational Relationships in; Family Relationships in Childhood; Mother–Child Relationships in Early Childhood; Parent–Child Relationships; Parenting

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FEAR OF DEATH, RELATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

Fear of death is a universal human attribute, the avoidance of which is the motivational impetus for a substantial proportion of human behavior. Given the fundamentally social nature of our species, it is not surprising that close relationships, such as those between family members, friends, and romantic partners, are greatly influenced by concerns about mortality. This entry provides an overview of how fear of death relates to the development and maintenance of close relationships.

Anthropologist Ernest Becker proposed that the uniquely human awareness of death gives rise to potentially paralyzing dread that is assuaged by culture. Cultural worldviews consist of humanly constructed beliefs about the nature of reality that provide a sense of meaning and value. Every culture has an account of the origin of the universe,

prescriptions for appropriate conduct, and promises of either symbolic or literal immortality to those who meet or exceed standards of value. Research based on terror management theory supports Becker's claims by demonstrating that (a) self-esteem (the belief that one is a person of value in a world of meaning) reduces anxiety in response to threat, and (b) reminders of death (mortality salience) instigate efforts to bolster faith in one's cultural worldview.

Introducing Death Into the Science of Love

Recently, theory and research have documented the importance of close relationships as a third psychological resource (in addition to self-esteem and cultural worldviews) that affords protection against the potential terror engendered by death awareness. According to John Bowlby's Attachment Theory, the anxiety-buffering function of close relationships develops in early childhood, as highly immature and vulnerable infants' undifferentiated fears in response to threats impel them to maintain physical and emotional proximity to primary caregivers. (Such "attachment" is evolutionarily advantageous by keeping vulnerable babies close to be protected by their caregivers.) "Secure" attachment to caregivers—that is, the confident dependence of a child who appraises his or her caregiver as likely to respond to the child's distress—alleviates anxiety and promotes growth-oriented activities such as exploration, play, and affiliation. Thus, even in young children, fears related to self-protection, though preceding explicit death awareness, instigate the formation and maintenance of close relationships.

Parental provision of protection and sustenance provides children with positive feelings of safety and satiety and is at first provided unconditionally. During socialization, however, parents' approval becomes contingent on engaging in certain culturally prescribed activities (e.g., standing for the Pledge of Allegiance) and refraining from others (e.g., urinating in the swimming pool). Now children learn to associate feeling safe and secure with being "good" and anxiety and insecurity with being "bad." This is how self-esteem initially becomes an effective anxiety buffer: positive self-feelings are remindful of parents' love and protection.

Later in childhood, youngsters realize that their parents are human and mortal and, thus, ultimately incapable of protecting them from life's dangers. Coincidentally, children recognize the inevitability of their own death. These developments compel children and adolescents to develop or adopt beliefs about the world that address existential issues, such as the origin and purpose of life and the meaning of death, in emotionally soothing ways. Consequently, they begin to (quite unconsciously) transfer their psychological allegiance from parents to the cultural worldview and garner self-esteem by adhering to standards of value associated with their social roles as fledgling members of their culture, in pursuit of literal (e.g., an after-life) or symbolic immortality (e.g., living on through one's accomplishments or progeny).

Because of the developmental interconnectedness among close relationships, self-esteem, and worldviews, all three mechanisms function interdependently to maintain psychological equanimity in adulthood. Research has demonstrated that securely attached individuals (similar to those with high self-esteem) are less likely to respond defensively to reminders of death. Additionally, death reminders increase the desire for intimacy, affiliation, willingness to initiate social interactions, and commitment to existing romantic relationships. Moreover, when close relationships are threatened, people become more insecure and subconscious thoughts related to death become more active. Current research also demonstrates that threats to one of the three anxiety-buffering mechanisms (attachment relationships, self-esteem, or cultural worldviews) instigate compensatory activation of the other mechanisms, suggesting that the three function as a coordinated security system.

Summary and Conclusion

In sum, human beings are prone to existential terror by virtue of their awareness of the inevitability of death, which can occur at any time for reasons that are often unanticipated and uncontrollable. Infants secure psychological equanimity by forming close emotional bonds to significant others, and security is subsequently fortified as individuals embed themselves in a cultural worldview and believe themselves to be valuable

contributors to the meaningful universe that the worldview describes. Close relationships, cultural worldviews, and self-esteem are all thus essential components of effective management of death fears. However, because close relationships are forged in infancy, long before we are aware of death or the cultural constructions we unknowingly adopt to cope with mortality or the psychological gyrations we employ in our incessant pursuit of self-regard, they may be the most potent and effective psychological bulwark against the ravages of time. As the great Roman poet Virgil put it more than 2,000 years ago: *Omnia vincit Amor*—Love conquers all!

Sheldon Solomon and Joshua Hart

See also Adult Attachment, Individual Differences; Emotion Regulation in Relationships; Self-Esteem, Effects on Relationships; Socialization; Uncertainty Reduction Theory

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FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES ON RELATIONSHIPS

Feminist perspectives on relationships are found not in a singular theory but, rather, in a variety of

interdisciplinary perspectives that value women's lives and experiences and seek to understand how gender is systematically constructed and performed in ways that naturalize social inequities and difference. This entry discusses common themes of feminist perspectives on relationships: gender as a social construction, intersectionality, power dynamics (both interpersonal and structural), historic and sociocultural contexts, rejection of unitary and uncomplicated notions of relationships and families, and methodologies that embrace deconstruction, reflexivity, and acknowledged politicized inquiry.

The Social Construction of Gender

As a central component of their theorizing, feminist scholars view gender as a social construct that embodies cultural views of femininity and masculinity; in this view, gender is created through everyday practices, interactions, and institutions that shape our ideas and enactment of what it means to be male and female, masculine and feminine. These gender constructions are inextricably interwoven into both social structures (such as work, family) and the distribution of privileges, resources, and power.

Whereas gender is a social status that organizes many aspects of relational and familial life, it is also enacted continuously in interpersonal relationships (often described as “doing gender”). Such a conceptualization of the ongoing construction and performance of gender sharply contrasts with biological notions of gender (which place gender into the realm of the natural, inextricably linked with anatomical sex), and *gender-role* perspectives (which emphasize gender as a social role that is marked by a well-articulated set of behaviors and attitudes that through socialization become integral to one's self-conception). Such biological and role perspectives emphasize *gender difference* and may overemphasize differences between men and women. Research on whether and to what degree men and women evidence divergent patterns of interpersonal communication (e.g., men use more interruption, self-display, and assertion; women are more relational in their speech and attuned to nonverbal cues) is a case in point here, to the extent that the

researcher either states or implies a biological basis for the differences, or treats the differences as so inherent to men versus women as to naturalize them. Feminist researchers on the other hand, seek to deconstruct the observation of gendered patterns of communication by examining how these patterns are constituted in the first place, how they play out in interpersonal interactions, and how they reflect and reinforce the structural inequities of men's and women's lives. Feminist perspectives further emphasize how individuals subvert and remake such gender constructions and seek to understand how both exaggerating and obscuring gender differences are constructions in and of themselves.

Feminist scholars also deconstruct sex and sexuality, with an emphasis on challenging binaries to understand the diversity of sexual identities, orientations, and practices. Here, the binary construction of heterosexuality as "normal" and other sexualities as deviant or pathological is critiqued, as are ways in which sex and sexuality are essentialized and inextricably linked with gender. Feminist analyses have given visibility to the ways in which heterosexuality, masculinity, femininity, and family ideology are so tightly intertwined and coconstructed as to make them nearly impossible to conceptualize separately. Thus, feminist theorists also contest *heteronormativity* (the ways in which heterosexual models of relationships are assumed to be so normal and natural that they go unquestioned and unrecognized).

Intersectionality

Intersectionality emphasizes the ways in which the interplay of social locations (such as race, class, gender, sexuality, nation) influences the identities, privileges, and oppressions of individuals and families. For example, racism, sexism, and their unique and multiplicative confluence shape both the stereotypes of Black women's intimate relationships and the choices Black women have in responding to relationship stressors. An emphasis on intersectionality stems from the work of multicultural and critical race feminists, who challenge conceptualizations of the experience of White, Western, heterosexual women as

universal and monolithic, and instead situate difference and identity across the fluid intersections of multiple social locations. Intersectional perspectives call for an examination of the ways in which multiple forms of oppression (including heterosexism, racism, class privilege) are cocreated with sexism. Scholars using intersectional perspectives also deconstruct and look for variation within social locations, for example, examining variation in sexual expression that goes beyond categories of heterosexual, gay, or bisexual or looking for the wide variety of cultural expressions and histories that are present within a group of Latinas. Feminist standpoint theorists in particular examine how the "politics of location" are negotiated and experienced and emphasize the ways in which multiple intersecting identities mutually contribute to identities and experiences.

Attention to Power

Feminist researchers seek to articulate the power processes that are embedded within (and support) gendered constructions of relationships, families, and institutions by highlighting the ways that men and women are granted differential access to material, symbolic, and social resources. These structural inequities play out in a variety of ways, not the least of which are the construction of inequality as an inevitable outcome of natural gender differences, and the devaluation of women's work at home and in the paid labor force. In taking a feminist perspective on relationships, the interplay of institutional or structural power and interpersonal power is emphasized. For example, feminist research on wife battering highlights how institutionalized privileges have historically granted men the right to control women and children, how such domination plays out in the powerful interpersonal tactic of physical and psychological aggression, and how a woman's responses to the battering she experiences are constrained by social institutions and economic realities. Power processes are not always so overt; for example, power processes are often concealed within a romanticized discourse of equality that masks male domination of relationships.

Situating Relationships and Families Within Sociohistorical Contexts

Feminist perspectives on relationships push scholars to go beyond the individual and relational levels to consider the interplay of larger sociohistorical contexts. Feminist researchers question the notion of “the family as a haven in a heartless world”; rather, the family is viewed as a key institutional structure that has contributed to women’s subordination and oppression. Heterosexual romantic relationships and families in the United States are undergirded by a history that includes the isolation of the nuclear family, romantic heterosexual love as the basis for legal marriage, separate spheres for men and women, and differential access to economic resources. Although relationships and families experienced fundamental changes during the 20th century, particularly in beliefs and practices around egalitarianism, feminist researchers have analyzed the ways in which ideologies and discourses about ideal romantic, parental, and family relationships still are deeply intertwined with the gendered division of household labor and the allocation of time between work and family. Ultimately, feminist scholars emphasize the problems inherent in an exclusive focus on characteristics of individuals or relational processes and call for attention to the historical, economic, and structural roots of gendered practices and beliefs that contextualize and fundamentally influence intimate relationships.

Rejection of Unitary and Idealized Notions of Families and Relationships

Feminist scholars challenge both the idea of a universal heteronormative family (i.e., male-headed, heterosexual, lifelong, existing across time and culture) as well as the notion that the biological nuclear family should be the ideal against which all other family forms are judged. Instead, families and relationships are viewed as socially constructed and historically bounded; emphasis is placed on families and relationships as changing over time and place in structure and meaning. Marriage is viewed as a special category of intimate relationships—one that hinges on and elevates gender difference (given that the family is the primary arena where

gender is constructed). The tensions and contradictions of intimate relationships are examined; for example, feminist scholars have noted a “paradox of love and violence” that occurs when violence is perpetrated by a family member who also professes love for the victim. Feminist perspectives also emphasize that while the family is a site of women’s subordination, women are still active agents in their family and intimate lives—they creatively resist and subvert gender/family constructions and use their strengths to negotiate around and through constraints and oppression.

Feminist perspectives embrace the diversity of families, relationships, and people, looking at the intersections of gender, race, ethnicity, class, age, sexual preference, ability, and nation. Feminists also critique the ways in which the privileging of heteronormative, White, middle-class family forms have affected research on families of color, lesbian/gay families, poor families, and so forth. Feminist scholars bring variation and diversity in intimate relationships to the forefront, examining, for example, the multiple and diverse household formations that effectively nurture children, the strengths and stressors experienced by lesbian parents and their children, the strong kin and community ties of Black couples, and the experiences of noncustodial mothers.

Feminist Methodologies

Feminist relationship and family scholars use research methodologies that are recovering, reflexive, critical, and politicized. Feminist methodologies analyze gendered epistemologies, working both to recover women’s voices and experiences and to challenge the disciplines by rethinking theories, concepts, assumptions, and methods. Feminist critiques include analysis of what “counts” as knowledge in the academy, whose knowledge production is privileged, and the hierarchy of methods, theories, and data collection techniques that ascribes higher value to particular research approaches. Feminist methodologies openly acknowledge that all research is historically, culturally, and politically bounded (even positivist, objective, “scientific” research). Reflexivity in research requires

conscious reflection about how the researcher comes into and enacts the research, including analysis of one's subjectivity, relationship with research participants, and questioning of the researcher as the ultimate "knower." Feminist methodologies also emphasize the importance of maintaining a dialectic between theory and practice and the inherently political nature of scholarship that aims to critique and change social institutions, families, and relationships in fundamental ways.

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See also Communication, Gender Differences in; Egalitarian Relationships; Families, Definitions and Typologies; Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Relationships; Gender Roles in Relationships; Gender Stereotypes; Power Distribution in Relationships; Sex Differences in Relationships

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FICTIVE KINSHIP

Fictive kinship comprises all those relationships socially understood as kinship different from descent and marriage, indicated by the usage of its terms, either modified (e.g., *comadre*) or not, as in some cases of fosterage, in which the term *mother* is the same regardless of whether it is the birth or foster mother. Taken literally, *fictive kinship* is a misnomer. As an antonym of *real*, *fictive* implicitly values such ties to be “false” or “not genuine” kinship. But people engaging in practices of fictive kinship experience these relationships as real as the ones based on “blood” and marriage, not least as they are also often tied to a prohibition of incest. After addressing the phenomenon in general, three aspects will be discussed in this entry that highlight the significance of kinship’s fictive forms for individuals, power processes, and theories of society.

Fictive kinship is found worldwide and covers highly diverse practices and experiences. Its most widespread forms are adoption (prominent in Oceania, in Western countries, and among South American Indians), sponsorship practiced in kinship such as godparenthood in Christian cultures (*compadrazgo*) or *oyabun-kobun* in Japan, fosterage (Central Africa, South America), blood brotherhood (Africa, North American Indians), more regionally specific types such as milk-kinship in Muslim societies or *miteri*-bonds in Nepal, and finally forms that are practiced without being named.

The differences between the documented forms of fictive kinship might be ascribed to the ways of its institutionalizations. Although people

commonly refer to rituals such as baptism to create a fictive kin relationship, in others people actualize it by continued reciprocal figurative use of kinship terms *and* actions that are understood socially as ideal kinship behavior. A figurative use of kin terms alone therefore does not institute a fictive kin relationship—it must be accompanied by concrete action. For example, people living together for a prolonged time with concomitant reciprocal use of kin terms may establish fictive kinship ties. Finally, all practices of fictive kinship are discernible as kinship only because people understand them as such. Further differentiating parameters lie in the quality of the relationship preceding the establishment of fictive kinship. Benjamin Paul devised an “intensive” and “extensive” choice of fictive kin for grasping analytically if individuals were related before (intensive) or not (extensive), and Sidney Mintz and Eric Wolf addressed the question of whether the people involved were of the same or a different social status with the respective terms *horizontal* or *vertical* relationships.

Three aspects of fictive kinship are central for its understanding and theoretical significance: connection, loyalty, and power. First, fictive kinship endows people with a social institution capable of bridging ethnic, religious, and class boundaries, therefore enabling individuals to establish or ascertain kin ties with social *others*. Fictive kinship, then, is singularly prominent in vertical relationships, especially in patron-client-ties that found their icon in Mario Puzo’s novel *The Godfather*. Albeit the institution of fictive kinship, conferring the egalitarian design of kinship ties upon vertical relations, never achieves an erasure of social inequality in practice, it allows humans to refer ideally to equality.

This widely documented social function leads to the second central aspect of fictive kinship: the institutionalization of a moral imperative of loyalty and solidarity within relationships. Fictive kinship establishes or heightens an affective relatedness, promising in turn an enduring relationship. Contrary to friendship, the relations of kinship are ideally irredeemable. The voluntary character of choosing fictive kin, in an intensive choice reenacting and assuring existing kin relations, explicates its social importance. When people endow their relationships with kinship’s moral imperatives of solidarity and loyalty, they signal a reciprocal will

to achieve a psychological maximum of security against internal discord.

Herein rests, thirdly, the theoretical significance of fictive kinship. It demonstrates as an actively sought transformation of relationship into kin ties that kinship in general offers the most efficient social technique to naturalize processes of power. The evident intentional character of fictive kinship substantiates the genuine social constitution of all kinship ties because these are sustained in practice only if individuals voluntarily actualize it by renewing its significance continuously. Even consanguineous kinship, that is, by “blood,” is meaningless in practice if individuals diverge socially, leading to a social exclusion of kin and potentially subsequent erasure from genealogical knowledge. The affective impact of the moral appeal of kinship ties, its characteristic imperative of solidarity and loyalty, is embodied through affects experienced early in life, habitus, and the culturally influenced socialization. Though relationships designed as kinship yield no guarantee of loyalty, ties practiced as kinship continuously render a security, even if self-suggestive, which cannot be attained otherwise.

As it is a culturally induced posture not to understand kin relationships as competitive or even as instrumental for one’s own power sake, they empower people, in particular when competitors or enemies are transformed into fictive kin. Although the intended continuation or intensification of kinship among social equals ideally suspends internal dissent, among unequals, it furthermore legitimizes exploitation and requires, at least partially, a participation in the power of the social superiors. These assigned qualities actualize the social and theoretical significance of kinship in general and of its fictive forms in particular.

But fictive kinship is still considerably underestimated in the social sciences. The field lacks both more detailed ethnographic investigation and theoretical synthesis of data. Perceived from a relational angle, fictive kinship critically influences societal arrangements. The fact that personal loyalty is not considered sufficiently in theories of class proves the necessity to advance the investigation of fictive kinship regarding psychological motives, relations of power, and society.

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See also Ideals About Relationships; Kin Relationships; Materialism and Relationships; Morality and Relationships; Power Distribution in Relationships

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FIELD OF ELIGIBLES AND AVAILABLES

Humans seek relationship partners, and eventually mates, according to principles that help to narrow the universe of possibilities to a final choice. At least three general concepts are useful when thinking about how this winnowing process works: eligibles, availables, and desirables. Each of these may be thought of as a field or pool, a set of qualifying persons and, by implication, a residual set of others who do not qualify. This entry discusses each of these concepts in the context of the mating process.

The field of eligibles refers to socially acceptable categories of partners. This field has two types of boundaries. *Endogamous norms* specify eligible partners according to their membership in the same or similar groups. The most commonly operative endogamous criteria are social class, race, ethnicity, religion, and age. We are supposed to seek partners similar to ourselves in these respects because it is believed that such matches lead to more satisfactory relationships. The other eligibility criterion involves *exogamous norms*. Social expectations usually require or encourage us to seek partners who are different from ourselves

in certain respects. The two most common exogamous norms are that we should seek opposite-sex partners and partners who are not too closely related by blood to ourselves. Homosexual unions are legally prohibited in many but not all jurisdictions, and almost every society has rules that discourage or punish incest.

The field of availables refers to those potential partners whom we are likely to meet and with whom we therefore could develop a meaningful relationship. The two most common manifestations of availability are geographic proximity and not already being in a committed relationship. Proximity, sometimes known as propinquity, has obvious implications. We cannot become acquainted, let alone fall in love, with people if we have no chance of ever meeting them. Research shows that the closer two people reside geographically, the more likely they are to marry. So, proximity influences opportunities to meet. Marital status also influences availability. In societies that require monogamy, already being married makes you unavailable for a new romantic relationship. Despite the restrictions imposed by shared expectations about availability, it is easy to appreciate how these norms may be challenged. Advances in technology have made it possible to meet geographically remote people on the Internet. Extramarital affairs testify to the occasional disregard of marital status when dealing with rules about availability. The relative weakness of restrictions about availability has even led to the idea that everybody is permanently available to everybody else.

The field of desirables refers to those people who meet a set of personal preferences about possible partners. Among the most important factors here are physical attractiveness, personality characteristics, and leisure interests. Potential partners may have to meet certain standards of fashion, grooming, and beauty to be considered serious possibilities. They also may have to be sociable, pleasant, good listeners, and have a nice sense of humor. Desirable partners also may have to share several leisure interests in common with the person making the evaluation. Although preferences may appear to be unique to the person having them, many preferences are widely shared within a given culture. For example, standards of beauty may be influenced by the appearances and practices of

celebrities and the ways in which the mass media portray them.

When people apply ideas about fields of potential partners to a search for real partners, several practical considerations are involved. First, mate choice is interactive. For a couple or union to form, both partners must fall within their partner's acceptable fields. So, it is wise to be attentive to one's own appeal, not just to the appeal of potential partners. Second, the searching process occurs within competitive markets, so we have to display to potential partners some advantages over likely rivals. The size of the relevant fields of both rivals and potential partners shapes our chances of success. In addition, cultures differ in how inclusive or restrictive their fields of potential partners are. For example, first cousins are eligible mates in some cultures, but not in others.

Because most mate selection is heterosexual, the criteria that apply to defining appropriate males and females sometimes may be incongruent. For example, although males are generally taller than females, if few tall males are available, the normal expectations about height differences may be violated without objection. Finally, fields of potential partners depend on the purposes of the relationship. If we are dating just for fun, the field of acceptable partners may be much broader than if we are searching for a lifelong marriage partner.

We narrow our fields of potential partners in different ways. We may first eliminate ineligible, and then from among those available, search for desirables. Alternatively, we may concentrate entirely on those who are available, then determine desirables, and finally deal with eligibility. Whatever sequence the winnowing process may follow, our successive experiences of success and failure shape the way we approach our next opportunity.

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See also Assortative Mating; Marketplace Approaches to Courtship, Love, and Sex; Marriage Markets; Matching Hypothesis; Mate Preferences

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FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Every interaction with a new person entails a first impression. The impressions we form of others and they of us influence practically every aspect of our lives, including our friendships, romantic relationships, and career prospects. Impression formation occurs rapidly, is often automatic and unconscious, and frequently occurs based on mere glimpses or instantaneous appraisals of “thin slices of behavior.” First impressions have important consequences in many different domains, including in the judgments of relationships, in job interviews, and in assessing others' personalities. And first impressions are critical because these original evaluations are often lasting, influential, and set the stage for subsequent expectations, behavior, and interactions. This entry first discusses the accuracy and downstream consequences of first impressions in the domains of relationships, deception, job interviews, and personality. This discussion is then followed by an examination of the characteristics of good judges of first impressions.

Thin Slices of Behavior

Thin slices of behavior was coined by Nalini Ambady and Robert Rosenthal to describe brief excerpts of expressive behavior sampled from the behavioral stream that contain dynamic information and are less than 5 minutes long. Thin slices are an excellent way to examine first impressions, and the slices can be sampled from any available

channel of communication, including the face, the body, speech, the voice, transcripts, or combinations of these. Hence, static images (e.g., photographs) and larger chunks of dynamic behaviors would not qualify as a thin slice.

The type of judgment being made affects accuracy. Thin-slice judgments are predictive and accurate only to the extent that relevant variables are observable from the thin slice sampled. Using the analogy of an onion, some characteristics, similar to the more visible, transparent outer layers of the onion, are easily observed and judged from thin slices. But other characteristics are hidden, similar to the inner layers of the onion, and are less easily judged from thin slices of behavior. Variables that are more observable and that are revealed through demeanor and behavior, such as extraversion, warmth, and likeability, are more easily and accurately judged from thin slices. In contrast, less observable variables, such as perseverance, are not easily or accurately judged from thin slices. This is because information regarding perseverance is more likely revealed through actions and behaviors that unfold over a relatively long period. Such information is less likely to be gleaned from thin slices of behavior.

Research on thin-slice judgments has had an impact across social, applied, and cognitive psychology and economics and has penetrated the popular literature as well. Thin-slice judgments are particularly useful in examining interpersonal relationships. For instance, judgments based on thin slices have been shown to accurately predict aspects of the doctor-patient relationship, including patient satisfaction and adherence to treatment, the relationship status of opposite-sex pairs interacting, judgments of rapport between two persons, and courtroom judges' expectations of a defendant's guilt.

Judging Relationships

Even nonhuman primates show an ability to quickly scan the social environment and recognize relationship patterns among others. These relationship patterns include those of kinship and status. During evolution, being able to make quick and accurate assessments of others' relationship patterns is important for survival of the species.

Among humans, do first impressions provide signals about different types of relationships? Evidence indicates that people can judge different types of relationships. For example, people (and animals) can judge kinship from minimal cues. They can also judge the status of individuals in an interaction, such as who is the boss and who is the subordinate, from first impressions. These accurate responses depend on a correct interpretation of available verbal and nonverbal cues. Thus, both kinship and status relationships are judged from cues such as posture and gaze. Finally, individuals can judge whether people are strangers, friends, or romantic partners based on minimal cues, such as posture, facial expression, and gaze.

In addition to identifying the type of relationship people share, perceivers also make inferences about the quality of relationships. One important characteristic of the quality of the relationships is the level of rapport between partners. Rapport is defined as the extent to which a relationship is pleasant, engaging, and harmonious. When two people feel rapport toward each other, they are more attentive to each other, more positive in their behavior to each other, and better coordinated in their movements. Can rapport be judged from first impressions? It turns out that people are not good at judging rapport or whether other people are "in sync" from observations of brief video clips. Thus, it seems that people are better at judging types of relationships than they are at judging the quality of relationships.

Another characteristic of the quality of a relationship is the love that exists between the partners. Studies relying on self-reports have found no differences in relationship quality between couples that reported falling in love at first sight and those whose relationships had evolved from friendships. Recent work on speed dating has yielded interesting insights regarding first impressions in romantic relationships. One important insight is that preferences for certain characteristics of an ideal partner expressed before speed dating do not predict the characteristics of the partner selected from the speed-dating event. Thus, predictions before the dating event do not line up with actual choices, suggesting that prior theories and beliefs do not accurately predict first impressions and liking.

How good are people at judging love between others based on their first impressions? People are

not good judges of the love between other couples from thin-slice video clips. Research has shown that people who were in love reported being more confident about their ability to judge whether other couples were in love but were actually less accurate than people not involved in romantic relationships. Thus, those in love may feel more confident about their ability to judge love, but are more biased than are those not in love. In sum, although perceivers have little difficulty categorizing the type of relationship that two people share, they are not as good at gauging the quality of that relationship, in terms of the rapport or the love between partners, from first impressions.

Deception

How well can deception be judged based on first impressions? Lying is ubiquitous in social life, and most lies are “white lies,” which are relatively harmless and are told to avoid friction and to maintain harmony in relationships. Other lies, however, are less innocuous, such as when liars maliciously manipulate individuals and organizations to advance their own self-interest.

Though people might lie quite often, they are not good at judging when others are lying. Meta-analyses of lie detection ability find average accuracy rate is 54 percent, only slightly better than that afforded by chance guessing.

One important moderator of accuracy in lie detection is the relationship between the liar and the detector. Research reveals that close friends show a substantial and significant improvement in lie detection accuracy (accuracy increased from 47 percent to 61 percent) over time as they get to know each other better, but less close friends show a small decrease in accuracy over time.

Factors such as expertise, experience, and formal training in lie detection do not seem to improve detection accuracy. “Professional lie catchers,” such as police officers, detectives, judges, secret service agents, and parole officers, are no more accurate at detecting deception than are students and other citizens. The one group of individuals that does seem to be more accurate at detecting lies than others is people with elevated levels of depression symptoms, who are better able to spot false reassurances and phoniness.

When perceivers do successfully distinguish truths and lies, they rely heavily on different streams of expressive behavior, including facial displays, gestures, and tones of voice. Are any of these channels particularly revealing of deception? The amount that people can control the information communicated by different channels of communication affects how revealing or “leaky” that channel of communication is considered. Verbal statements are believed to be the most controllable and therefore the least leaky channel of communication, followed, in order, by facial displays, gestures, and vocal tone. Vocal tone may be the leakiest channel of communication because the speaker’s perception differs from that of the listener. Because the voice sounds different to the speaker than to the listener, the speaker has difficulty monitoring and modulating it. Indeed, deception is most accurately detected from changes in the tone of voice compared with other channels of communication.

The bulk of research on deception detection comes from laboratory studies with undergraduate participants in which the liar’s motivation to be successful may be minimal. One meta-analysis of the literature examined whether the cues to deception become more transparent during “high-stakes” lies, when the liar has greater motivation to succeed. This analysis revealed that when liars are more highly motivated to succeed, they become tenser; specifically, they use less eye contact and use higher vocal pitch. This pattern is seen during real-life high-stakes situations, including murder, rape, and arson suspects undergoing police interrogations. Whether this greater transparency during higher stakes situations results in greater perceiver accuracy remains to be determined.

Job Interviews

First impressions are critical in job interviews, as documented in the plethora of books and articles on impression management in the job interview. Recent work suggests that interviewers’ early impressions affect interview outcomes. In general, studies have found that the more favorable the interviewers’ impressions on the preinterview measures are, the more positively they treat the applicant, and the more likely they are to extend

an offer to the applicant. Specifically, interviewers use a more positive vocal style with applicants who have made a positive first impression. Moreover, interviewers try to recruit the applicants who have made more positive first impressions by attempting to “sell” the company and the job to a greater extent and providing more information about the company than they do to applicants who have made less positive first impressions. Interviewer behavior also affects applicant communication style, and the more positive the interviewer, the more positive the applicant behavior. Thus, interviewers’ first impressions affect how they conduct the interview, and how interviewers conduct the interview is subsequently related to applicants’ behavior and their evaluation by the interviewer.

Personality

The ability to accurately gauge others’ personalities is also central to the development and maintenance of interpersonal relationships. How accurate are our first impressions of other’s personalities? The answer depends on the personality trait that is being judged.

In a pioneering study in 1938, Stanley Estes compared perceivers’ impressions of personality with targets’ self-reported assessments. After viewing two-minute film clips of people engaged in expressive movement, perceivers were able to judge emotionality, inhibition, and apathy at levels above chance. Half a century later, other researchers have examined the accuracy of perceptions of the Big Five personality traits (Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism, and Openness to experience) from first impressions based on brief encounters as well as on videotapes and thin slices. Judgments of extraversion and conscientiousness show the highest correspondence with self-assessments, but neuroticism, agreeableness, and openness were less well judged. Even when targets’ romantic partners or family members are asked to describe targets’ personality, extraversion and conscientiousness emerge as the most accurately judged traits from first impressions.

Another line of research has shown considerable agreement or consensus regarding personality traits of complete strangers. Several studies suggest

that unacquainted judges exhibit a surprisingly high degree of consensus in their impressions of a stranger’s personality. Although consensus increases with increased exposure, independent perceivers still agree in their assessments of a target’s personality even in the absence of interaction with that target. Consensus is again particularly strong on two personality traits: extraversion and conscientiousness.

Perceivers can be surprisingly accurate in their impressions even without the benefit of direct interaction. Impressions formed after brief observations lasting a mere 10 seconds are as accurate as those based on 5-minute observations, indicating that personality is often revealed in thin slices of expressive behavior. Moreover, a surprising amount of information about personality is revealed in the environments we construct—whether real or virtual. For instance, first impressions of individuals’ personalities based on their bedrooms or offices have been shown to correlate with their self-reports as well as with close acquaintances’ ratings of the target person’s personality.

Individual Differences: The Good Judge of First Impressions

What are the characteristics of good judges of first impressions? Several factors affect individual differences in the accuracy of first impressions of relationships, including differences in personality and motivation. For instance, individuals who are more highly motivated to understand others and who have greater social skill and competence are more accurate in their first impressions. Conversely, people who are self-preoccupied perform poorly. Knowledge about social relations is also an important moderator. People who have had advanced theatrical training score higher on some tasks that measure the accuracy of first impressions. This could be because their theatrical training sensitizes them to the meaning of particular gestures, facial displays, and vocal patterns.

Women tend to be more accurate judges of first impressions and nonverbal behavior than men do. This female advantage may be the result of socialization and societal expectations. Women may have more knowledge of nonverbal cue meanings and may be more sensitive to such cues.

Increasing evidence also indicates that the most accurate judges of first impressions are people who are socially well adjusted. Certain groups of people with clinical disorders such as autism, schizophrenia, mania, and alcoholism are particularly impaired in their ability to form accurate first impressions.

Even though, overall, both children and adults who enjoy greater interpersonal success are generally better judges of first impressions, individual differences are tempered by cultural and subcultural exposure. For example, people are better at accurately judging targets from their own culture and cultures similar to their own than with more foreign targets.

Self-Fulfilling Prophecies in Interpersonal Relationships

Both accurate and inaccurate first impressions may affect the perceiver's subsequent behavior toward the target as revealed in the studies on job interviews discussed. Perceiver behavior shapes and constrains targets' responses, creating self-fulfilling prophecies (also termed *interpersonal expectancy effects* or *behavioral confirmation*). A self-fulfilling prophecy is an originally false definition of the situation that evokes behaviors making the false conception come true. Empirical research on interpersonal self-fulfilling prophecies emerged from Robert Rosenthal's influential work showing that experimenters' expectations can unwittingly bias the results of their experiments with both human and animal participants. For instance, in one study, the rats of experimenters who were led to believe that their rats were good at running mazes, ran the maze faster than did the rats of experimenters who were led to believe that their rats were not good at running mazes. The false expectations of the experimenter thus evoked behavior from their animal subjects that validated the expectations, creating a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Rosenthal and his colleagues later documented this phenomenon in other interpersonal domains, including the classroom. They showed that the expectations of teachers affected the intellectual performance of students. Teachers were told at the beginning of the year that some students in their

class (selected randomly by the experimenters) were going to be "late bloomers" and show gains in intellectual competence in the next few months of school. At the end of the year, those students showed higher intellectual test performance scores than did children in the control group, indicating that teachers' expectations affected student performance. Although the idea that experimenters' and teachers' expectations could create self-fulfilling prophecies was initially met with considerable resistance, eventually enough replications were published to quell most critics. Meta-analyses of the literature on expectancy effects have subsequently shown that these effects are statistically significant and accompanied by a mean effect size that is moderate in magnitude.

Self-fulfilling prophecies have consequential effects on many different types of interpersonal relationships. In one study, for instance, male participants were given a description sheet of a female with a photograph of either an attractive or unattractive woman and were told that they were going to have a telephone conversation with her. After seeing the photograph but before conversing, men expected attractive women to embody more positive traits. After conversing with a female confederate, men's impressions remained consistent with their initial expectations: Women believed to be attractive were rated more positively, whereas women believed to be unattractive were rated more negatively. Interestingly, independent coders who were unaware of which photograph the men had seen rated the audiotaped conversations of the women who had randomly been paired with the attractive photos more positively. Further analyses of the audiotapes showed that male participants treated partners whom they believed to be less attractive in a less warm, sociable manner, thereby eliciting a more negative reaction from these women than from partners whom the men believed were more attractive. Thus, interpersonal expectations, even over a brief telephone conversation, created a self-fulfilling prophecy that resulted in female participants behaving in ways consistent with their male partners' initial appearance-based expectations. Similar results have been found in other behavioral confirmation studies that have manipulated impressions or expectancies regarding a variety of target traits, including personality, race, hyperactivity, and mental illness.

Thus, both accurate and inaccurate first impressions lay the foundation for subsequent behavior. First impressions are critical in the formation of fundamental social relationships and influence both whether a relationship is established and the quality of the relationship once it is established.

Nalini Ambady

See also Communication, Nonverbal; Communication Skills; Deception and Lying; Emotional Communication; Facial Expressions; Interpersonal Sensitivity; Liking; Nonverbal Communication, Status Differences; Rapport; Speed Dating

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FLIRTING

What do peacocks displaying their plumes, strutting chimpanzees, and smiling women in bars have in common? Chances are they are engaged in flirting. Birds, nonhuman animals, and humans all engage in behavior designed to attract potential mates. These primarily nonverbal behaviors are designed to show off the individual's desirable traits (large, colorful plumes, big chest, or bright teeth, respectively), attract attention, and signal that one is open to "approach." Scientists who study animal behavior, or ethology, have long studied how animals signal their interest and availability to potential mates. More recently, social scientists have begun to explore how humans do the same. This entry explores why humans flirt, how men and women flirt in cross-sex relationships, and why women and men may differ in their interpretations of flirting behaviors.

Why Do We Flirt?

From an evolutionary viewpoint, one of the most important task humans (and other animals) must accomplish is to locate a mate with whom they can reproduce. If humans fail at this most basic of duties, the species ceases to exist. To some extent, then, we are hardwired to flirt. It helps us attract the attention of potential mating partners. But why do happily married and committed individuals flirt with the mail carrier or the waitperson at the local café? They do so because flirting serves a variety of other purposes as well. Flirting validates others' sexual appeal, which provides enjoyment and enhances self-esteem; thus, flirting can increase liking and act as a "social lubricant" that makes interaction smoother and more successful.

Basic biological differences, however, have influenced men and women to develop different roles in the mate selection process. Because women can become pregnant and must devote years to any

offspring produced, they have greater investment in being selective. Men, however, benefit from being less selective in that doing so increases their chances of mating and producing offspring while incurring relatively low costs. Therefore, women tend to control the early stages of mate selection by choosing desirable males to whom they signal their availability, often through flirting.

Verbal and Nonverbal Flirting Behaviors

Women initiate flirting by targeting males to whom they signal their interest nonverbally—often by displaying the “coy glance.” The *coy glance* refers to a sequence in which a woman begins by looking at a male and offering a quick smile, then drops and turns her head as she offers a sidelong glance. This is a flirting signal that Irenäus Eibl-Eibesfeldt, founder of the field of human ethology, documented in cultures around the world. Other nonverbal signals of interest women use are the “head cant,” where the neck or the nape of the neck is exposed; the “skirt hike,” in which the legs are crossed so more of the leg is revealed; and the “forward body lean,” which signals interest as well as emphasizes the bosom and narrows the waist. Perhaps the most commonly enacted nonverbal flirting cue used by women is the hair flip—where a woman tosses her hair over her shoulder or uses her hands to move it about to draw attention. These behaviors occur frequently because they signal that one is open to being approached, and because they highlight physical attributes that reveal one is attractive, healthy, and sexually fit as a potential mating partner.

Men also flirt nonverbally, though not to as great an extent. In courtship settings, such as bars and parties, men often display an open body stance. That is, they stand so that the chest is expanded and hands are placed on the waist—which emphasizes the triangular body shape preferred in men. This posture also suggests he is unthreatening and approachable. Men, as well as women, use prolonged eye gaze to signal interest and capture the attention of a desirable other. Finally, both men and women perform the “eyebrow flash,” which describes the tendency for individuals to raise their eyebrows (usually unconsciously) when they find someone to be attractive.

Not all flirting occurs nonverbally. Both men and women use verbal strategies to entice and attract each other. Men are more likely to approach women to initiate a verbal interaction; thus, men are better known for using “pick-up lines” or utterances designed to foster conversation. Although the best pick-up line seems to involve simply saying hello, men also use innocuous statements such as “Do you know the time?” A few brave (or perhaps brazen) souls may attempt to use funny-cute lines, such as “If I told you that you had a beautiful body, would you hold it against me?” However, funny-cute lines tend to be evaluated negatively by women, who report preferring direct or innocuous opening lines.

Once interaction is initiated, both men and women use conversational strategies to engage one another. They may ask questions designed to give others a chance to talk about their strong points and that can serve simultaneously as a compliment. For example, one might ask, “Do you work out a lot?” Other conversational strategies used to signal interest are empathizing, mentioning an upcoming activity, and asking for or giving one’s phone number.

Sex Differences in Interpreting Flirting Behaviors

Although both men and women are active during the flirting process, they don’t always agree on what the behaviors mean. Men are more likely than women to say that women’s flirting behaviors reveal sexual interest, but women more often state that they are being friendly. This difference in interpretation occurs for two reasons. First, as discussed, men run fewer risks from mating and are the ones who approach a potential partner; therefore, they increase their chances of successfully mating if they interpret a broader range of behaviors as signaling sexual interest. In addition, flirting behaviors are deniable by design. That is, flirting behaviors are subtle and ambiguous enough that one can deny one was flirting at all. If faced with rejection or the angry partner of one’s target, an individual accused of flirting can save face (and possibly body) by arguing that he or she was just being friendly or was simply acting socially engaged and pleasant.

Flirting serves an important role in relationship development, and those who are competent at it increase the pool of candidates from which they can select a partner. However, men and women need to be aware that they may not agree on what, exactly, constitutes flirting.

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See also Attraction, Sexual; Communication, Nonverbal; Developing Relationships; Mate Selection; Opening Lines

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FOOD AND RELATIONSHIPS

We spend a large portion of our time preparing for, thinking about, planning, and consuming our meals. Food is more than an essential component of physical survival. Along the course of evolutionary history, we have developed rituals and culture around food to make it a social experience. There is a reciprocal connection between the food we eat and the relationships we have, affecting us as a society, as a family, and individually. Food can affect our social relationships just as social relationships can affect our food consumption. This entry reviews the current literature and discusses the ways in which food and relationships intertwine.

Food and the Evolution of Society

In our early evolutionary history, food was scarce, and great efforts were made just to obtain foodstuffs to eat. During this time, sharing food became a valued strategy to gain access to more resources, aide survival, or increase mating

opportunities. Societies used four major strategies of food sharing, sometimes in combination with one another, to gain access to these benefits.

The *kinship model* (or kin selection-based nepotism) describes food sharing between kin; it predicts that food sharing should be more prevalent among individuals who are closer in genealogical relatedness. Consistent with evolutionary theory, kinship food sharing is thought to increase gene survival and reproductive success of offspring and related family members. In most societies, food sharing is more prevalent among family members than strangers, especially for younger and older kin who cannot provide for themselves.

The *costly signaling* model holds that food is used as a status symbol and mating strategy. Men with the biggest food production or displays of bravery during a hunt are revered in their communities and prove that they can provide for their women and families. In addition to providing nutrients, food sharing is a way to display power and gain a selective mating advantage.

According to the *reciprocal altruism* model, sharing food is an important way to keep food on the table during times of scarceness and allows for gestures of goodwill between families and tribes. Showing goodwill and a desire to work with other groups establishes mutually reciprocal relationships, in which each group consistently helps the other. This model describes an ongoing equal trade between groups, using such commodities as money or other traded goods. By creating trustworthy relationships, food is used to build bridges between different groups.

A final model of food transfer is described as *tolerated scrounging*, in which individuals give up their food to another person without expectation of return. This can encompass making donations to a beggar or giving up food to a thief. Generally, transfers of this kind occur when the cost of protecting the food is less than the benefit of giving it up.

Demographic Influences of Food Preferences

Food choices are associated with family-related demographics. For example, in genetic studies, twins show similarities in ratings of hunger, the amount of food eaten, and liking of foods beyond what can be explained by the environment. In the

nature–nurture debate, our relatives have some impact on the way we perceive and consume food.

Family culture also plays a part in food preferences. For example, Puerto Ricans eat more fried foods and sauces compared with Hondurans, and Northern Chinese people prefer wheat-based products such as dumplings to rice, which is preferred by Southern Chinese people. In certain cultures, a plump figure is seen as healthy, and slenderness is seen as frailty. Cultural influences determine what parents and children eat and often their attitudes toward food.

Food choices of parents are also related to socioeconomic variables of education and income. Higher education is often associated with healthier food choices, such as higher fruit and vegetable consumption. Having parents who are well educated about nutritional choices helps children model the same behaviors. In addition, it increases the chances that those healthier foods are available in the household. Those with higher income can also afford to be more selective about the foods they eat, buy more nutritional foods even if they are already prepared, or hire help to run the household and cook.

Food and Family Dynamics

Food has been associated with relationships starting from infancy with mother-to-child feedings. During infant feedings, skin-to-skin contact and mutual gazing is thought to promote emotional bonding between the pair. *Oxytocin*, a mammalian hormone, is released during labor and when nipples are stimulated. The release of this chemical during breastfeeding is associated with lower heart rate and lowered anxiety in the mother enhancing the tendency to bond with the infant. The bonding in turn helps with infant survival by promoting mothers to stay close to their child.

As infants grow, mealtime often becomes a family ritual. Mealtimes help us socialize about food and food-related rules. Routines at mealtimes teach children about the way in which meals are consumed, how food is served, how to leave a dinner table, how and when to eat snacks, permissibility of wasting food, and how much and what kinds of food to eat. Parents, grandparents, caretakers,

and peers guide learning of these habits that are developed at an early age and persist through adulthood.

Food consumption is also influenced by rewards and punishments, verbally as parents communicate the distinction between what is okay and not okay, and also physically when food is used to reward—if you finish your vegetables or get straight A's, then you get ice cream. Rewarding and punishing experiences can help people associate emotions with foods, although they may lead to emotional eating; for example, eating sweets to make yourself feel better. While positive relationships with food can create healthy eating habits, criticism, inappropriate rewards, and misinformation can lead to disordered eating and other negative eating habits.

Besides being just an educational opportunity, mealtimes are also for individuals to come together and share an experience as a group. They provide opportunities to talk to one another and connect, discuss daily concerns and issues, give opinions, and have conflict. Even the ritual of having regular meals together can provide stability to a family, which is important in maintaining family cohesion and healthy eating, especially for daughters. In other words, nutritional quality is enhanced in more cohesive, functional family environments.

Changes in Family Mealtimes

Despite the benefits and social importance of mealtimes, recent studies, including landmark work by Robert Putnam, document the decline of family dinners. One explanation for the decreases in family mealtime is *time scarcity*—feeling like there isn't enough time. This effect is caused by the increase in responsibilities as family members work both inside and outside the home, an increase in productivity and longer work hours for some. Working more hours is especially true for those with less income, minorities, dual-income families, and single mothers. As a consequence of increasing demands both at home and at work, individuals experience less time to plan for, prepare, and consume meals.

Responsibility for food planning and preparation has been shifting in recent times, from being solely the woman's responsibility to being slightly

more egalitarian, with men and husbands taking on more household and food preparation responsibilities than in previous generations. As a consequence, couples and families are more involved in negotiating responsibilities of food planning.

Despite the added help, however, families still experience time constraints and feel that they have less time to prepare meals, which leads individuals to eat more outside of the house, many times consuming fastfoods. The availability of family restaurants and fast-food eateries makes dining convenient, but it often has the negative side effect of compromising nutritional quality and family mealtimes. Parents can see the exchange as a necessary compromise given their busy schedules and limited personal energy; however, this trade off is also often associated with guilt for not being able to provide the “right” kinds of foods and forgoing family bonding time.

Other Social Influences

Whether we know it or not, food consumption is also influenced by the people around us. One theory of *impression management* suggests that people restrict their food consumption to increase favorability in the eyes of others. Individuals who eat lightly are thought to show self-constraint, good manners, or femininity when eating. When paired with opposite-sex strangers, people decrease the amount of food they eat. When paired with people who eat sparingly, participants eat less than when paired with people who eat a lot. Food consumption is restricted when others are watching, despite one’s level of hunger, and this effect is especially exaggerated when the other person is not eating.

People generally restrict eating or match others in how much they eat to present themselves in a favorable light. However, *matching* occurs even when other people are not present in the room. If there is any chance that someone can evaluate them, people tend to look for cues from others, or cues left by others, to determine what is appropriate and eat similar amounts. Because eating can produce a self-conscious experience, when someone might be observing, restricted eating can decrease the time spent in such an uncomfortable state and may be the only way, in some cases, to make a favorable impression on an observer.

Most impression management and matching studies are conducted with strangers or in labs, where situations may be somewhat ambiguous. This may lead to more self-conscious eating and the need to take cues from others. In contrast to these previous findings, another major finding in the food consumption literature is that of *social facilitation*, which shows that we tend to eat more with others than we do when alone. This effect seems to be stronger when eating with familiar others, such as friends or family, than it does when eating with strangers. The effect is also generally stronger as the size of the group increases.

According to the *time-extension hypothesis*, time spent in the presence of food increases when others are present, so that increases the amount of food eaten. Alternatively, having a lot of people around may distract us from paying attention to our own food consumption, feelings of fullness, and the need to manage our impression.

Food as an Aphrodisiac

Whether used to enhance a sexual experience or to actually increase the libido, foods such as chocolate, oysters, ginseng, and strawberries have often been thought to boost one’s sexual appetite. To date, however, research has not supported the sexual effects of food on libido or sexual performance. Foods can produce physiologic effects—for example, spicy foods increasing heart rate, chocolate enhancing mood, and alcohol lowering inhibitions. Although foods may have some effect, their direct connection to sexual desire or performance has yet to be determined.

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See also Body Image, Relationship Implications; Family Routines and Rituals; Gender Roles in Relationships

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FORGIVENESS

Forgiveness is a response to being wronged that entails a change of heart in which anger, resentment, or indignation gives way to an attitude of goodwill toward the wrongdoer. Married persons view the capacity to seek and grant forgiveness as one of the most significant factors contributing to marital longevity and marital satisfaction, supporting Robert Quillen's widely cited observation, "A happy marriage is the union of two forgivers." In Western culture, forgiveness is thus considered critical in close relationships. The relevance of forgiveness for intimate relationships is further emphasized by the fact that our deepest affiliative needs are satisfied in close relationships and that partners in such relationships inevitably injure each other. Forgiveness provides a means of maintaining relatedness in the face of such injury. Recognition of this fact has led to an explosion of research on forgiveness in close relationships over the last decade.

Because it is a complex construct, considerable effort has been expended on conceptualizing forgiveness and how it might best be studied. Although a consensus has yet to emerge, central to various approaches to forgiveness is the idea of a freely chosen motivational transformation in which the desire to seek revenge and to avoid contact with the transgressor is overcome. It is generally agreed that forgiveness is an intentional process initiated by a deliberate decision to forgive. This position is consistent with philosophical writings that define forgiveness as the forswearing of resentment toward the wrongdoer. This entry reviews what is known about forgiveness and its effects on close relationships.

Forgiveness Distinguished From Related Constructs

The reference to effort by the forgiver embodied in the definition of forgiveness just outlined distinguishes forgiveness from related constructs such as forgetting (passive removal of the offense from consciousness; to forgive is more than not thinking about the offense), condoning (no longer viewing the act as a wrong and thereby removing need for forgiveness), and pardon (which can be granted only by a representative of society, such as a judge). Thus, the common phrase, "forgive and forget," is misleading, as forgiveness is only possible in the face of a remembered wrong.

In the relationship context, forgiveness needs to be distinguished from reconciliation. Although an inherently interpersonal construct, forgiveness occurs primarily within the individual. Interpersonal events, such as expressions of remorse by the wrongdoer, influence forgiveness, but the motivational change it embodies occurs largely within the individual. Reconciliation, in contrast, restores a relationship between persons and is a dyadic process that requires appropriate participation by both parties: It involves the restoration of violated trust and requires the goodwill of both partners. Forgiveness increases the likelihood of reconciliation but is not synonymous with it. There is no contradiction involved in forgiving a wrongdoer and ending one's relationship with the person. Reconciliation can occur without forgiveness, further emphasizing the need to distinguish between them.

Forgiveness also needs to be distinguished from accommodation. Accommodation involves responding to potentially destructive partner behavior by inhibiting the natural tendency to react in kind and instead reacting in a constructive manner. Potentially destructive partner behavior may take many forms but only when it represents a wrong is forgiveness relevant. Wrongs give rise to moral anger, a form of anger that occurs when a moral principle (an ought) is abrogated. In addition, accommodation might occur because potentially destructive partner behavior is construed in such a way that its destructive nature is ignored, overlooked, or downplayed or, when fully recognized, is condoned or excused. Under these circumstances, forgiveness is not a relevant concern. Although under certain conditions accommodation and forgiveness overlap,

accommodation is a much broader construct than forgiveness.

Who Benefits From Forgiveness?

Considering this question highlights a further characteristic of forgiveness. One view is that release from negative affect, cognition, and behavior toward the offender makes the forgiver the primary beneficiary. Because research on forgiveness has focused primarily on the forgiver, forgiveness has been viewed from this perspective. Most of what is known about forgiveness therefore rests on inferences made from the absence of a negative motivational orientation toward the transgressor. A second viewpoint emphasizes the offender as the primary beneficiary because he or she receives an undeserved gift and is released from an obligation. This perspective tends to emphasize the positive dimension of forgiveness. At the empirical level, there is evidence of at least two underlying dimensions of forgiveness, a negative dimension and a positive or benevolence dimension. However, there is less agreement among researchers about whether forgiveness requires a benevolent or positive response (e.g., compassion, empathy, affection, approach behavior) to the offender or whether the absence of negative responses (e.g., hostility, anger, avoidance) is sufficient.

The negative dimension, known as unforgiveness, sometimes yields two sub-dimensions, retaliation directed at the partner and partner avoidance. In the context of close relationships, change regarding both positive and negative dimensions of forgiveness is necessary. It is difficult to imagine an optimal relational outcome without forgiveness restoring real goodwill toward the offending partner. Given ongoing interaction between intimates, the nature of the relationship (e.g., closeness, quality) was a natural starting point for the study of forgiveness in relationships.

Forgiveness Is Related to Central Relationship Characteristics

A number of studies have shown that forgiveness is robustly and positively related to core relationship constructs, specifically commitment, closeness, and

relationship satisfaction. In addition, forgiveness is positively associated with the ability to effectively resolve relationship conflict. Although important, the documentation of such associations raises questions about the direction of effects. It can be argued that following a relational transgression, forgiveness has to occur before damaged closeness and commitment can be restored: It is difficult for the hurt individual to feel close to his or her offending partner if he or she still harbors a grudge about the transgression. Conversely, it also has been argued that the forgiveness-commitment association is driven by commitment because highly committed individuals may be more motivated to forgive simply because they intend to remain in their current relationship. Consistent with this viewpoint is some experimental data suggesting that greater commitment facilitates interpersonal forgiveness. However, manipulation of constructs such as commitment and forgiveness raises practical and ethical difficulties making experimental research difficult. Recognition that psychological changes in forgiveness, closeness, and commitment following an interpersonal transgression necessarily have a temporal component points to longitudinal research as a potential means of determining direction of effects.

Longitudinal evidence indicates that forgiveness promotes increases in commitment, whether forgiveness is assessed in terms of decreased retaliation, decreased partner avoidance, or increased benevolence toward the partner. Limited evidence also shows effects from commitment to forgiveness in that greater commitment predicts decreases in partner avoidance. Regarding relationship satisfaction, the picture that emerges also supports bidirectional effects. For example, a spouse's marital satisfaction predicts his or her forgiveness 12 months later and vice versa. In a similar vein, husband marital quality predicts later wife forgiveness whereas wife forgiveness predicts husband's later marital satisfaction.

Relationship satisfaction also influences documented differences between victim and perpetrator perspectives of transgressions, which may explain why forgiveness and satisfaction are related. Specifically, victims tend to overlook details that facilitate forgiving and embellish their memories with details that make forgiving more difficult, whereas transgressors tend to embellish details, such as extenuating circumstances, that facilitate

forgiving. However, individuals in highly satisfying relationships are less likely to exhibit these self-serving biases than are individuals in less satisfying relationships. Existing data are consistent with a causal sequence in which positive relationship quality leads to more benign interpretations of a transgression, which in turn promote forgiveness. Relationship satisfaction may therefore help meet the challenge forgiveness poses whereby the victimized partner has to cancel a debt that is often perceived as bigger than the debt acknowledged by the transgressing partner.

More Than an Artifact?

The robust association between forgiveness and relationship satisfaction raises an important challenge. Because forgiveness is conceptualized and measured at the intrapersonal level, data pertaining to it rely exclusively on self-reports. It is thus possible that forgiveness serves merely as a proxy for relationship satisfaction. Research on marriage is replete with constructs and measures that unknowingly tap into the same domain. As a result, the marital literature is strewn with an unknown number of tautological findings resulting from content overlap in the operations used to assess purportedly different constructs. Is the study of forgiveness in relationships simply the latest instance of this phenomenon?

A few studies have addressed this challenge by statistically controlling relationship satisfaction scores when examining forgiveness and its correlates. This work suggests that forgiveness is not simply relationship satisfaction by another name. For example, a well documented correlate of relationship satisfaction is conflict behavior. Forgiveness accounts for variability in concurrent conflict resolution beyond that which can be attributed to the relationship satisfaction of the partners in the relationship. Moreover, over a 12-month period, wives' self-reported benevolence predicts husbands' reports of conflict resolution independently of each spouse's satisfaction and wives' reports of conflict resolution.

More Than a Trait?

Perhaps forgiveness in close relationships simply reflects the partners' traits. This seems like a

reasonable hypothesis given the finding that a substantial portion of the variability in willingness to forgive a transgression (between 22 percent and 44 percent) is attributable to stable individual differences in the tendency to forgive. This hypothesis embodies two notions, that forgiveness reflects a stable tendency of the forgiver, their dispositional forgivingness, or the forgivability of the offending partner. But there is also a third possibility in that forgiveness may reflect relationship-specific factors. When these possibilities were examined, reactions to spouse transgressions were found to be determined largely by relationship-specific factors rather than by individual characteristics of the forgiving spouse or the offending partner.

More Than an Act?

There is the temptation to identify forgiving with a specific statement of forgiveness or an overt act of forgiveness. However, the verb form *to forgive* is not performative but instead signals that a decision to forgive has occurred. The statement by itself does not constitute forgiveness but sets in motion a process with a presumed endpoint that unfolds over time.

This creates particular challenges in a relationship. Although the words "I forgive you" may signal the beginning of a process for the speaker (of trying to forgive the transgression), they tend to be seen as the end of the matter by the offending partner who is likely to be only too willing to put the transgression in the past and act as if it never happened. The offending partner may therefore be puzzled, annoyed, or angry when incompletely resolved feelings of resentment about the harm-doing intrude on subsequent discourse or behavior in the relationship.

The potential for misunderstanding also occurs when communications regarding forgiveness are poorly executed. The partner may see even forgiveness that is offered in a genuine manner as a put down, a form of retaliation, or a humiliation if it is unskillfully executed. Finally, statements of forgiveness may be intentionally abused. They can be used strategically to convey contempt, engage in one-upping, and the like. Likewise, verbal statements of forgiveness may not reflect true feelings. Such statements of forgiveness without accompanying internal changes have been labeled *hollow forgiveness*.

What Determines Forgiveness?

Researchers have repeatedly found that the more severe the transgression the harder it is to forgive. Forgiveness can be observed in exchanges between the offender and the victim, and how these exchanges unfold is likely to influence the forgiveness process. For example, it is well established that a sincere apology from the transgressor facilitates the forgiveness process.

Certain individual differences are related to forgiveness of relationship partners. Greater forgiveness is predicted by more agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability, and extraversion and higher self-esteem and need for approval. However, as noted earlier, relationship level factors are relatively more important in predicting forgiveness, and these include the factors mentioned thus far, as well as the tendency to repeat offenses and the degree of dependent and anxious attachment that exists between partners.

Benign attributions for the offending partner's behavior (e.g., "He was late for our date because the traffic was heavier than usual") are related to greater levels of forgiveness than are nonbenign or conflict-promoting attributions (e.g., "He was late for our date because he doesn't value our time together"). Among married couples, benign attributions predict forgiveness both directly and indirectly through lessening negative emotional reactions to the transgression and increasing empathy toward the transgressing spouse. Evidence also suggests that, compared with husbands, wives' attributions are more predictive of their forgiveness, a finding that is consistent with a larger body of evidence that supports a strong association between attributions and behavior among women. The robust association between attributions and forgiveness has led practitioners to pay explicit attention to attributions in interventions designed to facilitate forgiveness.

Finally, empathy plays an important role in the forgiveness process. Empathy has been shown to weaken motivations to avoid and seek revenge against the transgressor and to foster benevolent motivations regarding him or her. These motivational changes are assumed to occur because empathy causes the victim to resume caring for the transgressing partner on the basis of (a) the transgressor's imagined guilt or distress over his or her

behavior, (b) the transgressor's imagined longing for a restored relationship, or (c) a desire to repair the breached relationship. Empathy may also help restore the perceived overlap between one's own identity and the identity of the transgressing relationship partner. This perceived overlap might cause the victim to view forgiveness as being in his or her own best interests as well as in the best interests of the transgressor. However, the precise mechanism whereby empathy influences forgiveness remains unclear.

Can Forgiveness Be Taught?

Several interventions have been shown to increase forgiveness in romantic relationships, and various theoretical models of forgiveness have been used to develop these interventions. Most often, these are delivered in the context of psychoeducational groups or relationship enrichment interventions. An initial meta-analysis of 14 studies showed that there is a linear relationship between the length of an intervention and its efficacy: Clinically relevant interventions (defined as those of 6 or more hours duration) produced a change in forgiveness that is reliably different from zero, with nonclinically relevant interventions (defined as 1 or 2 hours duration) yielding a small but measurable change in forgiveness.

A more recent meta-analysis of 27 studies yielded a similar result and demonstrated that interventions were more effective in promoting forgiveness of partners than were attention placebo and no treatment control groups. In this analysis, however, intervention status predicted intervention effectiveness beyond the amount of time spent in the intervention. Most of the interventions included attention to helping couples understand what forgiveness is and is not (87 percent), encouraged them to recall the hurt (95 percent), and helped victims empathize with the offending partner (89 percent).

Although these findings demonstrate that we have made good progress in devising interventions to induce forgiveness, they refer only to self-reported forgiveness. This raises the question, "Does induced forgiveness produce positive individual or relationship outcomes?" Few studies address this question, and those that do have provided mixed results. This reflects, in part, the

fact that interventions tend to have been delivered to samples that are asymptomatic with regard to individual and relationship health. It is therefore noteworthy that participants screened for psychological distress before a forgiveness intervention showed improved mental health (less depression and anxiety) post intervention and at a 12-month follow-up. The analogous investigation to document impact on relationship outcomes remains to be conducted.

Cautionary Note

Research on forgiveness interventions and on forgiveness more generally has paid insufficient attention to an important element of the relationship context. Specifically, by focusing on forgiveness of isolated transgressions, patterns of offenses and forgiveness within a relationship have been overlooked. Given the rich history of transgressions that most couples experience, it is important to move beyond single offenses because each transgression is embedded in a complex relational story. For example, one cannot help a wife move toward forgiveness of her husband's onetime infidelity in the same manner that one would treat a couple in which the husband had a history of multiple transgressions of this kind. Thus, there is the need to consider how the pattern of transgressions over time influences the forgiveness of subsequent offenses within the relationship.

Conclusion

Recognition that forgiveness can be conceptualized and studied in secular terms has led to a marked increase of research on the topic, including its role in close relations. Forgiveness is related to core relationship constructs such as commitment and relationship satisfaction, though the mechanisms that account for the relationship are not yet fully understood. Evidence also indicates that psychoeducational interventions can facilitate forgiveness, but the impact of such interventions on individual and relational well-being remains to be determined. Promising findings from basic research on forgiveness in relationships suggests that facilitating forgiveness will prove to be salutary.

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See also Apologies; Attribution Processes in Relationships; Conflict Resolution; Couple Therapy; Revenge; Satisfaction in Relationships; Vengeance

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FOSTER CARE, RELATIONSHIPS IN

In 2005, Child Protective Services (CPS) found that almost 1 million children in the United States were substantiated victims of child abuse and neglect. Importantly, more than one third of these children were placed in foster care because they were at “imminent risk” for danger. Based on federal statistics, children enter foster care for several reasons: neglect (64.4 percent), physical abuse (9.1 percent), sexual abuse (3.3 percent), or multiple abuses (16.0 percent). Family-based foster care is the most common placement for children removed from their biological families, with 70 percent of

youth being placed in a nonrelative (46 percent) or kinship (24 percent) foster home. The average age of children entering care in the United States is 8.2 years old, and their mean length of stay is 28.6 months, although the range can vary from days to years. Half of those children entering foster care are expected to return to their biological parents.

Although practices vary, there is usually little preparation for children entering foster care. Children often move straight from their biological family into a foster home. The child and birth parent are given little or no information about the family with whom the child will live. The same is true for foster parents. They receive a call from a social services agency with vague details about a child needing placement. Further, foster families have a range of parenting experiences and may never have had a child in their home before. Most states have training for foster parents that addresses common issues, but little is known about the effectiveness of these programs for increasing knowledge of children's needs and development. Relationships, although theoretically central to foster care, often take a back seat to the pressing demands of the system. This entry explores the historical factors that affect the relational quality of children in foster care, as well as those they develop with their foster-care givers.

Psychosocial Adjustment of Children in Foster Care

Research on the many risk factors in foster care includes maltreatment, prenatal substance exposure, parental mental health problems, exposure to chronic poverty, and a disrupted and chaotic home life. The trauma of separation from biological parents as children enter foster care may be another risk factor for development. Individually, each of these risk factors is associated with a host of negative outcomes. Cumulatively, they put this group of children at high risk for poor outcomes, including those (e.g., unemployment and incarceration) that are costly to communities and to society in general.

Given these risks, it is not surprising that children in foster care have social and emotional problems at rates 3 to 10 times higher than the general population, as well as developmental delays,

physical problems, and difficulties in academic functioning that far surpass those of other children in the community. During adolescence and adulthood, studies show that children in foster care are at increased risk for substance abuse, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, school failure, incarceration, and suicide. Although these findings appear bleak, the consequences of remaining in an abusive home are even more dire. Scientifically, it is hard to show that foster care has improved children's lives, although research is beginning that suggests children who are removed from their birth families do better socially, emotionally, and academically than do their siblings living at home.

Relationships and Risk Factors in Foster Care

By definition, children entering foster care have suffered a disruption in their relationship with their primary caregiver, as well as with friends, teachers, classmates, neighbors, and pets. Children move from an unsafe home into a home with strangers. Importantly, evidence suggests that in addition to the actual placement disrupting the parent-child relationship, many of the risk factors that bring a child into care are also those that have been independently linked to disturbed emotional ties with caregivers.

Maltreatment

Many of the risk factors associated with foster care are also correlated with relational disturbances. Most children enter foster care having experienced child abuse or neglect. Research is clear that maltreatment has an adverse effect on children's social, emotional, and cognitive development. Childhood maltreatment has been linked to aggression, depression, anxiety, attentional deficits, cognitive delays, and academic difficulties. In adulthood, a history of maltreatment predicts a host of psychological, social, and health problems, which may include heart troubles, alcoholism, and suicide.

Problems begin early in the lives of maltreated children. Young children show difficulties in their relationships with primary caregivers. Research indicates that without intervention, most maltreated infants will form maladaptive relationships with

their foster-care givers. This is because the history and problems that children arrive with often require specialized parenting skills. For example, Mary Dozier's research has shown that foster parents often respond to their children's responses "in kind"; that is, if the child does not seek attention, then the parents will not go out of their way to attend to the child. However, research suggests that foster infants can form secure attachments with their caretakers, but it is more likely to occur if the child is placed before 12 months of age and the foster-care givers exhibit their own history of an early secure attachment. More is known about the attachment of maltreated children who remain home. Recent research by Sheree Toth and associates indicates that almost 90 percent of infants with a substantiated CPS report who remained at home exhibited a disorganized attachment, which remained relatively stable over time. Disorganized attachment status in childhood has been linked to a range of psychological symptoms across the life span and is likely a factor in the reported increase in the incidence of attachment disorders in maltreated youth.

Parental Substance Abuse

Although no well-defined method exists for assessing substance abuse for biological parents of children in foster care, research indicates that it is common, with rates ranging from 43 percent to 79 percent. Substance abuse interacts with child well-being and relationships. The literature on children of substance-abusing caregivers highlights difficulties in development, including biological, emotional, and behavioral functioning. The link between parental substance use and child development is not simple, and multiple pathways have been demonstrated. Past research has identified direct links between parental substance use and the development of similar problems in offspring, especially for same-sex parent-child pairs. The child's early primary relationships provide an indirect link through caregiver mental illness, stress in the parent-child relationship, and deficits in parenting and parental monitoring.

Parental Psychopathology

Although only limited data are available for children in foster care, research on families involved

with CPS indicates that parental mental health needs are common. Results from the only national study of families involved with CPS indicate that 23 percent of caretakers whose children stayed in home reported symptoms indicative of a depressive disorder. In addition, estimates of other mental health disorders include 13 percent with psychotic disorders and 7 percent with other unspecified mental health disorders. This is important because maternal depression is related with reduced attachment security, less parental monitoring, and increased parenting stress.

Family Poverty

Children in foster care are exposed to maltreatment, parental substance abuse, and other trauma and live in some of the poorest U.S. homes. Family finance data for birth families of children in foster care are not available, but the income of 52 percent of families involved with CPS was at or below the federal poverty level. This compares with 11 percent of the general population who reported living at this level in the 2000 census. Financial findings for foster homes were significantly better, with 42 percent of nonrelative and 32 percent of kinship foster parents reporting incomes greater than 200 percent of the poverty level.

Poverty is a social condition, as well as a factor associated with negative effects on child development. Contextual influences such as adverse conditions in the home environment, poor quality of parenting, and parental physical and mental health problems appear to exacerbate neighborhood influences. One prevailing conceptualization maintains that poverty may affect children through the disruption of interpersonal relationships and interactions. As poverty alone adversely affects child outcomes, the added hazards associated with maltreatment and other risk factors are particularly pernicious.

Placement Disruptions

Moving from one foster home to another is common in foster care. One study of children's moves during foster care in California found that the average child moves 4.2 times in an 18-month period (the range was 1–15). Repeated movement is likely to have a profound effect on children's

relationships with caretakers—foster, biological, or other. Although relationship status has not been assessed as a function of moves, Rae Newton and associates found that moves often occurred in response to children's disruptive behavior, but that these behaviors escalated with each move. Thus, the transient nature of foster care appears to be yet another factor impairing the relational quality of its youngest consumers.

Relationships in Foster Care

Foster care was originally designed to provide "normal" homes for "normal" children. This initial assumption is inaccurate because research shows that the children who enter foster care actually show above average rates of psychological and behavioral problems. The formation of positive, healthy relationships between children and their foster parents is theoretically important because, as researchers have noted, there is no greater influence on children while they are in foster care than those who directly care for them. The foster family potentially provides a healthy context for children to solidify competencies, modify maladaptive behaviors, and develop new skills that may not have been modeled or taught in their biological homes.

Little research has focused on the qualities of foster parents that are related to optimal child outcomes. A review of available work indicates that parental nurturance, consistent limit-setting, and commitment to the child over time—regardless of whether they return to the birth home or not—are important to children's adjustment and functioning in foster care. In fact, commitment has been shown to be a better predictor of children's adjustment than attachment. This is most likely because commitment is transportable, but attachment, which develops over time and may be terminated after the child moves, is built on constancy and the level of security. In addition, a safe and stimulating home environment and a stable placement all contribute to positive outcomes for children in foster care. Examining the necessary ingredients for a quality foster relationship from the children's perspective is an area of study that is in its infancy. A recent study found that most children in care were satisfied with the people with whom they lived,

with high levels of relatedness and closeness to caregivers.

Although questions about relationships in foster care are not limited to attachment, this has generally been the focus of child welfare and mental health. The attachment status of children in foster care is important because these relationships affect interactions with the primary caregiver, as well as how youth will approach and react to later relationships with adults and intimate partners. Thus, early caregiving deficits, paired with repeated rejections and movements in the foster-care system make it less likely for children to form healthy, secure relationships in the future.

Although attachment interventions for children in care are rare, recent studies shed light on the benefits of improved relationships with foster parents. Dozier and colleagues' attachment intervention aims to train foster parents to better provide nurturing care to infants. Similarly, Phil Fisher and colleagues' preschool intervention targets developmental and social needs through a range of treatments. These programs both have been shown to produce increases in attachment security, but also a change in the children's biological systems. More specifically, past research on children in foster care show that they have significantly higher rates of cortisol abnormalities than do their nonmaltreated peers. Cortisol is an important hormone because it moderates the body's physical response to stress. The production of cortisol is especially important during infancy and early childhood because it is socially regulated and is highly vulnerable to disturbance in the absence of sensitive, nurturing caregiving. Cortisol dysregulation has long-term implications and has been linked to a range of symptoms, such as aggression, anxiety, and depression. The research provided by Fisher, Dozier, and others indicates that interventions can enhance attachment status while children are in foster care, and that the relationships developed in these programs benefit children across the broad range of functioning.

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See also Abuse and Violence in Relationships; Alcoholism, Effects on Relationships; Attachment Theory; Child Abuse and Neglect; Mother–Child Relationship in Adolescence and Adulthood; Mother–Child Relationship in Early Childhood; Parent–Child Relationships

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FRIENDSHIP, CONFLICT AND DISSOLUTION

Conflicts occur when friends seek incompatible goals or outcomes or they favor incompatible means to the same ends. To prevent interpersonal conflicts from adversely affecting their relationship, friends need to effectively manage these conflicts. Much of what has been written about conflict and relationship dissolution pertains to courtship, marriage, and family. This entry focuses on those aspects of interpersonal conflict and relationship dissolution that pertain specifically to friendship. Although there may be many causes of friendship dissolution, such as separation (moving away), change in social or financial status, marriage, or change in interests, this entry focuses on conflicts over relationship rules, which may destroy the relationship.

Rules of Friendship

From a rules perspective, people are faced with choices. As mutual expectations regarding what is appropriate in a given situation, rules generally

function as criteria for choice among alternatives. As constraints on the availability of choices, rules are guides to action. These constraints are normative in that when people know the rules, they tend to conform to them.

Data collected from a variety of countries show that the following six rules are generally endorsed as important for friendship:

1. Volunteering help in time of need.
2. Trusting and confiding in each other.
3. Showing verbal and nonverbal emotional support.
4. Communicating in ways that make him or her happy while in each other's company.
5. Speaking up for the other in his or her absence.
6. Sharing news of success with him or her.

This list is not meant to be all-inclusive but, rather, to suggest that identifiable rules define and govern friendships. If one views all but the second rule as indicative of a helping orientation and the second rule as the trust-confidentiality dimension, then helping orientation, trust, and confidentiality are important in defining friendship.

Identifying rules that are essential to a relationship more clearly distinguishes that specific relationship from other types. For example, friendship may be distinguished from romantic relationships, especially marriage. For many people, marriage involves its own rules such as agreeing to express a long-term commitment in a public ritual or wedding, to no longer play the field, to engage in sex, to share property, and to have and care for children. In the United States, spouses also expect one another to be good friends, so they usually share two relationships, a marriage and a friendship.

Friendship Conflicts

Like people in other types of relationships, friends may engage in many conflicts that do not involve relationship rules. For example, they may disagree about a political candidate, movie, or type of food. These disagreements usually do not threaten the friendship. However, disagreements about the rules of friendship may dissolve it.

Friendship rules become issues in interpersonal conflicts when one of the friends breaks one or more relationship rules, such as failing to help in time of need or lying to the other. Another way occurs when friends misunderstand the friendship rules and take too much advantage of others. The friendship rules are the issues in the conflict because the people involved have tacitly or overtly agreed on them, and now one person has violated or misunderstood one or more of the relationship rules.

Conflict and Dissolution

How does conflict regarding a friendship rule lead to relationship dissolution? Imagine that a person runs out of gas outside of town and calls someone she considers a good friend to come get her. Suppose the other responds with "Why call me? Why don't you call a taxi?" If one fails to help in time of need, the friendship is in trouble. The same logic holds for the friendship trust rule. As we develop friendships with others, we tend to develop a truth-bias toward them: We assume that they tell us the truth. So, lying to an acquaintance about why one does not want to go shopping is different than lying to a good friend because friends are supposed to trust each other. Violating the friendship rules of helping when needed and telling the truth become conflict issues because the two people involved have tacitly or overtly agreed to be friends, which means abiding by the rules governing the relationship, and now one person has broken "the agreement." Rules theory would predict that a friendship is in trouble when one of the partners violates the rules of friendship.

Although one might break a friendship rule, others might misunderstand their application and try to take too much advantage of friends who want to help them. Some people have acute emotional needs that can turn a friendship into a pseudo therapist-client relationship. This is different from a confidential type of friendship where friends listen to each other, give advice, and occasionally vent their anger. In more extreme cases, it is difficult for the average person to help a friend who constantly dwells on his or her own emotional problems and cannot change the subject for long without returning to and dwelling on it.

In other cases, a friend's needs may be too great a financial burden. Such a friend can present real problems because he or she constantly asks to borrow money, or when a friend accepts that person's checks, they bounce. Some may move in and live off their friends, contributing nothing financially. According to relationship rules, there are other types of interpersonal relationships, where one may expect to receive a greater degree of financial help than from friends, such as one's spouse, parents, and adult children. Friends may be expected to help one another, but a dependent person may demand too much. In this case, the problem consists of a single "behavior," such as asking to borrow constantly or only talking about one's personal emotional problems.

Other problems occur when the problem pertains to more than a single behavior. Many friendships are based on similar interests, usually involving a particular activity, such as people who play golf, bar hop, square dance, play cards, fish, or hunt together. These friends see themselves as companions. They can trust their companions to meet with them, play fair, and keep discussions about their activity among them. One does not expect a friend to tell "outsiders" that he or she is a bad golfer, drinks too much, or performs any questionable acts. These friendships may comfortably be limited to particular shared interests. However, if one tries to expand the limited basis for the friendship to other activities or attempts to develop a more confidential type of friendship, where they disclose at great depth, they may push the friendship beyond the limits of trust or other friendship rules. People need to be sensitive to their friends, work with them on maintaining a comfortable level of involvement, and not push them beyond their capabilities. This problem differs from misunderstanding the helping orientation rule discussed earlier in that it consists of more than one behavior. The other person depends too much on a friend in a variety of ways. For example, Ernesto enjoys fishing two to three times a week and meets Marty, who agrees to fish with Ernesto. The problem is that Marty also wants Ernesto to fish every day, wants him to accompany him on other activities during the rest of the day, and calls frequently just to talk. When Ernesto declines to meet more often or says he can't talk right then, Marty gets angry at Ernesto. The

problem is that Marty is demanding a broader range of activities and more time and effort from Ernesto than he can give to the friendship.

Friendship Repair Ritual

The previous cases call attention to common conflicts that may dissolve a friendship. However, if the offending person follows a “repair ritual,” she or he may be able to repair or preserve the friendship. Of course, at many of the steps of the ritual, one person could elect to terminate the relationship. The repair ritual has four steps:

1. *An offending situation:* A person believes that the other has acted in an inappropriate way.
2. *A reproach:* The offended person calls attention to the offense and asks the offending person for an explanation. However, the offended person may decide to end the friendship by avoiding the other person.
3. *A remedy:* The other person takes action to rectify matters. However, an offender may refuse to take such actions, which in all likelihood ends the friendship. Refusals include turning the reproach around and questioning the right of the offended person to make a reproach. If, however, the offender is willing to take responsibility for his or her actions, there are three types of actions an offender can take to restore the friendship: offer an account (through excuses or justifications), make a concession, offer an apology, or combine any of these.

Accounts are explanations for behavior when questioned. Accounts serve an important function in that they explain how people interpret the situation at hand. Accounts may take the form of excuses or justifications. These types of accounts are not always concocted but, rather, may be legitimate extenuating circumstances unknown to the person offended. In such cases, one may simply explain his or her side of the matter, without admitting guilt or apologizing. In other cases, it may be necessary to apologize. *Excuses* admit that the offense occurred but deny responsibility for it. The offender can claim impairment, diminished responsibility, or overriding problems of his or her own.

Justifications diminish the meaning of the offense rather than diffuse responsibility for it. Here, the offender acknowledges that an act was committed while maybe claiming that it hurt no one, the offended person deserved it, or the offender had good intentions when committing the offense. *Concessions* admit the offender’s guilt and include apologies and offers of restitution. When an excuse or justification is not acceptable, some concession must be made or an apology given. *Apologies* allow a person to take responsibility for an action, but they also request a pardon for the action by attempting to convince the offended person that the incident is not representative of what the offender is really like.

4. *An acknowledgment:* An evaluation of the account is supplied by the one offended. The offended party may honor the account, signaling that the “score is even.” The offended party may retreat from the reproach, dropping his or her right to make it. The offended party may also simply drop or switch the topic, moving away from the reproach without resolving the issue. Most problematic for the friendship is a *rejection of the account*, either by taking issue with it or by simply restating the reproach as though no account was given. When the offender offers a remedy that is rejected, the friendship may be over.

The repair ritual provides friends with the means to restore a friendship following conflicts that range from embarrassing situations to relational transgressions. There may be other ways to restore or preserve a friendship without confronting the other and attempting to repair the friendship by resolving the conflict. People may choose to avoid the relationship issues raised in a conflict and act as though nothing happened. Or they may get back together after enough time passes. Based on the idea that it is better to be proactive than reactive, probably it is best to understand what it means to be a friend and abide by the rules of friendship.

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See also Accounts; Embarrassment; Repairing Relationships

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FRIENDSHIP FORMATION AND DEVELOPMENT

In the classic film *Casablanca*, the saloon owner delivers a famous line: “Louis, I think this is the beginning of a beautiful friendship.” This entry addresses questions surrounding the beginnings of friendships. How do people “make” friends? What is the process by which an acquaintanceship is transformed into a friendship? Research reveals that friendship formation is a complex process in which a number of factors must converge. First, the *environment* must bring two people into contact with one another. Second, the *situation* must be “right” for a friendship to develop. For example, both people must be at a point in life where they have the time and resources to devote to a new friendship. The qualities that people possess also play a role in friendship formation; *individual* factors such as attractiveness and social skills matter. Finally, friendship is ultimately a *dyadic* process. In other words, it takes two to form a friendship. As will be seen, friendships are more likely to form when the two people share important similarities, when liking is mutual, and when self-disclosures are reciprocated.

The Environment

For a friendship to develop, two people must be brought into contact with one another. The role of

physical proximity in friendship formation is well documented. For example, in a classic study, married students living in a student housing complex were asked to name the three people in the complex with whom they socialized most. Two thirds of the people named lived in the same building, and two thirds of these people lived on the same floor. Other studies have shown that people are likely to form friendships with those who live nearby (i.e., residential proximity). Proximity effects also have been shown in the workplace, in college dormitories, and in classrooms.

What is it about neighborhood, workplace, and school settings that promotes friendship formation? The short answer is that these settings provide opportunities for contact. The greater the amount of contact between two people, the greater the likelihood that they will become friends. However, physical proximity is becoming less important than it was in the past. Many people are now relying on the Internet as a venue for meeting potential friends. Thus, it is possible that in the future, environmental factors will be less crucial for friendship formation, although the people with whom we rub shoulders on a day-to-day basis will probably continue to be candidates for friendship formation.

The Situation

A number of “chance” factors influence whether or not friendships develop. One such factor is whether the two individuals will have opportunities for ongoing interactions and whether they will be able to interact on frequent basis. Importantly, both people also must be “available” for this kind of relationship.

Opportunities for Interaction

When two people meet each other, they usually know whether this is likely to be a one-time occurrence (e.g., chatting with a fellow passenger on an airplane) or whether their interactions will be ongoing (e.g., chatting with a new coworker). We are more likely to pursue a friendship with a person when we believe that there will be future opportunities to interact with him or her. This was demonstrated in a classic study in which research

participants watched a videotape of three people having a discussion. Some participants were led to believe that they would not be meeting anyone on the videotape; others were told that they would have a one-time meeting with one of the people on the videotape; still others were told that they would be meeting with one of the people during the next 5-week. Those who expected to meet during a five-week period rated the person in the videotape the most positively, followed by those who expected a one-time meeting. Those who did not expect to meet at all provided the least positive ratings. Other studies have shown that when we expect to interact with someone over an extended period, we tend to emphasize the positives and downplay the negatives so that our future interactions with the person will be smooth and enjoyable.

Frequency of Interactions

As just discussed, if we anticipate future interactions with a person, we evaluate him or her more positively than if we do not. Does the frequency of those interactions matter? The answer is yes. Considerable research shows that the more often we see someone—or even a photograph of a person—the more we like him or her. This phenomenon is referred to as the *mere exposure effect*. There is one exception: If we initially dislike someone, repeated contact can cause us to like the person even less. In general, however, the more contact we have with a person, the more we will like him or her, and the greater the probability that a friendship will form.

Availability

We do not form a friendship with every person with whom we have ongoing interactions. Another factor must be considered, namely whether we have room in our lives for a new friendship. Friendships require a number of resources—time, energy, and even money. Other commitments in life, such as time-consuming studies, work demands, and existing relationships (romantic partner, family, friendships) can prevent us from pursuing a promising new friendship. A friendship can form only if each person is available for this kind of relationship.

Thus, circumstantial factors affect the development of friendships. Friendships are more likely to

form if two people expect that they will have ongoing interactions, that they will be able to see each other on a frequent basis, and when each person has the time and energy to devote to forming a new relationship.

The Individual

Even if the situation is “right” for the development of a friendship, there is no guarantee that a friendship will form. Another important class of variables comes into play, namely whether the other person has qualities that we want in a friend—and vice versa. A number of characteristics make a person a desirable friendship candidate, including physical attractiveness, social skills, and responsiveness.

Physical Attractiveness

It is well known that looks are important in determining attraction to potential romantic partners. However, physical attractiveness also matters in the friendship selection process. Research conducted with adults and children shows that physical attractiveness is correlated with popularity—the better looking someone is, the greater the likelihood that he or she will be sought out as a friend.

Why are good-looking people at an advantage when it comes to making friends? One reason is the tendency to assume that “what is beautiful is good.” In other words, when people are attractive on the outside, we assume that they also are attractive on the inside and attribute positive qualities to them. Research also has shown that we assume that people who are good looking are similar to us in personality and attitudes. (As is discussed later, it is well-established that we are attracted to similar others.) Finally, evidence also indicates that people who are physically attractive may have better social skills than do those who are less attractive. From childhood on, good-looking people experience positive reactions from others, which results in increased self-confidence and social competence. Thus, interactions with physically attractive people may actually be more enjoyable than are interactions with those who are less attractive. There are a number of reasons, then, why good-looking people are pursued as friends.

Social Skills

It has been said that making friends is a skilled performance, much like learning a new sport or learning to drive a car. Research conducted with adults and children confirms that people who have good social skills are liked more than are those who are less socially skilled. Social skills include being competent at initiating conversations, asking appropriate questions, and showing interest in what the other person is saying. Social skills also include nonverbal behaviors such as appropriate patterning of eye contact and gaze and following norms for interpersonal spacing (e.g., respecting the other's personal space). Social skills are crucial at the beginning stage of friendships; those who are socially skilled are better at getting friendships "off the ground." Once a friendship is established, however, it becomes less important to be socially skilled and more important to be competent in providing warmth and support.

Responsiveness

Another individual-level characteristic that is closely related to social skill competence is responsiveness. A responsive individual pays attention to questions he or she is asked and makes appropriate, relevant responses. These behaviors convey interest, liking, and concern. As a result, the interaction partner feels more comfortable opening up, which, as we shall see, is an important element of the friendship formation process (see section on Self-Disclosure). Indeed, several experiments have shown that when people are interacting with a responsive (versus a nonresponsive) interaction partner, they feel liked by him or her, they report greater liking for him or her, and they see the person as someone who potentially could become a friend.

Thus, several individual characteristics are associated with friendship formation. Those who are physically attractive, who have good social skills, and who are responsive are likely to be sought out as friends.

The Dyad

A friendship is a relationship between two people. Thus, analyses of friendship formation must consider the characteristics of each individual, as well

as the interplay or the "chemistry" between them. As discussed next, friendships are most likely to form when liking is reciprocal, when self-disclosure is mutual, and when the two people share similarities.

Reciprocal Liking

"How I like to be liked, and what I do to be liked!" These words, penned by the 19th-century English writer Charles Lamb, are as applicable today as they were 200 years ago. In a classic demonstration of this phenomenon, groups of same-sex strangers engaged in weekly discussions during a 6-week period. Before the first meeting, each participant was told that based on personality information gathered earlier, the researchers could predict which group members would like him or her. (The names of these group members were actually randomly selected.) As expected, participants expressed the greatest liking for those group members who they believed liked them.

Interestingly, the perception that another person likes us may cause us to behave in ways that confirm that expectation. In another landmark study, researchers led participants to believe that their interaction partner either liked or disliked them. Those who believed their partner liked them engaged in more intimate self-disclosure, were more pleasant, and demonstrated fewer distancing behaviors than did those who believed they were disliked. Importantly, these behaviors lead the interaction partner to like them. Thus, when another person likes us, we tend to like them in return. Even the belief that another person likes us creates liking because it puts in motion a self-fulfilling prophecy whereby we behave in ways that produce the liking that we initially expected.

Self-Disclosure

We are generally attracted to a person who self-discloses to us because revealing personal information sends a message that he or she likes us and desires a closer relationship with us. Indeed, many studies have demonstrated that we like people who engage in intimate self-disclosure more than we like those who engage in non-intimate disclosures. The one exception to this pattern is when another person reveals "too much too soon"—highly intimate

self-disclosures from a stranger can elicit dislike, rather than liking.

We also like those to whom we have self-disclosed. The effect of engaging in self-disclosure (rather than being on the receiving end) was examined in a study in which pairs of strangers participated in a 10-minute “get acquainted” discussion. The more a participant self-disclosed, the more he or she liked the other and saw the other person as a potential friend. Thus, in general, the greater another person’s self-disclosure, the more we like him or her. We also like those to whom we have self-disclosed.

At the early stages of relationships, it is important for disclosures to be reciprocal. If Person A reveals something intimate about himself or herself, Person B needs to reciprocate with an equally intimate disclosure. Indeed, considerable evidence indicates that reciprocity of disclosure is associated with greater liking for an interaction partner. Reciprocity is considered important in establishing trust in a relationship. When we first meet another person, we do not know whether he or she can be trusted to keep our self-disclosures in confidence, whether he or she might use the information we have disclosed to hurt us, or whether he or she might ultimately reject us. We are more willing to risk being vulnerable if the other person is also taking the same risk. Thus, self-disclosure generally takes the form of “turn taking” in which we reveal personal information and then assess whether the other person reciprocates and whether he or she can be trusted with the information that we have shared. If the other person seems trustworthy, we will gradually increase the intimacy of our self-disclosures, while monitoring whether the other person is also increasing the intimacy of his or her disclosures. Once trust is established, it is not necessary for each self-disclosure to be reciprocated in each specific interaction; rather, there is an assumption of reciprocity over the long term.

Similarity

One of the most widely researched predictors of friendship formation is similarity. A broad base of evidence indicates that people are likely to become friends with those who are similar to them in demographic characteristics (e.g., age, physical health, education, religion, family background),

residential proximity, social status, physical attractiveness, and so on. Although adult friendships are the focus of this literature, most of these effects have been obtained in studies with children and adolescents as well.

The classic domain in which similarity effects have been investigated is attitude similarity. In early investigations of the role of similarity in attraction, participants were asked to complete a questionnaire assessing their attitudes on a variety of issues (e.g., politics, religion, tuition increases). They were then shown the same questionnaire supposedly filled out by a person who would be their partner during an experiment. In actuality, the researchers completed the questionnaire so that it appeared either similar to that of the research participant or dissimilar. Participants then were asked to give their impression of this person, before meeting him or her. Those who believed that the partner held attitudes similar to their own reported greater attraction and liking than did those who believed that they and their partner held dissimilar attitudes. Subsequent research demonstrated that these findings also apply to real-world friendships, namely that people tend to form and maintain friendships with those who are similar to them in attitudes. People also tend to develop friendships with those who share their values.

Similarity effects also are pronounced for activity preferences. We are more likely to form friendships with people who enjoy the same hobbies, sports, and leisure preferences that we enjoy. Interestingly, there is little evidence that people become friends because of personality similarity, although similarity effects have been found for more relationally oriented characteristics such as social and communication skills.

There is one domain in which similarity effects are found for children’s and adolescents’ friendships, but not for adults’ friendships, namely similarity in prosocial and antisocial behaviors. These effects are strongest for antisocial behavior. For example, research has shown that aggressive children seek out other aggressive children as early as preschool and that this tendency becomes more pronounced with age. Research also shows that adolescents tend to seek out as friends those who are similar to them in drug and alcohol use and school delinquency (e.g., cutting classes, quitting school).

Overall, substantial evidence indicates that we are likely to become friends with those who are similar to us. The only area in which similarity effects seem to be weak or nonexistent is personality similarity. Thus, it seems to matter less that our friends share our characteristics, than that they share our attitudes, values, social competencies, and leisure preferences.

Why are we more likely to form friendships with similar, rather than dissimilar, others? The most common explanation is that our views are validated by interacting with someone who shares them. Put another way, we feel more confident that we are “right” in our thinking if we encounter someone else who thinks just like us. Another explanation focuses on the enjoyment of interactions. The idea is that interactions are smoother and more pleasant if we agree with another person on most things. Disagreement tends to make interactions tense and strained.

In summary, a number of dyadic factors promote the formation of friendships. The two people must like each other. They must engage in a process of mutual self-disclosure in which the intimacy of information revealed gradually increases over time. And, finally, potential friends should be similar in most ways.

Beverly Fehr

See also Acquaintance Process; Developing Relationships; Friendships, Cross-Sex; Friendships, Sex Differences and Similarities; Friendships in Adolescence; Friendships in Childhood; Friendships in Late Adulthood; Friendships in Middle Adulthood; Friendships in Young Adulthood

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FRIENDSHIPS, CROSS-SEX

A cross-sex friendship (also called opposite-sex friendship or cross-gender friendship) is a friendship between a genetic female and male in which both partners label the relationship as a friendship. Cross-sex friendships do not involve family members, are nonromantic, and are almost always devoid of sexual contact. However, teens and young adults will sometimes have what they call *friends with benefits*, which are nonromantic cross-sex friendships in which the friends have sexual relations with one another.

Most cross-sex friendship research has focused on the friendships of heterosexual individuals, with little attention given to friendships between men and women or girls and boys in which one or both individuals are gay, lesbian, bisexual, or post-operative transsexuals. Some studies suggest that the dynamics are different in cross-sex friendships in which one or both partners are not heterosexual. For example, the mutual sexual attraction that often exists in heterosexual cross-sex friendships becomes much less of an issue if one of the friends is gay or lesbian.

As suggested by the definition of cross-gender friendships, cross-sex friendships are a type of friendship, similar in many respects to other kinds of friendship such as same-sex friendships and interracial friendships. Friendships between females and

males have been documented from early toddlerhood through old age. This entry tracks cross-sex friendship initiation and development across the life span; that is, from early childhood through the twilight years of one's life. In particular, generic and unique advantages of these friendships are identified and described as well as challenges that members of cross-sex friendships sometimes contend with. The entry concludes with speculation about the future of cross-sex friendship research and theory.

Cross-Sex Friendships Across the Life Span

Cross-sex friendship scholars generally agree that friendships between females and males sometimes occur between individuals as young as one year of age. Once boys and girls reach the age of about 3 or 4, they have friendships with members of the other sex, and they recognize that their friend is of a different sex than they are, something they were not able to do if they had such friendships as early toddlers. Research indicates that friendships between young girls and boys, say between the ages of 1 and 5, are not unusual until they leave early childhood and enter into middle childhood and elementary school. This developmental transition is often accompanied by a process called gender or sex segregation. *Sex segregation* means separating the biological sexes simply on the basis of whether they are female or male, and it can be voluntary or involuntary. Voluntary gender segregation begins to occur around the age of 5 or 6 and involves the intentional separation of oneself from members of the other sex. Involuntary gender segregation occurs when adults separate children at schools and daycare centers, sometimes even at home and in their neighborhoods, according to their biological sex. For example, some of the readers might remember their elementary school teacher saying "Girls on this side of the room, boys on the other side."

When children leave middle school, most of them are in the process of entering puberty and adolescence. The biological, cognitive, and social changes that accompany puberty make it the single most important developmental stage for individuals regarding their desire to be around members of the other sex. Before the onset of puberty, children between the ages of about 6 to 10 typically do

everything in their power to avoid contact with children of the opposite sex. The hormonal and social changes that go hand-in-hand with the coming of adolescence often prompt children, who are now becoming teenagers, to break the gender barrier. Whereas cross-sex friendships were quite common in early childhood (approximately 1 to 5 years old), and nearly nonexistent in middle childhood (approximately 6 to 11 years old), once adolescence starts, the walls of gender segregation begin to crumble and individuals have more and closer cross-sex friends.

Adolescence ends and adulthood begins around the age of 18 to 20, although some researchers categorize individuals in their early twenties as still being in late adolescence. Regardless, young adults continue the pattern they started in high school in regards to the number and closeness of their cross-sex friendships. Probably more so than any other stage of the life cycle, young adults in their twenties and early thirties have a significant number of cross-sex friends, often as many as five or six. Research has demonstrated that individuals who attend college have more cross-sex friends than do those who do not, because of the increased opportunity for cross-sex interaction that college affords young people. Additionally, it is not unusual for some college students, typically females more than males, to prefer the company of cross-sex friends to that of their same-sex ones.

The number and closeness of cross-sex friends usually declines if individuals get married and even more if they have children. Investigations of marriage and its impact on cross-sex friendship shows that marriage often interferes with the formation of new cross-sex friendships because of jealousy issues. But if the cross-sex friendship existed before the marital partners met one another, the chances for its continued existence after the marriage are greatly enhanced. However, marriage sometimes will facilitate the formation of what are called *couple friendships*, which are cross-sex friendships that arise from two married couples doing things together. For example, if a woman and man are close cross-sex friends, they might introduce their respective spouses to the spouse of their friend so that they may continue to see each other and at the same time circumvent jealous suspicions from their spouse or unwanted temptations that might arise from within the friendship.

Just as cross-sex friendships have been somewhat marginalized and given less research attention than same-sex friendships and romantic relationships, older U.S. residents are also a marginalized group. This double marginalization has resulted in an embarrassingly small number of studies done on the cross-sex friendships of what gerontologists call the young-old (ages 60 to 74), the old-old (ages 75 to 84), and the very old (ages 85 and older). The scant research that has been done is dated, not allowing for the possibility that baby-boomers who are now entering old age might have a different view of the viability of cross-sex friendships than does the generation that preceded them.

Advantages of and the Challenges in Cross-Sex Friendships

Cross-sex friends across the life cycle provide both generic and unique advantages, but they also face what are sometimes formidable challenges to their initiation and maintenance. A generic advantage is an advantage that can be provided by any kind of friendship. For example, similar to all other kinds of friendships, cross-sex friends throughout the life span give one another social support in the form of affect, aid, and affirmation. Whether it is a friendship between two young children or two elderly individuals, all cross-friendships offer social support by giving help (aid) in time of need, by supplying companionship and emotional support (affect), and by making one another feel good about themselves (affirmation).

Unique advantages are benefits that are unique to cross-sex friendship and do not occur in the main type of friendship with which it is often compared, that is, same-sex friendships. For example, research has shown that men and women and girls and boys enjoy their cross-sex friendships because those friendships provide them with an insider's perspective on how members of the other sex think, feel, and behave. For instance, a woman may tell her cross-sex friend what it is like to be moody because she is on her period. This insider's perspective allows the male to better understand other females in his life who may be going through the same thing. In a similar fashion, a young teen boy may explain to his adolescent cross-sex friend

why so many teenage boys are obsessed with video games. However, researchers do not know with certainty when the recognition of an insider's perspective first arises, and it arises for different individuals at different times. Scholars speculate that the cognitive realization that one is receiving an insider's perspective and what that means becomes apparent as soon as the friends know the difference between males and females, which usually occurs around the age of 3.

The second commonly reported unique advantage of cross-sex friendship is the provision of opposite-sex companionship for the participating members. From early childhood through adulthood, females and males report that one of the intangible benefits of cross-sex friendship is enjoyment of the company of a member of the other sex. The provision of other-sex companionship is clearly linked to the first unique advantage because part of the reason why friends enjoy opposite-sex companionship is the insider's perspective that is sometimes communicated during those interactions.

Unfortunately, U.S. society often makes it difficult for men and women and boys and girls to form friendships with one another. Mass media such as television and movies do not help with their portrayals of relationships that start out as friendships, but then change into romantic or sexual relationships. For example, in the TV program *The X-Files*, which ran for 9 years, the female and male FBI partners started out as enemies, then became good friends, then lovers. Females and males who want to be friends must sometimes overcome a host of challenges. One of the main challenges of heterosexual cross-sex friendships is dealing with the romantic and sexual tensions in the friendship. Consider the case where one member of the friendship wants to redefine the relationship into a romantic or sexual association, whereas the other wants the friendship to remain platonic. This kind of challenge comes from within the friendship itself, and often the one wanting to change the nature of the relationship will attempt to do so in a less than straightforward way. Some challenges originate from outside the relationship, such as jealous romantic partners, gossipers at work, and parents who prevent their child, especially their female child, from spending time with members of the other sex. Additionally, because of

gender segregation that begins early in life and often continues into the work environment and other social settings, the opportunity for cross-sex interaction and thus friendship formation is seriously curtailed.

The Future of Cross-Sex Friendship Research

Cross-sex friendships in each stage of the life cycle are complex relationships. That complexity requires broad, focused, and imaginative research designs. Although cross-sex friendship researchers have repeatedly requested that more research be conducted on these relationships, friendships between females and males are still understudied. Explorations of cross-sex friendships are usually limited because of the atheoretical approach taken and the lack of longitudinal research. An *atheoretical orientation* means researchers collect data on cross-sex friendships without an articulated theoretical framework within which to analyze that data. Theories about cross-sex friendships could be complemented with utilization of longitudinal research designs, which are designs that allow investigators to study the same cross-sex friendships over an extended period. For example, almost no research focuses on individuals and their cross-sex friendships as they transition from one stage of the life cycle to the next, such as transitioning from middle and late childhood through the first few years of puberty.

Michael Monsour

See also Casual Sex; Computer-Mediated Communication; Friendships, Sex Differences and Similarities; Friends With Benefits; Self-Concept and Relationships

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FRIENDSHIPS, SEX DIFFERENCES AND SIMILARITIES

Attempting to capture the essential differences between women's and men's same-sex friendships, Paul Wright described them respectively as "face-to-face" and "side-by-side." Although the observation that women, compared with men, describe their same-sex friendships as more intimate, emotionally expressive, and supportive has been repeatedly verified, exploration of what this means and why it occurs continues. Too much attention to gender differences can also obscure important similarities between women's and men's friendships. This entry focuses on same-sex friendships, but cross-sex friendships will also be discussed.

Friendships are nonkin, nonromantic, voluntary, and reciprocal personal relationships. Reciprocal relationships and frequent use of the word "friend" emerge by the time a child is 4 years old. Friendships are often cross-sex in preschool, become increasingly same-sex (as much as 95 percent) during middle childhood, and then less exclusively gender concordant in adolescence and adulthood. Friends are expected to be equals, to confide in one another, to do things together, to be comfortable being one's self with one another, and to be supportive, trustworthy and accepting. Not having friends has been linked to depression, lower feelings of self-worth, and less social competence throughout the life span.

Gender Differences

Children, adolescents, and adults have been asked in many ways what they do with their friends, how they perceive their friends and their friendships, what they give to and receive from their friends and how they feel about their friends and

their friendships. A sampling of results from these studies of friendship shows that in childhood girls, compared with boys, have fewer friends but more exclusive, intimate, and expressive relationships with their same-sex friends; girls rate their best friends higher for companionship, help, security, and closeness; both pre-adolescent girls and college women report greater communion with their best friend (i.e., support, nurturance, intimacy, validation, love, loyalty, and companionship); women rate their best friends higher than men rate their best friends on supportiveness, security, concern, and desire to spend free time together; in describing providing help to a same-sex friend, women report spending more time helping; women engage in more intimate self-disclosure to a same-sex friend; women report talking to their same-sex friends more about relationships, personal problems, and secrets; women express more affection, verbally and nonverbally, toward their same-sex friends; and women use more supportiveness, openness, and interaction in maintaining their same-sex friendships.

Conversely, boys are somewhat more likely than girls are to describe their same-sex best friend as someone who fulfills instrumental needs, such as competition, status, guidance, favors, and praise for accomplishments; young men are more likely than are women to describe their same-sex closest friend as someone with whom they compete, quarrel, and tease; and men talk more with same-sex friends about sports, hobbies, work, and shared activities. Although some researchers have found that women are more satisfied with their same-sex friends, others have found no sex differences in satisfaction. Even in a sample where women reported more personal self-disclosure and involvement in their interactions with same-sex friends, women and men gave similar ratings for meaningfulness, pleasantness, and satisfaction.

Although sex differences in same-sex friendships are reliably found, they tend to be small to moderate in size, meaning that being male or female accounts for a relatively modest portion of the overall variance in same-sex friendships. A further caveat is that most data on friendships are collected from self-reports, where participants are asked to describe their relationships with friends, rather than through direct observation, making it probable that what men and women think their

friendships should be like, as well as what their friendships really are like, influence participants' responses.

Gender Similarities

Despite these many differences, women and men generally share similar views of same-sex friendships, valuing intimacy, trust, emotional closeness, and self-disclosure. Also, when researchers focus on within-gender differences rather than between-gender differences, similarities emerge. Although women may give higher ratings than do men on some measures, the rankings for what women and men value in friendships tend to be similar. For example, when describing ideal and real same-sex best friends, women and men rate communal characteristics, such as support, intimacy, and loyalty, higher than instrumental ones, such as competition, status, and network access. Both women and men agree that self-disclosing interactions create more intimacy in friendships than activity-based interaction does. Both women and men recognize connection as the most important goal in same-sex friendship and trust as the most valued quality of a friend. These friendship characteristics have also been found to predict friendship quality for both women and men. Finally, data from diary techniques indicate that friends spend most of their time together talking and that women and men do not differ in this regard.

Understanding Differences

If women and men value similar friendship qualities, then why are women's same-sex friendships consistently rated as higher in intimacy and closeness? Beverley Fehr asked women and men to generate descriptions of behaviors that contribute to intimacy in friendships. Frequent responses involved self-disclosure and emotional support, and these were generated equally by women and men. On the other hand, women were more likely than men to regard these behaviors as central to friendship intimacy. Violations of these intimacy patterns were perceived by women as more damaging to friendship intimacy and by both men and women as more damaging if they occurred in a female same-sex friendship compared with a male

same-sex friendship. Thus, women have both a stronger belief in the importance of self-disclosure and emotional support to intimacy in friendships and, as many studies have shown, are more likely to engage in these behaviors. Researchers studying these patterns have generally concluded that men simply prefer not to engage in these behaviors that lead to closer and more intimate friendships.

If men and women agree on the path to friendship intimacy but women choose to travel further down this path than men, are there barriers to intimacy in men's same-sex friendships? Barbara Bank and Suzanne Hansford found that emotional restraint and wanting to maintain distance from gay men were most helpful in explaining gender differences in intimacy and support in a same-sex best friendship. Having no role model (a same-sex parent with close friends) reduced the effect of gender on supportiveness, and masculine self-identity reduced the effect of gender on intimacy. The authors concluded that men's tendency to be emotionally cautious and reserved with their male friends may account to some extent for their failure to establish more intimate and supportive same-sex friendships. Although these barriers to male friendship contributed to explaining sex differences in friendship intimacy and supportiveness, these barriers did not eliminate the differences, suggesting that although characteristics of the male role do help us understand these gender differences, they do not fully account for them.

Although men have been described as not preferring behaviors that promote closeness and intimacy, it may be that they choose these behaviors without necessarily preferring them. Evidence indicates that men would like more openness in their same-sex interactions and that given the proper context, they are willing to express affection toward same-sex friends. Men may also suffer more from these choices; failure to meet communal needs in friendships was found to predict loneliness for men but not for women.

Recent research has included a focus on the instrumental aspects of same-sex relationships in addition to the more frequently studied communal aspects. Results for sex differences are mixed. Lynne Zarbatany and her colleagues found that boys and men prefer friends who provide competition, encouragement, and status and who are

influenced by their actions and opinions, but Bank and Hansford, measuring status orientation toward friendship, found that women were more likely than men to want friends who respect and depend on them and who are influenced by them. These noncommunal characteristics of friendship also appear to contribute positively to friendship quality. Researchers might also pay more attention to the ways in which friendship interactions provide fun, relaxation, and relief from boredom. Integrating both instrumental and communal aspects of relationships may be critical for establishing effective friendships. That Joyce Benenson and Athena Cristakos found that adolescent females have same-sex best friendships of shorter duration and more former best friends, suggesting in their words "greater fragility," indicates that there is more to know about friendships than just how close and intimate they are. Rather than focusing on men's problems with friendships, the field might better address the multifaceted benefits of friendships, the strategies that women and men use to accrue these benefits, and the barriers they each experience in meeting their friendship goals.

Cross-Sex Friendships

Less research has addressed the experience of cross-sex friendships. Cross-sex friendships are common in preschool children, become rare in middle childhood and reemerge in adolescence and young adulthood, becoming less frequent again as adults enter marriage and parenthood. Romantic partners and spouses are often viewed as close, or even best, friends. For research purposes, however, cross-sex (and same-sex) friendships are defined as nonromantic relationships. There is less research on cross-sex friendships, and results may be affected by the age of the sample and the nature of the measures. In general, results suggest that females receive fewer benefits from cross-sex friends than males. Men rate their cross-sex friendships higher on enjoyment, nurturance, and overall quality than women rate their cross-sex friendships. Men have also been found to rate their cross-sex (female) friends as more accepting, intimate, and emotionally supportive than are their same-sex friends.

Guys, Lesbians, and Friendships

Same-sex and cross-sex friendships are generally assumed to occur between individuals with a heterosexual orientation. But sometimes this is not the case. In studies of teenagers and young adults with homosexual orientations, Lisa Diamond and Eric Dube found that lesbians had particularly strong connections to other females, as friends, best friends, and attachment figures; whereas gay men were the least likely, compared with lesbians and heterosexual youth, to have same-gender best friends and more likely than others to form cross-gender friendships. Conversely, Peter Nardi and Drury Sherrod, with an older sample, found no differences between lesbians and gay men in their ratings of same-sex friends on satisfaction, social support, self-disclosure, or activities. Nardi and Sherrod did find, however, that many lesbians and gay men reported having had sexual relationships with their friends.

Structural Factors in Friendships

Friendships, being voluntary and nonobligatory, are often studied as if they were context-free. One context that has received some attention is culture. Although most studies of friendship, including those previously mentioned, are based largely on North American samples, researchers have studied the influence of collectivistic and individualistic cultures on perceptions of same-sex friends in childhood and adulthood. Although there were differences based on culture, these were not affected by gender; in other words, culture influenced both sexes equally. Virgil Sheets and Robyn Lugar, comparing friendship in Russia and in the United States, found stable gender differences across countries, but Russian men were particularly unlikely to have cross-sex friends. Culturally defined gender roles may have a particularly strong effect on cross-sex friends.

Other contextual factors may also affect gender and friendships. In the workplace, for example, gender similarities were found on measures of quality of same-sex friendships. Social settings—such as school, work, neighborhoods, churches, interest groups, and sport teams—also provide

opportunities for friendships. They may play differential roles in the formation and maintenance of friendship. Might one be more likely to share activities with a friend made at work or through team sports but self-disclose and provide support with a friend from the neighborhood or an interest group? The structural factors that influence friendships and perhaps help account for the gender differences described here are just beginning to be defined and explored.

Barbara A. Winstead

See also Daily Diary Methods; Friendships, Cross-Sex; Friendships in Adolescence; Friendships in Young Adulthood; Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Relationships; Sex Differences in Relationships; Workplace Relationships

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FRIENDSHIPS IN ADOLESCENCE

This entry addresses conceptual views and research findings pertaining to friendships during the second decade of life. In many respects, friendship sits at the frontier of adolescent social development. Friendships provide the formative context for learning the complex close relationship skills needed to establish close emotional bonds with people outside the family. These bonds help teens move beyond childish dependencies on parents toward autonomous independent lives as young adults, thus serving as a bridge between childhood attachments to parents and adult attachments to spouses and children. Friends also shape adolescent character and personality development. As teens begin to make their own choices, they gravitate toward the social niches they find most appealing and comfortable. Their chosen friends often share similar preferences and identities that reinforce and amplify their own emerging characters. Friends also “co-socialize” each other when they test limits together and encourage conformity to peer-group norms. Thus, it is not surprising that friendships exert heavy sway over teenagers’ emotional well-being. The challenge of making and keeping friends is the source of considerable stress and anxiety, and youth who are excluded or without friends suffer painful loneliness and depression. At the same time, friendship is the source of immense excitement and camaraderie. Adolescent friends serve as vital allies and supporters in times of need and may afford experiences of intimacy and affection remembered for a lifetime.

Transition From Childhood to Adolescent Friendship

Considerable research documents changes in the features of friendship from childhood through adolescence. Preschool playmate preferences are transformed during the grade-school years into true dyadic friendships in which children reciprocally identify themselves as friends, spend time doing things together inside and outside school, and are able to cooperatively play together. These friendships unfold within the broader context of

classroom peer-group status; most everyone likes popular children, most everyone dislikes rejected children, and neglected children are neither liked nor disliked by classmates. Rejected children are most likely to be friendless, often because of some combination of their own aggressiveness, poor social skills, or other “misfit” characteristics. Overall, about 85 percent of all children have at least one reciprocated friendship, with most children having two to four good friends.

Whereas childhood friendships are based on propinquity (proximity) and similarity of objective characteristics, children are especially drawn to peers who share their interests in particular activities, be it competitive sports, computer games, social conversation, or academic subjects. Dyads tend to be highly segregated by age and gender, with opposite-sex friendships viewed as atypical. Theorists have argued that the self-imposed isolation of boys’ and girls’ friendships creates different socialization cultures, with girls’ friendships fostering a more connection-oriented focus on talk and close relationships, whereas boys’ friendships foster a more agency-oriented focus on activities and competition. As children approach the teenage years, these gender barriers collapse as sexual and romantic interests erupt.

Early Adolescence

Abilities for thinking abstractly and idealistically emerge during early adolescence. This cognitive transition coincides with pubertal maturation, which happens about 2 years earlier among girls (9–12 years) than among boys (11–14 years). Paralleling these maturational changes, friendship becomes more talk focused and emotionally intimate in quality. Gossip about peers is a mainstay of conversation. A good deal of gossip is malicious in nature, with teenage friends sharing the latest news about so-and-so and critiquing the appearance, behaviors, and motives of fellow peers. At times, this type of gossip is used as a form of social aggression. Youth insult, criticize, and spread disparaging rumors about enemies and rivalries in attempts to get back at, or gain social advantage over, them. Researchers originally thought that such relational regression was the province of girls, but more recent research shows that boys also engage in aggressive gossip. Boys, however, engage

in substantially more physical aggression than do girls, and thus girls engage in more social aggression relative to physical aggression.

But not all gossip is motivated by cruel intentions. One psychological benefit of gossip is enabling collaborative construction of opinions and values. Through hours of conversation, friends explore and arrive at their conceptions of others and themselves. Gossip also builds intimacy and closeness between friends. Self-disclosure requires that friends be trusted to keep secrets and remain loyal when other peers entice them to disparage teens behind their backs. Friends show their trust by disclosing risky opinions, which enhances felt intimacy when opinions are mutually shared. Thus, intimate self-disclosure, trust, and loyalty all intertwine to become the key features of early adolescent friendship.

This talk-focused feature of friendship is more characteristic of female than of male friendship and begins earlier for girls than boys. The growth of gossip and intimate talk roughly parallels the timing of pubertal development. For girls, there is rapid increase in the frequency and depth of intimate disclosure among friends between 9 to 14 years of age, whereas for boys what growth occurs takes place between 12 to 17 years of age. Indeed, only when boys establish romantic attachments in later adolescence do they manifest the same levels of conversational intimacy that girls generally achieve in early adolescent friendship.

The broader world of peer relations also grows more complex in early adolescence as teens move into large middle schools with rotating class periods. Crowd identifications (jocks, nerds, skaters, or druggies) heavily influence friend selection, with teens gravitating toward peers who are “like me” and away from members of crowds “not like me.” Interactions with friends take place within smaller cliques of friends rather than in large-crowd activities. Friendship cliques typically have 2 to 12 members, with an average of 5 friends, who often do things together such as sleeping-over, hanging out at malls, or going to movies as a group. Some cliques, such as the popular jocks and cheerleaders, have generally higher status than other cliques do, but most cliques differ more in qualitative characteristics than in status.

Life within friendship cliques has its highs and lows. Doing things with a group of friends is

exciting and fun and sometimes pushes the limits of risky activities. Inclusion by the group creates a genuine sense of belonging; being excluded or relegated to marginal status is painful. Jealousies among clique members are not uncommon. These inter- and intra-group dynamics can involve relational aggression where some teens engage in disparaging gossip intended to sabotage others’ standings in cliques for personal gain or to retaliate for perceived slights. Being without a friendship clique, however, is associated with loneliness, boredom, and depression. Having just one close friend tends to mitigate feelings of loneliness and alienation. Although exclusive “best friends” are more the exception than the rule, research has found that such alliances can buffer even chronically victimized teens from adverse mental health outcomes.

Middle Adolescence

During middle adolescence, close friendships become even more talk-focused and intimate. Honest and intimate self-disclosure becomes a prominent dyadic process. Gossip, humor, social comparison, and mind reading are frequent in friends’ conversations, and these social processes often work in the service of revealing oneself to friends. Besides building solidarity between friends, self-disclosure also provides a forum for exploring self-worth and personal identity. Adolescents’ growing cognitive abilities foster introspection and evaluating self and others in terms of abstract psychological traits and dynamics. Middle adolescents are also better able to consider things idealistically and analyze how things are relative to how they could be. Conversations with friends contribute to the growth of socio-moral reasoning and the elaboration of self-concept.

Friends further come to depend on one another for emotional support. Providing support effectively is a challenging, but important role to master because it plays a key role in later romance and parenthood. Styles of support giving and support seeking in adolescent friendships are predicted by styles originating in earlier parent-child attachment relationships. Teens with histories of relationships in which they felt secure are more likely to seek emotional support from, and sensitively provide support to, their friends. In contrast, teens

who developed avoidant patterns with parents feel uncomfortable seeking support from, or providing support to, friends and therefore are likely to avoid supportive exchanges with friends. Teens who manifest heightened dependence and preoccupation with problems can overwhelm friends with excessive self-disclosure and frustrate them because the friend is unable to help relieve the teen's preoccupation with distress. As givers of support, teens showing this latter pattern tend to become overly involved in their friends' problems, alternating between becoming mired in the friend's problems or intrusively giving advice.

Two of the most common topics friends share involve emergent problems with parents and romance. Research shows that as an outgrowth of teens' desires for increased autonomy from parents, family relations can become conflicted and distant during middle adolescence. Teens often turn to friends as confidants with whom they discuss and compare family pressures. This is an important shift because, before adolescence, parents were the chief source of emotional support. Teens also typically turn first to friends to discuss romantic interests and heartaches. This is only natural because initial forays in dating and romance commonly happen in the context of mixed-gender friendship cliques. Not all disclosure and support attempts between friends, however, work out for the best. Recent research reveals an unhealthy form of "co-rumination" among friends where pairs incessantly talk their problems to death. Although such talk tends to make friends feel especially close to each other, it also seems to contribute to more, rather than fewer, depressive symptoms. This is more common among girls' than among boys' friendships.

The influence of friends seems to reach its zenith during middle adolescence. Parents and researchers have long been interested in the influence of teenage friends on tastes, attitudes, and behaviors. In the mid-20th century, adolescents' peers were seen as corrupting influences that pressured teens to conform to values and behaviors that were at odds with those of parents and the broader society. Initial research seemed to confirm this view. When surveys forced teens to choose whether to conform to parent versus friend values and tastes, teens more often sided with friends. Developmentally, conforming to peer norms rose from childhood

and peaked during middle adolescence. But subsequent research revealed a more complex picture: teens are influenced by both parents and peers, their relative influences varying by domain. In core moral, religious, and political attitudes and values, parents usually hold more sway than friends do. But in matters of fashion, tastes, and activity choices, friends usually exert more influence than parents do.

Friend influence on activity choice—especially smoking, drinking, drug use, sexual activity, and delinquency—has been of great interest to researchers. Friends are usually quite similar in their involvement in these activities. These correlations have led some to conclude that deviant friends are responsible for exerting corrupting influence on teenagers. But these correlations can also reflect the way friends are selected. Research shows that teenagers are attracted to others who share similar interests and activity preferences, as in the adage "birds of a feather flock together." In careful research studies trying to tease apart whether similarity between friends is the result of selection factors or influence factors, teenagers' levels of involvement in substance use, sexuality, and delinquency are tracked across time along with the involvement of peers who are potential friends. The findings reveal that similarity of friends is mostly because teenagers gravitate toward making friends with peers who share their interest (or disinterest) in substance use, sexual activity, and delinquency.

At the same time, evidence indicates that friends become more similar to each other across time, indicating that some influence is also taking place. This is especially true for smoking and drinking. This is because friends often take part in these activities together and thus support and implicitly encourage (or discourage) involvement. One interesting study discovered that some friends engage in "deviance training" together. Young teenage friends who intentionally misbehaved during an observational session (e.g., cursed and made obscene gestures to the camera) were more likely to commit serious crimes several years later compared with pairs of friends who behaved themselves during the session. Thus, the friends rewarded and encouraged each other for being defiant and disruptive, which led to increasing deviance in the future.

Late Adolescence

As youth look forward to leaving high school and beginning adulthood, the greater permeability of boundaries between crowds affords opportunities to explore new spheres of possible friends. The search for identity becomes more personal as older teens strive to find career, religious, political, and romantic self-definitions that uniquely fit their own identities rather than the caricatures they had adopted during early adolescence by identifying with particular crowds. Not surprisingly, the conversations between friends become both more forward- and inward-looking. Friends explore with one another their emerging philosophies of life along with their fears and hopes for the future. Moreover, friendship continues to play central roles in helping older teens achieve mature autonomy from family, explore and settle on identities, and establish truly intimate romantic attachments.

Friendships play a particularly important role in romantic development. During late adolescence, friendship cliques become more heterosexual in composition, with most high school seniors averaging two opposite-sex friendships and four same-sex friendships. This is compared with sixth grade, where on average children report no or one opposite-sex friendship and five or more same-sex friendships. At one level, mixed-sex friendship cliques provide older teens access to potential romantic partners. By going places and doing things together as a mixed-sex group, teens form friendships that can progress into romantic relationships. Clique members also introduce each other to outside friends, which further broadens the field of potential romantic partners.

At another level, mixed-sex friendship groups provide an education in how to understand and relate to members of the opposite sex. Gender socialization and early segregation of peer groups led males and females to adopt different interpersonal styles and values. The male style is organized around the pursuit of common activities and individual status. Their conversational style is task focused and blunt and places value on "being right" and showing how individuals differ from one another. By contrast, the female style is organized around sharing feelings and building relationship connections. Their conversational style is supportive and nuanced, and it places value on

affirming the partner and down-playing differences. A major developmental task of adolescence for males and females is to learn how to relate effectively to one another given their different styles. Mixed-sex friendships are a forum in which these differences are often discussed and explored. Mixed-sex clique discussions often focus on differences between men and women and how they expect to be treated in romantic relationships.

At still another level, late adolescent friendships shape "mental models" that they carry into subsequent romantic relationships. Recent research shows that the attachment security that older teens experience in their serious romantic relationships is predicted more by experiences in same-sex friendship than by experiences in parent-child attachments. Again, this highlights the role that friendship plays as a bridge between childhood dependencies on family and adult relationships. This is not surprising because of the overlapping nature of friendship and mature romance. At the core of romantic relationships are the key features of friendships: companionship, disclosure, intimacy, support, trust, and loyalty. Thus, whereas early relationships with parents create a starting point for a basic sense of security or insecurity in close relationships, experiences in adolescent friendships broaden the range of relational features and concomitant interpersonal skills that will be called upon in adult romance and marriage.

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See also Dating Relationships in Adolescence and Young Adulthood; Family Relationships in Adolescence; Friendships, Sex Differences and Similarities; Friendships in Childhood; Self-Disclosure

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FRIENDSHIPS IN CHILDHOOD

This entry describes friendships in childhood and examines their developmental significance. Most children succeed in forming these relationships, although about 10 percent fail to do so. Enormous differences exist in the number of these relationships that children have, the traits that characterize friends, and the texture of these relationships. Friendships also change in important ways from their earliest manifestations on through childhood and into adolescence even though certain features remain constant.

Social reciprocity and mutuality are central to the meaning of friendships for almost everyone. Sometimes these reciprocities consist of equivalence in resource exchanges; mostly, however, “giving-and-taking” in a broader sense undergirds the attraction that exists between friends both in childhood and adulthood. The most significant age changes observed in childhood occur in the individual's awareness and understanding of these reciprocities and their implications. Cognitive and affective representations of friendship change considerably, but the underlying meaning structure, based in reciprocity, remains constant.

Aspects of Friendship in Childhood

Incidence

Infants and toddlers sometimes show preferences for one another, seeking out other youngsters who have been more-or-less regularly responsive to them. These preferences are revealed in the time that children spend with particular playmates and are not especially nuanced linguistically or affectively. Young children are known to be less fearful of strange situations in the company of a familiar peer rather than an unfamiliar one, but familiarity is not equivalent to friendship.

The word *friend* usually appears in the third or fourth year, and sometimes preschool-aged children miss their friends when they are absent or talked about. Usually, friendship is defined by the young child in terms of concrete reciprocities (“We play”) and, during the preschool years, approximately 75 percent have preferred playmates. Play, indeed, is the main content of the interaction between friends at this age, and the proportion of the child's time spent with specific partners is a good index to use in identifying these relationships. The number of children possessing these relationships rises during middle childhood when about 85 percent have a best friend and several good friends.

Friendship networks consisting of children and their friends are relatively small during early childhood (approximately 1.7 and .9 for boys and girls, respectively) becoming somewhat larger in middle childhood (3.0 to 5.0, depending on whether unreprocated choices are included). Amount of time spent with friends increases until adolescence, when

about 30 percent of time awake is spent with these associates.

Gender

Children's friendships are gender concordant. About 30 percent of preschool children's friends are other-sex, but this percentage declines through middle childhood reaching 5 percent and rising again in adolescence when about 25 percent of teenagers' friendship networks become mixed-sex. Other-sex friends are likely to be "secondary" rather than "best friends" throughout childhood. Girls have a higher proportion of other-sex friends than boys do, and the other-sex friends of girls are likely to be older than themselves whereas the opposite is the case for boys.

Boys and girls do not differ in the proportion of children who have friends. Every observer knows, however, that the activities of boys with their friends are different from the activities of girls with theirs. During middle childhood, intimacy is a much greater concern in girls' talk about their friends than in boys' talk. Self-ratings of their friendships by girls are more intimate than are those of boys and self-disclosure is more common. At the same time, girls employ relational aggression (including threats to terminate these relationships) more frequently than boys do. Children of both sexes understand these differences. Little is known, however, about intimacy in friendship interaction that is based in camaraderie and shared mastery.

Friendship Expectations

Friendship expectations differ from expectations about other relationships: Preschool-aged children recognize differences in social power between themselves and their parents, for example, but do not expect power differences to exist between themselves and their friends. Friends are not expected to be the help-givers that parents are, or to provoke conflict as frequently as siblings do. Companionship and intimacy are expected of one's friends, rather than compliance and conflict. Refinements in these basic differentiations among relationships occur through middle childhood into adolescence.

Friendships are understood by children to be based in symmetric reciprocity at all ages although

differences emerge in the amount, complexity, and organization of information and ideas about these relationships. Among young children, friendship expectations emphasize common interests and concrete reciprocities that occur mostly in play. Older children describe friends as sharing values and rules about loyalty and trust; friends also expect to spend time with one another and to engage in constructive conflict resolution. Adolescent friends expect shared interests, understanding, empathy, and intimacy with friends; similarity between oneself and one's friends is increasingly important.

These changes in friendship expectations during childhood are correlated with certain aspects of cognitive development, including the number of constructs children can apply to a relationship and their complexity; some writers have also linked changes in friendship expectations to changes in perspective taking that occur during childhood. Whatever the case, older children and adolescents perceive and think about these relationships in nuanced ways even though symmetrical reciprocities remain their major basis.

Behavior With Friends

In most instances, children have to be in the same place at the same time to become friends. However, propinquity does not guarantee the formation of a relationship, and initial encounters between children are largely devoted to establishing common ground or its absence. "Hitting it off" may require short or longer periods, but once this happens, communication is more connected, conflicts are managed more successfully, attention is drawn to similarities between the nascent friends, and, especially among girls, self-disclosure increases. Should common interests not be maintained after this "build up" period, relevant information must be exchanged again, much as in first encounters. Continued consensual validation and commitment are required for friendships to be maintained over the long haul.

Both preschool- and school-aged children spend more time with their friends than with other associates. Social exchanges of friends and nonfriends differ in four ways: *positive engagement* (friends talk, smile, and laugh together more than nonfriends do); *task-related activity* (friends orient to

the task at hand more extensively and spend more time on-task than nonfriends); *mutuality* (friends affirm one another more and exhibit greater mutuality and attention to reciprocity in their partners than nonfriends); and *conflict management* (while exhibiting as many conflicts with one another as nonfriends do, friends use disengagement and negotiation more frequently and use power assertion to a lesser extent). The mutuality and symmetry existing in the social exchanges between friends are reasons for suggesting that reciprocity is the sine qua non for these relationships during the first two decades of life.

Similarities Between Friends

Given the common ground that brings friends together, one would expect friends to be similar to one another in a variety of ways. Not surprisingly, then, the probability that two young children will be attracted to one another has been shown to vary according to the number of behavioral attributes they share. Also, children who are strangers initially are attracted to one another when their cognitive and play styles are similar rather than different. Actually, children are likely to dislike other children who are different from themselves. Similarities, not “opposites,” attract.

Children and their friends resemble one another closely in age, gender, ethnicity, and sociometric status (how well other children like them). Behavioral concordances can be detected among preschool-aged friends, and these grow more extensive through middle childhood. School-aged friends, compared with nonfriends, are more like one another in prosocial behavior, antisocial behavior, shyness-dependency, depression, popularity, and achievement. Friends also share biases in their perceptions of people and relationships: For example, when friends rate their classmates on aggression or shyness, their ratings are more alike than classmate ratings made by nonfriends. Considerable variability occurs, however, in the similarities existing across these behavioral domains as well as within them.

Children are similar to their friends for a variety of reasons. First, children from the same neighborhood are likely to be more similar to one another than are children from different neighborhoods; socialization histories are also likely to be more

similar. Second, children are attracted to others like themselves because of the reinforcing properties that similarity seems to encompass. Children then sort themselves out by a somewhat disorganized process that is informally called “shopping” and formally called “selection.”

Friendship similarities also derive from mutual socialization; that is, children become more alike because of their interaction over time. The extent to which selection and socialization, respectively, contribute to friendship similarity depends, however, on characteristics of the children themselves (which derive from their genetic makeup as well as their social histories), their interaction with one another, and which behavioral characteristics are being measured. For example, the genetically mediated expression of physical aggression, but not social aggression, is stronger among children who have physically aggressive friends compared with children whose friends are not physically aggressive.

Friendship Variations

Having Friends

Correlational studies show that children who have friends, in contrast to those who are without friends, enjoy better psychosocial adjustment; they are more sociable, more cooperative, more altruistic, less aggressive and impulsive, and less lonely. In most studies, “having friends” means having “good” friends or “compatible” friends even though not all friendships are harmonious. It is thus somewhat difficult to argue that merely having a friend, disregarding the nature of the relationship, facilitates good adjustment. Nevertheless, merely having friends is an indicator in longitudinal studies of good later outcomes: having positive feelings about oneself and one’s family as well as having a romantic partner in adolescence and being relatively free of depression. Most investigators interpret these findings to mean that the complex reciprocities experienced with a friend during childhood promote the kinds of social competence that make one a desirable companion later on. Disharmony between friends attenuates these benefits but, overall, childhood friendships appear to facilitate good adjustment—both at the moment and later.

Friendship Stability

Children change friends with some regularity, although childhood friendships last longer than is commonly believed. Nursery school children often maintain friendships for many months and stability increases through adolescence, at which time about 70 percent of individuals report that their friendships last a year or more. By the end of middle childhood, it is not uncommon to find children reporting friendships that have lasted between 1 and 5 years. Friendship stability, however, depends on a number of conditions. For example, relationships between aggressive, antisocial children are more unstable than are relationships between nonaggressive children. Other psychosocial difficulties are associated with friendship instability, too, probably resulting from the children's limited capacities to regulate emotion and other deficits in social skill.

Friendship stability also has implications for the child's social adaptation. For example, school-age children who have friendships that last through a school year show greater improvement in attitudes toward school and greater improvement in other school-related behaviors than do children with less stable friendships. Other implications of friendship stability vary according to the children involved. Stable friendships among children who have conduct problems increases children's own behavior problems. In contrast, friendships with shy or withdrawn children seem not to affect a child's own social withdrawal. The developmental implications of friendship stability thus differ according to the behavior being measured and aspects of the children's relationships with one another.

Who the Partner Is

Childhood friends enhance social adaptation when one's partners are socially competent but are developmental risks when partners evince poor adaptation. Examples: When friends are aggressive and antisocial, children become more aggressive over time, especially those who are disposed toward aggression and who perceive themselves as socially rejected. When children have friends and these friends are socially well-adjusted, marital disruption has fewer effects than otherwise. Finally, social adjustment improves after school transitions when friends are well-adjusted, but otherwise not.

Partner effects are not well understood. Modeling and reinforcement during interaction with friends may be responsible for some of these effects; poorly adjusted partners do not model "competence" as consistently as do better adjusted ones and may not provide social rewards for competence behaviors as regularly. In many instances, conversations also seem to be powerful mechanisms for behavior change within friendships, especially when these conversations are persuasive. Aggressive children and their friends, for example, entice one another into "deviant talk," in which rule-breaking and other aggressive activities are discussed much more frequently than nonaggressive friends discuss them. Conversations between aggressive friends also contain more conflict and aggression than the conversations of less aggressive friends. Other observations show that increased depression is sometimes an outcome when childhood friends spend inordinate amounts of time "co-ruminating," that is, talking endlessly and intensely about issues rather than letting them drop after a reasonable period. Developmental contexts thus differ for children according to who their partners are, and these differences are related to behavior change.

Friendship Quality

Friendships in childhood vary in their structural and affective qualities, and these variations are significant for adaptation. Some friendships are warm, intimate, and supportive; others are rife with conflict, relational aggression, and other disharmonies. The outcomes of friendship experience are now known to vary according to these differences, not merely according to whether a child has friends. Supportive, intimate friendship relations—at least in middle childhood—are associated with sociability, good social reputations, popularity, and avoidance of aggression. "Prosocial friendships" are linked to school achievement as well as to popularity, whereas "antisocial friendships" are linked to peer rejection and delinquency, and "socially withdrawn" friendships are associated with low self-esteem, peer rejection, and depression.

Linkages such as these are moderated by other conditions—sometimes according to other aspects of the friendship experience and sometimes according to characteristics of the child himself or herself.

For example, the positive outcomes of supportive friendships (mentioned earlier) occur mainly when friendships are stable rather than unstable. In addition, disharmony in friendship relations increases aggression in children over time, but mainly when friendships are not harmonious to begin with. Although the affective and behavioral qualities of children's friendships may be clearly related to behavior changes over time, the magnitude of these effects is often moderated by other conditions.

Developmental Implications

Family relationships in earliest childhood set the stage and carry forward to relationships that children have with their peers. The sensitivity of early caregiving and the security of early attachments are both antecedents of harmony, responsiveness, and competence in peer interaction during childhood and beyond. Linkages between family relationships and friendship, however, are less direct: Good family relations in the earliest years do not ordinarily predict friendship functioning in either early or middle childhood. Rather, the peer competence that is linked to early family relationships predicts having friends and friendship functioning in childhood. Friendships, in turn, predict individual differences in romantic relations in adolescence. These mediated trajectories have been observed in several studies and illustrate the complexity with which family relationships, friendships, and even romantic relationships are intertwined in human development. The development of antisocial behavior in children shows a similar progression. Coercive mother-child relations lead to aggressive behavior during childhood, both at home and outside; aggressive children, in turn, affiliate with other aggressive children, including those who may be regarded as friends; having aggressive friends, in turn, predicts increases in aggression and antisocial behavior as well as delinquency in early adolescence.

One exception to these developmental scenarios concerns sibling relationships. Although these relationships are sometimes thought to presage peer functioning, the evidence suggests otherwise. Although "only" children are more likely to conjure imaginary friends than are those who have siblings (suggesting some strong need for companionship in

early childhood), no consistent pattern has been found in either social or cognitive development that differentiates children with siblings from those who do not have them. Sibling relationships and friendships are, rather, quite different social contexts—especially as related to conflict. Conflicts with siblings are more intense and aggressive than are those between friends and less likely to be resolved with negotiation and conciliation. Children themselves recognize these differences.

Finally, friendships in childhood "buffer" children from family vulnerabilities and stress. For example, well-functioning friendships, as contrasted to poorly functioning ones, are linked to better social outcomes for children from dysfunctional families; few benefits are evinced, however, for children from good family environments. Once again, the developmental significance of childhood friendships is revealed in interaction effects rather than direct linkages.

Conclusion

Friendships in childhood are commonplace, and what children think and expect of them, as well as certain social interactions that distinguish them, have been identified. Yet these relationships are not all alike; considerable variation exists in how many friends children have, what partners are like, and what social and affective qualities characterize the relationships themselves. Although general conclusions can be drawn about children's friendships and their dynamics, developmental significance can only be inferred by considering these variations as they occur over relatively long periods.

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See also Children's Peer Groups; Friendship, Conflict and Dissolution; Friendship Formation and Development; Friendships, Sex Differences and Similarities; Friendships in Adolescence; Life-Span Development and Relationships; Sibling Relationships

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FRIENDSHIPS IN LATE ADULTHOOD

For many persons, both friends and family are important for fulfillment of social needs and maintenance of well-being throughout the life cycle. Yet, by late adulthood, people vary in the degree to which friends are available in their social networks as a result of personal choices in friendship as well as circumstances that support or inhibit the development and maintenance of friendship. This entry describes developments in friendship in later life, factors that influence continuity and change in friendship, the contribution of friends to well-being, and special challenges to friendship in late adulthood.

By definition, friendship involves a voluntary relationship: Friends choose one another and are free to determine what they will do together and how often they see one another. Often this mutual

choice is based on commonalities of interests and preferred activities, shared humor, and attitudes about important issues. Fundamental to friendship is reciprocity, that is, a balanced exchange of attention, affection, and support. Considerable social skills are necessary for development of friendship and achievement of reciprocity and for the maintenance of friendships during life transitions. For various reasons friendships may end; when interactions are no longer positive, a friendship may be discontinued intentionally or may be allowed to fade away. Those that developed within specific contexts such as a neighborhood or work may end when involvement in that setting ends. Thus, a combination of personal choice and situational opportunities and constraints influence continuities and discontinuities in friendship in later life.

Relational Functions of Friendship and Well-Being

To understand why having friends is advantageous in later life, consider the functions that friendship fulfills. One of the main functions of friendship is the provision of pleasurable companionship; engaging in favorite activities and sharing stories and social rituals make being with friends especially stimulating and enjoyable. Older adults are happier in the company of friends than when they are alone or with family only, as are younger adults and adolescents. For older adults, spending time with friends helps them remain socially integrated when other roles and relationships have been lost. New friends as well as old friends may provide this kind of companionship.

Another function of friendship is the provision of support. When faced with challenging situations or transitions related to aging, friends listen to one another, show affection and concern, and offer useful information. Support from friends can be especially effective when they have been through the same transition themselves, by describing their own experience, giving advice, or suggesting alternative ways of understanding and dealing with the situation. Therefore, those facing retirement benefit from contact with friends who are already retired whereas widows and widowers seek the company of others who understand what it means to lose a partner. In the new situation, friends

support one another with the task of reorganizing their lives, whether this is because of widowhood, retirement, or other changes. Friends even socialize one another to old age, by serving as examples and exchanging information on important transitions.

When family members fail to provide sufficient practical help or are unavailable during challenging situations, friends may step in to provide the necessary aid. Usually this help is offered on a short-term basis. Friends in need of such help may be wary of asking for it or even accepting help when it is offered because this disturbs the balance of reciprocity that is fundamental to friendship. However, some circumstances promote the exchange of practical help, such as the proximity of friends in the neighborhood or special practical skills or expertise that friends are willing to share.

Although forms of support offered by friends vary, a more general function of friendship is reassurance of worth. This is because of the awareness that each party is chosen as a friend and that friends make the effort to maintain the friendship. Long-time friends are especially valuable for mutual confirmation of identity in later life, reminding one another that each is the same person despite various changes in appearance, health, and life circumstances. Thus, it is not surprising that older adults often describe old friends as their closest friendships.

Another more general feature of friendship involves sharing the process of attributing meaning to experiences as friends age together. Because of the similarities and commonalities on which friendship is based, as well as shared life history, values, and historical perspective, friends are useful as companions for interpreting and understanding new experiences. When talking with friends, people usually feel free to express their opinions or doubts, whether this involves understanding changes in childrearing practices, relationships between the sexes, politics, or personal events.

Social control involves regulating or influencing one another's behavior, thereby encouraging compliance with social norms. Although social control is not a function usually associated with friendship, when one regularly interacts with friends, a certain degree of social control is likely to develop. For example, friends often exchange information about their current health situation and develop shared norms about when to see a doctor, change

medication, or adopt a calmer life style in late adulthood. They also provide one another direct feedback and advice on such matters.

This review of the functions that friendship may fulfill in later life shows that friendship is a multifaceted relationship that contributes to well-being in various ways. The pleasure and stimulation of companionship with friends and reassurance of worth that they provide have a direct effect on happiness and life satisfaction. Because friends contribute to fulfillment of a variety of social needs, they are important in preventing or reducing loneliness in later adulthood. During stressful life events or transitions requiring adaptation, support from friends often has a buffering effect, reducing stress and other negative emotional consequences and contributing to positive adaptation. Furthermore, friends also contribute to social integration; involvement in regular social activities with friends is associated with better physical and mental health, as well as lower mortality than is found among those who are socially isolated in later life.

Who Is Likely to Have Friends Available?

Throughout adulthood, individuals demonstrate considerable variation in the tendency to maintain existing friendships and to develop new friendships under changing circumstances. In a study on older persons' life histories with respect to friendship, Sara Matthews identified three friendship styles. Those with an *acquisitive style* had continued to accumulate friends throughout their lives. Some had friends from various life periods (childhood, adolescence, early and middle adulthood), whereas others with this style made new friends as their circumstances changed without necessarily maintaining their oldest friendships. A second style, called *discerning*, involved development of one or two close friendships that were maintained from youth through late adulthood. These friends are irreplaceable, should they be lost. The third approach to friendship, the *independent style*, involves a preference for friendly relations rather than close friendships. Those persons who are available for friendly interactions are considered one's friends; they are replaceable when circumstances change and social contacts are disrupted.

One's style in friendship influences the degree of vulnerability to loneliness in later life. Those persons with an acquisitive or independent style are less vulnerable to loneliness because of possibilities for compensating for social losses through friendship, whereas the discerning are more vulnerable because their friends are few and irreplaceable when lost. Matthews suggests that those persons who are discerning in friendship earlier on may change their orientation to friendship in late old age, leaning more toward an independent style or even becoming more acquisitive. In general, the oldest tend to broaden their definition of friendship so that "friends" remain available despite losses of friends of similar age. Neighbors, home helpers, and those one meets regularly at local activities for older adults are more readily considered to be friends in this phase of life. As a result of this process, friendships become more heterogeneous: there are greater age differences between the oldest old and their current friends and even more cross-sex friendships in late old age.

In addition to personal dispositions that influence the availability of friends, there are other social structural influences such as gender and marital status. Gender differences in friendship found earlier in adulthood continue in later life. Men tend to develop friendships based on shared, structured activities; during their working lives, friendships often develop from work-related contacts. Upon retirement, men are likely to lose contact with work-related friends. Whether or not these are replaced depends on their participation in other associations following retirement. One study found that after age 75, men were less interested in individual friendships. This may be because of the death of male friends and a desire to avoid further loss of friends.

Women's friendships involve more confiding and exchange of emotional support in addition to the companionship that characterizes men's friendship. Thus, women tend to develop more personal, multifaceted friendships. When involvement in active parenting ends, women have more time available for contact with friends; at this point, they may intensify existing friendships or develop new ones, depending on their personal disposition in friendship. Women continue their interest in maintaining and developing new friendships in late old age. Friends serve as especially valuable

resources in adaptation to widowhood because of the companionship and emotional support they provide one another. Widows have a larger pool of potential friends because more women are widowed than are men. For both men and women, personal cross-sex friendship, outside of friendship between couples, is relatively rare in late adulthood, at least until late old age.

Marital status influences availability of friends in late adulthood in several ways. Married couples often have more friends in their social networks because of the inclusion of couple-companionate friends. Married couples represent the largest social group in society so more people of similar status are available for friendship. However, married persons tend to spend less time with friends in late adulthood compared with widowed, divorced, or never-married older adults. Those living alone need to seek companionship and reassurance of worth outside the home and thus tend to have more frequent contact with friends. Men who are no longer married are at a disadvantage because they have smaller networks and fewer friends in later life. When widowed or divorced, they tend to develop new partner relationships to meet their social needs and rely less on friends than do older widows.

Developments in Friendship in Late Adulthood

By late adulthood, various transitions have taken place that affect the availability of friends in social networks. These include the end of active parenting; becoming a caregiver for older parents, the partner, or (grand)children; retirement from the workforce; relocation; changes in health; and widowhood. These transitions affect social needs and the time and energy available for friendship, as well as proximity to friends and the commonalities which friends share. All parties involved in friendship undergo such transitions in the course of late adulthood, so they represent a challenge to the durability of friendships.

Two theories on adaptation in late adulthood are relevant to developments in friendship in this phase of life. According to the social compensation model, individuals strive for continuity in their social involvements and activities. When a particular relationship is no longer available or particular

social activities cease, people tend to develop new relationships or social activities to maintain their customary social life style. If friendships are lost, then older adults will be motivated to develop new friendships, according to this model. When social activities are lost, adults will tend to seek out other social activities that can serve as contexts for the development of new social contacts. This model predicts continuity in the availability of friendships in social networks, partly because of the development of new friendships in late adulthood.

Socioemotional Selectivity Theory focuses on changes in goals that individuals strive to achieve during the life course. Acquisition of information and emotional regulation are considered as two of the main goals in social relationships. As individuals realize that the time they have left to live is limited, they become increasingly oriented toward maximizing benefits in the present. Therefore, engaging in interactions with persons with whom positive emotional experiences are more likely and avoiding interactions with those with whom the quality of interactions is uncertain or likely to be negative become increasingly important. As a result of the change in time perspective, older adults become increasingly selective in their social relationships. They prefer to interact with close family members and their closest friends and spend less time and energy on maintaining more distant relationships, including less close friendships. This is presumably a universal process that affects most persons in late adulthood and will thus influence the mutual selection process involved in maintaining friendships. Thus, this model predicts decline in the number of friendships that are maintained in late adulthood compared with those in earlier phases of life.

Longitudinal studies on large representative samples of persons in late adulthood tend to find a decrease in the number of friends in personal networks as individuals age. This is due to loss because of death, illness, or relocation of friends, as well as the process of selection. However, studies that focus on adaptation to important life events or transitions, such as becoming widowed or relocation to retirement community, report increases in the number of friends or in the time spent with friends within the first few years following the transition. Following retirement, women also tend to increase involvement with friends. It appears

that women are more inclined to seek the support and company of friends while adjusting to a major transition in late adulthood. This effect does not seem to be apparent for men following retirement or loss of the partner. These findings suggest that during transitions that disrupt social involvements, friendships may be intensified and friendship networks may be expanded, which supports the notion of social compensation (at least for women). The two processes of selection and compensation in social relationships are not necessarily contradictory, but can be seen as complementary. Whether or not they are influential in a particular phase of life depends on the circumstances of individuals in that phase and the personal disposition or inclination to seek compensation for loss of activities and relations through friendship.

Challenges to Friendship in Later Life

The general decline in friendship with age has been mentioned, as well as a variety of factors contributing to its impermanence. An important factor is the voluntary nature of friendship; the two persons who are involved in a friendship need to be committed to the continuation of the relationship. As individuals develop with age, they may no longer share the commonalities in interests and activities that form the basis of a friendship. Changes in health status may interfere with the ability to engage in preferred activities with friends; furthermore, it may become difficult to maintain reciprocity in the friendship as a result of differences in health status. As mentioned earlier, the process of socioemotional selectivity affects friendship as individuals age; an increasing preference for interaction with one's closest relations, including friends, means that less close friendships will be dropped or allowed to fade away. The arrival of grandchildren may cause some older adults to focus more time and energy on children and grandchildren and less on friends. Thus, preferences for particular friends (or relatives) are influenced by developments in the lives of all parties involved.

Changes in circumstances with age also influence whether or not friendships are continued. Relocations of friends that reduces proximity will have a stronger effect on casual friendships than

on close friends, who are more likely to use the available communication channels such as telephone and Internet to maintain contact. Changes in marital status or occupational status also influence commonalities that older adult friends share, which in turn influence the likelihood that friendship will be continued or the intensity with which they are continued. It is often a challenge for a member of a new couple or a newly single older adult to maintain contact with older friends who shared one's former partner status but not the new one.

Another reason for discontinuing friendship arises when overt problems develop in friendship. These may be because of violations of the implicit rules that govern friendship, such as the discovery that a friend is not trustworthy, does not respect one's privacy, or has become overly critical. A conflict of loyalties may arise between one's partner and a friend or between two different friends. Those who have more friendships tend to have more problematic friendships in late adulthood. Unfortunately, little is known about the reasons for maintaining a problematic friendship, rather than ending it actively or passively.

Some friends are discontinued or lost in later adulthood, but long-term friendships that have faded into the background of social lives during middle adulthood because of preoccupations with career and family life may be revived. Retirement, widowhood, and relocation are transitions that lead to reassessment of social needs and opportunities. Naturally occurring reminiscence may increase one's longing for contact with old friends, as well as curiosity about them in later adulthood. Reunions of various sorts provide contexts for getting back in touch with former friends; the Internet also enables people to find one another many years after losing touch. Renewed contact may lead to rejuvenation of old friendships, when those involved discover that they still have much in common and that one another's company is still stimulating and a source of pleasure.

Friendship is a dynamic type of relationship during the life cycle, subject to many personal and situational influences. When asked about the importance of friendship in their lives, most older adults describe this type of relationship as (very) important. The efforts that are made to maintain or revive old

friendships, and to develop new ones, attest to the significance of friendship in late adulthood.

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See also Change in Romantic Relationships Over Time; Friendships, Sex Differences and Similarities; Friendships in Middle Adulthood; Social Skills, Adults

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FRIENDSHIPS IN MIDDLE ADULTHOOD

In midlife, generally defined as the period between young adulthood and old age, friendships provide affection, companionship, understanding, and social support and therefore contribute to well-being.

Friends can also affect the status, power, wealth, attitudes, behaviors, and values of middle-aged people. In addition to these consequences for individuals, midlife friendship patterns can affect society, such as by reinforcing the class structure and upholding the institution of marriage. Friendship is thus an important type of human relationship during this stage of life. This entry synthesizes what is known about the interactive processes exchanged between friends during midlife, the internal structure of midlife friendships, and how these friendships vary across contexts and individual demographic characteristics.

In Western societies, friends are not determined by blood ties, as relatives are, or by residence, as neighbors are. This absence of a structural definition of friendship results in a lack of clear consensus about which relationships are considered friendships and about the normative expectations relevant to this type of relationship. Although scholars have generally conceptualized friendship as a voluntary relationship between equals, research shows that individuals use the term to refer to relationships that do not meet these criteria, sometimes applying it to mere acquaintances and sometimes reserving it for intimates. Despite this variation in the use of the term, however, most people define *friendship* social psychologically and, more specifically, affectively, as a close relationship with nonkin.

With age, opportunities for and constraints on friendships change and people approach friendship with different attitudes, skills, and dispositions. Although people experience the middle years in different ways, midlife is the stage of the life course with the potential for the most responsibilities. Not all middle-aged people are committed to partners, have children, are employed, or care for older adults in their families, but these circumstances are expected of middle-aged people in Western society and can affect friendship. For example, involvement in a committed romantic partnership sometimes means dropping some friendships, adding new ones, and spending more social time with couples. Children absorb a great deal of time, which can interfere with friendship, but they also provide new sources of friends for their parents—the parents of their friends. Caring for an aging parent can limit the amount of time available to spend with friends, but can also widen a social

circle, for example by adding acquaintances from the parent's neighborhood or from a caregiver's support group. Similarly, work both uses time that could be spent socializing and provides new opportunities for friendships with coworkers.

Friendships of midlife adults are also likely to differ from those of younger or older persons because of the developmental maturity often characteristic of this stage of life, such as an ability to handle a highly complex environment, the emergence of a highly differentiated self, and an achieved balance between productivity and stagnation. Midlife friendship patterns are thus different than those of younger and older people. Furthermore, concurrent sociological and developmental forces affect midlife friendships, as do prior experiences. Given that the longer people have lived, the more time they have had to follow different paths, friendship patterns are more varied across individuals during midlife than they are during earlier periods of life.

Unfortunately, given the importance of friendships during middle age, few studies define *midlife* theoretically. Most of what is known about midlife friendship is derived from general samples of adults, which sometimes include participants as young as 18 years and as old as or older than 65 years. Even those studies that focus on midlife adults often impose arbitrary age boundaries on the category rather than using theoretically derived definitions of stage of life course or level of developmental maturity to determine which adults should be included as participants. In a sense, midlife is the residual age category and sometimes represents the norm against which people of other ages are implicitly compared. The literature on children, college student, and older adult friendship is thus larger than the literature on midlife friendship.

Although scholars from many disciplines have contributed to the study of friendship, collaborations among scholars from these different disciplines are rare. For this reason, the literature on friendship in general and on midlife friendship specifically is somewhat fragmented. Psychologists and communication scholars tend to study dyadic processes using experimental methods on convenience samples of volunteers. Sociologists (and some anthropologists) study network structure, usually conducting small-scale surveys of

specialized populations. Finally, some historians, anthropologists, and sociologists study midlife friendship qualitatively in context, describing case studies in detail without comparing friendships across contexts.

Interactive Processes in Friendship Dyads

Interactive processes are the action components of friendships or what is exchanged between friends, including what they do with their friends and how they think and feel about them. Perhaps because researchers have assumed all friends feel close to each other, they have concentrated on studying friendship behaviors and cognitions rather than focusing on the feelings involved in friendship.

Recent studies of midlife friendship behavior focus mainly on communication patterns, social support, and conflict. Friends communicate better than acquaintances do because they share more mutual knowledge, display greater levels of self-disclosure, are more relaxed with each other, exchange more information, and communicate more positively in ways that build morale. In midlife, women are more likely to emphasize the importance of self-disclosure in their friendships than men are, and women tend to discuss different topics with their friends than men do. Women friends tend to discuss intimate relationships, reveal their fears and doubts, and talk in depth about personal problems. In contrast, men friends are inclined to talk about sports, business, and politics.

Research on social support by friends in midlife is concentrated on studies of women. A particularly important feature of women's closest friendships at this stage of life is the emotional support they provide. This research also shows that women rely more heavily on friends than on family members in the aftermath of difficult events (e.g., an abortion or a diagnosis with a chronic illness). One possible explanation for this finding is that midlife women's friends tend to be other midlife women who, by virtue of their age and sex, are more likely than partners and other family members to have experienced the same problems or to have thought through how they would handle them.

Scholars have also examined relational conflict during midlife, including disagreements over beliefs

and values and those regarding habits and lifestyles. Men's friendships involve more conflict than do women's, possibly because women who are currently middle-aged or older have been taught to suppress or avoid conflict. Conflict is also less common in same-sex friendships than in opposite-sex friendships, and middle-aged and older people work harder at resolving conflicts with their friends than younger people do.

Researchers have also studied cognitive, processes in midlife friendships. Research shows that, like in younger and older people's friendships, similarity of values, interests, and background is important in middle-aged people's friendships. These similarities contribute to the ease of communication and the likelihood of shared experiences. Midlife friends also evaluate each other on the basis of politeness and friendliness.

The way people describe their friends and the meaning they attribute to friendship do not vary much across ages, but the discrepancy between how people describe real friends and how they describe ideal friends differs across age groups. Differences in descriptions of real and ideal friends are smallest among middle-aged people. This might reflect middle-aged people's greater selectivity compared with younger people regarding their choice in friends and the fewer physical and social constraints on their friendships compared with older adults.

Internal Structure of Friendship Networks

Scholars have studied the *internal network structure* of friendship (i.e., the form of ties linking an individual's friends) less exhaustively than they have studied their internal processes, perhaps because the network literature tends to focus on social networks in general, without distinguishing family, neighbors, coworkers, and friends from each other and from other types of associates or because interviewing people about their networks is expensive and time-consuming.

One of the most basic structural characteristics of friendship networks is their *size*. Although some researchers have reported that the frequency of interaction with friends decreases with age or even that friendship networks are larger in midlife than in old age, the number of friends does not vary

much during the life course. A national study of U.S. residents conducted by Gallup in 2004 reported that the number of *close* friends does vary by age, at least somewhat, with middle-aged people (30–49 years, 7.0 friends; 50–64 years, 8.7) reporting fewer close friends than younger (8.9 close friends) and older adults (12.5). The variation in the average number of friendships and close friendships reported by midlife subgroups is substantial enough that reporting an overall average is somewhat misleading, however.

Even studies of friendships in a particular subgroup often have yielded different results. For example, findings on gender differences in the number of friends during midlife are mixed. Some studies show that adult men have more friends than adult women have, and other studies show the opposite depending on other characteristics of the samples. For example, some data indicate that among white-collar adults, men have more friends than women do and that among blue-collar adults, women have more friends than men do. Although the average number of friends in midlife and how this number varies across subgroups is not clear, research has shown that the size of friendship network and global measures of number of friends are associated positively with access to resources, social support, and various indicators of well-being.

Studies of midlife friendship *network density* (i.e., the percentage of all possible links among friends in a network that do in fact exist) are rare. Perhaps the two most well-known studies of adult network density are Edward Laumann's analysis of Detroit Area Study data and Claude Fischer's report on the Northern California Study. Laumann, who only examined density among his respondents' three closest friends, found that 27 percent of them had networks that were completely interlocking (100 percent dense), 42 percent had partially interlocking networks, and the rest had radial networks (0 percent dense). Fischer reported that the average density of the network of associates was 44 percent and that the more kin and the fewer nonkin in the network, the denser it was. This suggests that friendship network density, if he had reported it, would have been lower.

The density of networks is related to the processes that take place within them. For example, dense networks make it possible for information to

be transmitted quickly and therefore are easy to mobilize during crises. In contrast, confidences are less likely to be kept in high density networks and so self-disclosure is risky in them.

One of the most robust findings regarding friendship network structure is that they tend to be *homogeneous* (i.e., friends tend to occupy similar social structural positions). Studies have shown that midlife friendships are homogeneous in occupational status, ethnicity, age, marital status, income, education, gender, and religion. In general, higher status middle-aged people tend to have more homogeneous networks than do lower status people. Although sociologists generally posit a structural explanation for these findings (i.e., people, especially higher status ones, have more opportunities to meet others who are similar to themselves than do dissimilar others), preferences resulting from socialization may also contribute to the homogeneity of networks. Although findings vary across types of homogeneity, in midlife, homogeneous friendships tend to be closer than heterogeneous ones.

In most studies that include measures of friendship structure, the structural characteristics of friendship networks are used to predict outcome variables such as psychological well-being, occupational success, or educational achievement. The paucity of studies examining midlife friendship network structure is unfortunate because these are important outcomes. As the examples already provided demonstrate, some studies suggest that the internal structure of friendship networks and dyads affects the processes that are exchanged among participants. There are also fewer studies about how interactive processes sustain and modify friendship structure. For example, frequent contact with friends increases the chance that those friends know each other, so frequent positive contact increases the density of friendship networks over time.

Variations in Friendship Across Contexts

Friendships do not, of course, occur in a vacuum; they are embedded in societies, communities, and immediate social environments (e.g., neighborhoods, buildings, and organizations). Although few societal-level studies comparing midlife friendships

in different historical periods or in different countries have been conducted, since the founding of the field of sociology scholars have theorized about how the broader social context affects the friendships that take place within it. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, for example, German scholars such as Max Weber and Ferdinand Tönnies argued that the importance of friendship had declined with industrialization and urbanization because of increasingly diverse social environments, residential mobility, and the development of impersonal bureaucracies, social forces that all are particularly salient in midlife. In a series of articles in the 1960s, Eugene Litwak rejected the notion that close relationships and bureaucratic organizations are incompatible and argued instead that they perform different, but complementary tasks. More recently, scholars have argued that in the process of industrialization and modernization, the more communal social life of the past has been replaced with a concern for the private world of home and family. Whereas in the past, social lives, including those of the middle aged, centered on relationships with coworkers and neighbors, now improvements in transportation and communications technologies have reduced the importance of local ties. Some scholars have argued that this has led to increased isolation, but others have argued that people are now free to develop a wider variety of friendships.

Only a few studies have been conducted comparing midlife friendships in across societies or periods of history in the same society, and few quantitative studies have compared midlife friendships in various communities or immediate social environments. Ethnographic studies (i.e., studies of specific settings that usually are qualitative and include observation), however, raise questions about whether findings can be generalized across contexts and suggest some connection between the characteristics of contexts and how friendship is enacted. For example, ethnographies of poor or marginal populations are more likely to discuss the closeness of relationships in a setting and to describe the social support friends provide to each other. In contrast, ethnographies of the middle class tend to describe friendships in terms of sociability rather than in terms of closeness and as focused on specific activities rather than being central to everyday survival. If the friendships in these same settings were systematically compared, quantitative researchers

would be able to document how friendship processes and structure varied across these two types of settings more precisely. Comparing these ethnographies also suggests certain characteristics of friendships are the same across contexts. For example, no matter what the setting, ethnographers tend to describe most friendships as homogeneous, probably because most immediate social environments and communities are themselves fairly homogeneous.

Individual Differences

Depending on the study, individual differences are conceptualized and examined differently. Although researchers who study dyadic processes and those who study network structure both tend to discuss individual variation in midlife friendship patterns across demographic characteristics, they use the same measures to indicate different concepts. For example, psychologists often use “sex” as a proxy measure of disposition (e.g., personality, motives, personal preferences, biologically based tendencies), and sociologists use it as a proxy measure of social structural location (i.e., external opportunities and constraints). Researchers who study midlife friendship processes tend to place more emphasis on the relationships among characteristics of friendship (e.g., such as closeness, self-disclosure, satisfaction, perceptions of equity) and less emphasis on studying individual variation within samples. In contrast, those who study midlife friendship structure tend to include many independent variables in their equations and focus on a limited number of friendship characteristics, each measured with a single item. Ethnographers do not often describe individual variation in midlife friendship patterns and when they do, interpretations of findings about how individual characteristics affect outcomes are often difficult to distinguish from contextual effects because contexts tend to be homogeneous.

However they conceptualize and interpret demographic variables, researchers study some effects more than others. Gender is by far the favorite demographic variable among midlife friendship researchers who use quantitative methods, whether they study interactive processes or internal structure. Researchers do not, however,

typically include race, ethnicity, or social class as independent or control variables in their analyses, so ethnographic case studies are the main source of information on the effects of these variables on midlife friendship patterns. Quantitative studies of friendship processes in minority populations are relatively uncommon as are those of noncollege-educated populations.

Not much is known about the effects of age on adult friendship. The information included on midlife friendship in this entry is derived from studies that are not focused on children, adolescents, young adults, or old adults. Often studies that incorporate theoretical definitions of midlife do not include people from other age groups and so explicit comparisons are not possible. When studies do include other age groups, they are typically cross-sectional and do not permit separation of age, period, and cohort effects. Much remains to be discovered about midlife friendship patterns, how they differ from friendship patterns during other stages of life, and how they vary across contexts and demographic groups.

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See also Friendship, Conflict and Dissolution; Friendship Formation and Development; Friendships, Cross-Sex; Friendships, Sex Differences and Similarities; Friendships in Adolescence; Friendships in Late Adulthood; Friendships in Young Adulthood; Social Networks, Dyad Effects on; Social Networks, Effects on Developed Relationships; Social Networks, Role in Relationship Initiation

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FRIENDSHIPS IN YOUNG ADULTHOOD

Friendships are among the many personal relationships people engage in during their lifetimes. Most of what relationship scientists know about friendship stems from research on children or college students in Western cultures; however, the research that has been conducted has consistently shown that people value and enjoy their friendships, that people invest time and effort to maintain their friendships, and that people with established friendships fare better psychologically and even live longer than do those without. Benefits notwithstanding, friendships also entail costs and pose challenges. This entry discusses the importance of friendship in young adults' lives; describes the process of friendship initiation, the development of closeness, and precursors to friendship dissolution; and highlights differences between men's and women's friendships and between same-sex and cross-sex friendships during young adulthood.

Importance of Friendship in Young Adulthood

During young adulthood, a given individual is likely to be navigating myriad personal relationships, including sibling relationships, parent-child relationships, employee-employer relationships, friendships, romantic relationships, team relationships, and teacher-mentoring relationships. At this

point in life, however, friendships and romantic relationships take center stage. In one sample of unmarried college undergraduates, for example, almost half identified a romantic relationship as their “closest, deepest, most involved, and most intimate relationship” and more than a third identified a friendship. And, when young adults are asked about sources of joy and meaning in their lives, “friends” is among their most frequent responses.

A look at the quality of life during young adulthood (and in adolescence), particularly in Western cultures, might clarify the distinctive quality friendships have during young adulthood. During adolescence and young adulthood, individuals are likely to be romantically involved but not yet married or with children. Moreover, individuals generally spend a lot of time with others of their same age—in school and at play—at a time when they are exploring different relationship partners and developing their interpersonal skills and an understanding of their own enduring strengths, weaknesses, and desires and goals. Perhaps it is not surprising, then, that at this point in life, people rate companionship, emotional support, and personal disclosure as among the most important qualities of friendship. During adolescence and young adulthood, friends seem to play an integral role—through constant conversation, activity sharing, and emotional support—in each other’s understanding of self and others.

Defining Features of Friendship

Given the importance young adults attach to their friendships, one might expect to find clear definitions of friendship. However, *friendship* is difficult to pin down in a few concise words. That said, various studies consistently point to several defining features of young adults’ perceptions of friendship. First, friendships are characterized by interdependence: One person’s behavior both influences and is influenced by the other person’s behavior. Second, that interdependence is *voluntary*: Friends seek out each other’s company rather than interact by obligation (as is often the case in family relationships). Third, friends enjoy each other’s company, even if that company is not as frequent as they would like: Friends enjoy talking,

eating, and just “hanging out” with each other. Fourth, friends disclose: They reveal information about themselves to one another that they presumably would not share with just anybody. Although the degree of intimate self-disclosure varies from dyad to dyad and as a function of the sex composition of the dyad, friends tend to share their thoughts and feelings. Finally, young adults perceive friendships as involving a voluntary sense of mutual aid and loyalty. In other words, they perceive a friend as someone they can rely on and as someone who can rely on them when the going gets rough.

These defining features of friendship might also be thought of as “rules” of friendship. For example, consider a young man who is disappointed that others seem to “befriend” him only because he can help them with their math homework. One of the benefits of friendship is task support, but this young man has experienced a betrayal of the implicit notion that friendships are founded in mutual enjoyment more than task assistance. And when one woman borrows a few dollars from her friend, she might be disappointed if her friend talks incessantly of needing to be paid back so that their “score is even.” The aid and loyalty held in high regard in friendship involves not tit-for-tat exchange but, rather, the perception that the relationship has a long future—the score will even out in its own time—and that a friend will be there for them through thick and thin, regardless of the current score.

Becoming Friends

Several characteristics predict the formation of a friendship between two individuals. In young adulthood, people are more likely to become friends with frequent interaction partners, such as coworkers and individuals who live close by, than with infrequent interaction partners. As a general rule, people prefer friends (and other relationship partners) who are physically attractive and socially skilled. Related to social skill, people also tend to fall into friendships with people who they perceive as “responsive.” Responsive individuals answer questions about themselves, thus demonstrating a willingness to share a bit about themselves with others. Perhaps more importantly, responsive people also ask questions about other people,

listen to the answers, and respond supportively and sympathetically. In short, people become friends with those who display an interest in them.

People like those who are similar to themselves, and they perceive the people they like to be similar to themselves. Not surprisingly, then, individuals who are similar to each other, and who perceive themselves as similar to each other, are likely to become friends. For example, freshmen roommates in college who are placed together at random are more likely to like each other if they share similar values and attitudes. Friends are similar in many ways. They tend to be similar in age, level of education, family background, income, values, religion, political views, and the activities they enjoy. Limited research even suggests that same-sex friends may be similar in how physically attractive they are.

There are multiple, and not necessarily mutually exclusive, explanations for the similarity observed among friends (and other relationship partners). One suggestion is that humans are driven by a need for cognitive consistency, or *balance*. According to this perspective, we prefer to be around individuals who perceive other things and other people the same way we do. Another theory is that we are more likely to encounter similar others than dissimilar others, given that our interests and values guide the environments we select for ourselves. According to this perspective, it is not necessarily all that surprising when two previously unacquainted people who sign up for the same tai chi class (or any other specialized activity) realize they have much in common and quickly develop a satisfying friendship. Another prominent theory is that humans have evolved to select interaction partners who are genetically similar to themselves. In support of this theory, known as Genetic Similarity Theory, friends (and spouses) tend to be more similar to each other on characteristics that are under stronger genetic influence, such as anthropometric characteristics and highly heritable social attitudes.

Degrees of Friendship

If you ask young men and women to tell you about a friend of theirs, the first thing they will probably

do is attempt to clarify whether you want to know about a casual friend, a good friend, a close friend, or a best friend. This request for clarification demonstrates people's tendency to categorize their friendships along a continuum of closeness. Again, however, there are no concise, objective definitions of closeness but, rather, typical features. Generally, these features parallel those already mentioned earlier. In other words, each level of friendship (casual—good—close—best) is associated with increasing levels of similarity, interaction, disclosure, support, and enjoyment.

Some research suggests that people also have an intuitive perception of whether a given friend is a "true" friend or a "fair-weather" friend. A true friend seems to closely parallel people's perceptions of a "best" friend—this friend is genuinely happy for you when things go your way and would do just about anything for you when things do not go your way. Some researchers have speculated that true friendship forms under the conditions of *mutual irreplaceability*, that is, when each member perceives the other as offering him or her unique and desirable benefits that would be difficult to find in anyone else.

Types of Friendship

Young adulthood is one of the only stages in life, at least in many industrialized nations, that if you ask young men and women to tell you about a friend, they might also ask if you want to know about a *same-sex* friend or a *cross-sex* friend. During adolescence and young adulthood, most males and females report that they have one or more friends of the other sex (although they tend to have more same-sex friends than cross-sex friends). Thus, a thorough discussion of friendship must at least touch upon the complicated dynamics of cross-sex friendships and how they compare and contrast with same-sex friendships.

In the most fundamental ways, same-sex friendships and cross-sex friendships are similar. Both forms of friendship involve voluntary interdependence. And, when young adults report on their most common experiences with a close same-sex or cross-sex friend, nominations related to companionship, help, and support, and having someone to talk to are mentioned frequently for both

forms of friendship. Same-sex and cross-sex friendships do, however, differ in some of the rewards they offer and costs they entail. For example, in heterosexual samples, one of the most prominent benefits of cross-sex friendships for young adults is gaining an insider perspective about the opposite sex. Another common finding is that sexual attraction and sexual tension can operate—albeit frequently at low levels—in some cross-sex friendships. In one study, more than one-half of college students reported that they had had sex with a cross-sex friend at some point in their lives. Friends differ in the degree to which they perceive sexual undertones operating in their friendship, as well as in the degree to which they perceive it as adding spice to the relationship (for example, by affirming one's desirability as a romantic partner) or complicating it (for example, if sexual attraction is not mutual). Perhaps it is not surprising, then, that although individuals value intimate disclosure in both their same-sex and cross-sex friendships, they are more likely to avoid talking about certain topics, such as sexual and dating experiences, with their cross-sex friends than with their same-sex friends. Young adults also are more likely to deceive their cross-sex friends than their same-sex friends about their current romantic relationship involvement and whether or not they have feelings of romantic attraction toward their friend. Individuals who are simultaneously involved in a romantic relationship and cross-sex friendships report that their cross-sex friends and romantic partners alike may experience jealousy.

Same-sex friendships also provide unique benefits and pose unique challenges. Young adults devote substantial effort to maintaining their same-sex friendships, by offering the benefits that friendships should provide—such as companionship and emotional and task support. Some of the primary benefits of same-sex friendship, then, are also the primary costs. In other words, young adults perceive the time and effort they devote to their same-sex friendships as both a benefit and a cost.

Same-sex friendships, like cross-sex friendships, are linked with romance and mating. In adolescence as well as young adulthood, same-sex friends spend a lot of their time talking about the other sex. That is, young men talk about women and young women talk about men (and relationships).

It is not uncommon for young adults to perceive their same-sex friends as relationship advisers and mate-seeking partners. Yet, at the same time, they also perceive them as rivals. In one sample of young adults, more than half reported that they had competed with a same-sex friend to attract a member of the opposite sex. They perceived such competition as one of the most costly aspects of their same-sex friendship. Perhaps by befriending those who are similar to ourselves in values, activity preferences, and physical attractiveness, people fall into friendships with those who can both facilitate and interfere with their mating desires.

Gender Differences in Friendship

In many ways, men and women have similar perceptions of their friendships and similar friendship experiences. For example, both sexes value close friendships and intimacy in those friendships. Both sexes maintain close friendships that endure for many years. Men and women hold similarly high levels of trust in their friends, report similar unwillingness to confront their friends when something hurtful is said, and maintain similarly frequent contact with their friends. In young adulthood, men and women both spend a lot of time with their friends—in some cases, 10 to 25 hours per week. Despite the similarities, however, there also are some striking differences between men and women.

Gender differences in *same-sex* friendships are largest in the domains of activity and self-disclosure. More than anything else, women enjoy talking with their same-sex friends. Other activities—such as shopping, canoeing, or knitting—are preferred to the extent that they also allow for conversation. Men, in contrast, emphasize activities over talking. When men and women engage in conversation with their same-sex friends, women's self-disclosures include more personal and emotional information, and they tend to talk about their relationships and other people; men's conversations involve less personal information and more talk of sports and shared activities such as drinking. In essence, women's same-sex friendships tend to be more oriented toward personal sharing, and men's same-sex friendships tend to be more oriented toward joint activities.

Men's lower level of intimate self-disclosure in their same-sex friendships, relative to women's, does not necessarily imply that men are less capable of intimacy. In fact, men engage in more intimate self-disclosure in their cross-sex friendships than in their same-sex friendships (and more disclosure in their cross-sex friendships than women do). Thus, research suggests that men are capable of experiencing intimacy but either cannot or choose not to in their same-sex friendships. Men's intimacy needs appear to be met in their other relationships, including their cross-sex friendships and romantic relationships.

The most consistent sex differences in cross-sex friendship have been documented in the domain of sexual attraction. Although overall levels of sexual attraction to cross-sex friends are not high, men report greater sexual attraction to their cross-sex friends than do women. Men also overestimate the degree to which their friends are attracted to them and perceive sexual attractiveness as a more desirable characteristic for a cross-sex friend to possess. There are two primary, but nonmutually exclusive, explanations for this. One possibility is that men are socialized by the media, and pressured by their peers, to sexualize women. Conversely, evolutionary models of human behavior propose that men may have evolved to perceive reproductive-age women (who are not perceived as genetic kin) as potential sexual partners. It is likely that both causal forces are operating.

Friendship Conflict and Dissolution

Friendships are not without conflict. Sources of conflict are tied to the rules of friendship, characteristics involved in friendship formation and development of closeness, and the costs and benefits of friendship. For example, a primary benefit of friendship is self-disclosure, with increasing degrees of self-disclosure linked with increasing friendship closeness. One rule of friendship is that those disclosures are kept between friends; when that rule is broken, a friend has been betrayed and dissolution may result. A betrayal is one of several painful reasons for friendship dissolution, which also include nagging and criticizing, not confiding, jealousy, and not helping when needed. Young adults report that most of their friendships end

because of physical separation from a friend, acquisition of new friends, betrayal by a friend, or establishment by self or friend of a romantic relationship. Romantic relationships tend to interfere more with women's same-sex friendships than with men's same-sex friendships. Perhaps the lower level of emotional intimacy and greater level of specific shared activities in men's same-sex friendships allows them to more easily invest simultaneously in same-sex friendships and romantic relationships.

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See also Closeness; Friendship Formation and Development; Friendships, Cross-Sex; Intimacy; Rules of Relationships; Similarity Principle of Attraction

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FRIENDS WITH BENEFITS

We all know that friendships between men and women differ from heterosexual romantic relationships. To give one example, sexual interaction typically occurs in close, intimate, romantic relationships whereas friends generally eschew these encounters. The boundaries between friendships and romantic relationships, however, are not as rigid as some may think. For example, one of the challenges facing some close cross-sex friends is sexual or physical attraction. Moreover, modern sexual interactions between heterosexual men and women differ dramatically from a half-century ago. One recent example of this change, noted primarily on college campuses, is the topic of this entry: *Friends With Benefits*. Put simply, friends with benefits relationships (FWBRs) represent a relational hybrid of friendships and sexual partnerships. More formally, FWBRs are platonic friendships (i.e., partners who are not dating and do not consider themselves to be romantically involved) in which individuals engage in some degree of sexual interaction. The sexual activity generally occurs on repeated occasions (in contrast to a one-night-stand or hookup), and can include behaviors ranging from kissing to sexual intercourse. This entry discusses the nature of FWBRs, how their ideal differs from their reality, and the variety of these relationship types.

Friends with benefits relationships attempt to combine the best of two relational worlds by fusing the communication and closeness of a friendship with the sexual intimacy of a romantic relationship. At the same time, however, partners try to avoid the commitments and responsibilities (the “strings”) typical of a romantic entanglement. In addition to lacking commitment, FWBRs typically lack exclusivity so that if partners wanted to date or engage in casual sex with other partners, they are generally free to do so.

Friends With Benefits: The Ideal Versus the Real

The ideal FWBR is simple: sex between friends. College students typically use the phrase “no strings attached” to describe this ideal FWBR form. Friends repeatedly engage in sexual behavior, but try to avoid anything that will make the partners feel tied down, such as commitment, exclusivity, and deeper emotional connections like romantic love or jealousy. Partners are free to have sex with each other, but can also investigate outside entanglements, romantic or otherwise.

In many cases, the reality of FWBRs is quite different from the ideal. It is relatively rare to find long-term FWBRs. There are several reasons why this might be the case. First, the FWBR label (though not necessarily the phenomenon) is relatively recent. (The FWBR label comes from the 1996 Alanis Morissette song titled *Head Over Feet*.) Given the relative rarity and recency of the relationship form, there are likely no cultural (or subcultural) scripts for FWBRs partners to follow. Second, managing a balance between a close sexual, but not romantic, friendship appears to be a difficult task. Contrary to the primary emotional commandment in FWBRs (i.e., “thou shalt not get attached”), it is typical that one partner develops feelings for the other. These feelings violate FWBRs’ primary emotional commandment and likely generate a fear, or actual instances, of unrequited love. Third, FWBR partners generally do not communicate about the relationship, its definition, or how to make it work. Friends with benefits relationships are likely difficult to maintain over time under the best of circumstances. A lack of explicit relational communication likely makes it nearly impossible.

Given the difference between the ideal and the real in FWBRs, it is not surprising that some partners maintain their FWBRs only so long as there is no other romantic option available to them. Some partners describe terminating their FWBR when they find a “real” romantic relationship that better serves their emotional needs. Despite the primary emotional commandment, finding a “real” relationship likely will not happen simultaneously for both partners, leading to hurt feelings by the “dumpee.” Another instance of hurt feelings might occur when one partner views the FWBR as

potentially romantic, a view that is not reciprocated by the other partner.

Variations in Friends With Benefits Relationships

Most discussions assume that FWBRs represent a single consistent relationship type. When college students were asked to describe their FWBR experience, however, a number of other relationship forms appeared under this label. The most popular FWBR form is the prototypical good friends who have sex with one another. At the opposite end of the spectrum, we see a second type involving serial hookups where partners appear to have relatively little interaction other than to arrange and engage in sexual encounters. Third, an intermediate position suggests that FWBRs are opportunistic. Partners who are members of the same social circle might not be particularly close, but can always rely on hooking up with each other if neither finds a different sexual partner by the end of the night.

The final two forms of FWBRs suggest that they are, in some cases, closely connected to romantic relationships. First, some partners meet, get to know each other, and form a FWBR as a means of testing the romantic waters. Conversely, in some cases, FWBRs represent the smoldering embers of a terminated relationship. That is, partners were previously romantically linked, terminated their relationship, however, miss (and, therefore, decided to continue) the sexual connection. Therefore, in some cases, FWBRs represent a transition *into* a romantic relationship, whereas in others, FWBRs represent a transition *out* of one.

In summary, it appears as though the term *friends with benefits* is used in a strategically ambiguous manner. The term communicates enough (i.e., two people are having sex but aren't dating or in a romantic relationship), without saying too much (i.e., doesn't communicate how close partners are, the frequency and nature of the sexual interaction, or the potential for a romantic relationship). Future research should investigate the various meanings associated with the FWBR label to gain a greater understanding of this difficult and complex relationship type. Future work could also explore the apparent disparity between

the ideal and the reality of FWBRs, and examine the ways that partners manage those dilemmas.

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See also Dating Relationships in Adolescence and Young Adulthood; Friendships, Cross-Sex; Hooking Up, Hookups; Love, Unreciprocated

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FUN IN RELATIONSHIPS

Having fun in relationships is an important motivation for individuals' entering into relationships and has consequences for closeness and attraction to partners. People establish and maintain relationships for a variety of reasons including security, companionship, and intimacy; relationships and romantic partners are also a source of fun and enjoyment. Actually, one of the primary goals of romantic interactions is to have fun, especially during early stages of relationship development. This entry discusses how partner and relationship characteristics, as well as the types of experiences couples have together, can increase the amount of fun in relationships.

Humor in Relationships

Fun is closely associated with humor in relationships. Humorous individuals are perceived as attractive, and sense of humor is an important

characteristic when selecting a romantic partner. Furthermore, in studies of preferences of partners' characteristics, sense of humor is rated as an increasingly important attribute as relationships become more serious (i.e., from friendships to short-term to long-term relationships). In particular, research on mate selection indicates that sense of humor is especially important for females when selecting a romantic partner, whereas males put less emphasis on humor relative to other characteristics, such as physical attractiveness. Humor has a significant function in relationships by promoting fun, enjoyable interactions, and intimacy. Furthermore, individuals in satisfying relationships report that humor occurs frequently and view humor as a central part of their relationships. Although humor is clearly a valued aspect of romantic relationships, it may be troublesome in cross-sex friendships because it can be interpreted as unwanted flirting or harassment.

Along with humor, other relationship characteristics may facilitate fun. For example, having fun in a relationship may be a function of the degree of similarity between partners. Research conducted by Brant Burleson and Wayne Denton indicates that people who are similar to their partners enjoy their interactions with partners more than do those who are dissimilar, and enjoyment of interactions is an important factor leading to attraction in relationships. In short, similarity promotes fun in relationships, and fun is associated with attraction.

Furthermore, relationship quality may be enhanced by playfulness between partners in more established relationships. People who engage in playful interactions in their relationships tend to experience more positive emotions, relationship satisfaction, and feel closer to their partners. Interestingly, playfulness can include mock aggression, or *play fighting*, between partners. Mock aggression occurs frequently in relationships and is generally reported as being associated with positivity in the relationship.

Fun and Self-Expansion

In the most general sense, people pursue relationships that are rewarding or that benefit them in some fashion. Fun and enjoyment are common rewards that relationships provide. Art and Elaine

Aron's *Self-Expansion Model* provides a theoretical basis for why fun would be particularly desirable in close relationships. According to the model, people are fundamentally motivated to enhance their capabilities through the accumulation of knowledge, experience, identities, and other resources. One way to accomplish this is through participation in self-expanding activities that involve novelty, challenge, fun, and enjoyment. The model further states that the primary way people satisfy this motivation is through close relationships. The Self-Expansion Model hypothesizes that initial romantic attraction is greatest for partners who provide the potential to maximize one's own expansion. Thus, engaging in novel activities with a partner should be experienced as fun and therefore enhance attraction for that partner and increase relationship satisfaction.

Research by Aron and colleagues has examined the association between fun activities and marital satisfaction. In their study, married couples initially rated a list of activities for how exciting or pleasant they found each activity. Couples were then randomly assigned to either engage in exciting and fun activities or pleasant activities, or did not engage in special activities over the following weeks. Exciting and fun activities included activities such as skiing, dancing, and hiking. In contrast, pleasant activities were generally less fun and included activities such as visiting friends, seeing a movie, and eating out. Those in the no special activity condition were from the waiting list. Results indicate that relationship satisfaction 10 weeks later was greater for those who engaged in the fun and exciting activities compared with the pleasant activities or those who did not engage in any special activities. These results suggest that having fun is important for marital satisfaction.

Other studies by Aron and colleagues investigated the role of novel, challenging, and arousing experiences on self-expansion. A series of laboratory experiments tested whether these types of fun experiences enhanced relationship quality. In these experiments, married couples first completed some questionnaires, participated together in a task, and then completed more questionnaires. The questionnaires before and after the task served as a pretest and posttest measures of experienced relationship quality. The task was experimentally manipulated so that couples in the experimental

condition engaged in an activity that was novel, challenging, and arousing and those in the control condition took part in a less novel, less challenging, and less arousing activity. In the experimental condition, the couple was tied together on one side at the wrists and ankles and then took part in a task in which they crawled together on mats for 12 meters, climbing over a barrier at one point, while carrying a foam cylinder with their heads and bodies. In the control condition, one partner slowly crawled to the middle of the mat and back, then the other partner did the same, then the first partner repeated this, and so on. The first study employing this paradigm found a significantly greater increase in experienced relationship quality for couples in the experimental (novel/challenging/arousing) condition compared with the control condition. Additional studies revealed parallel findings when a no-activity condition was included, and when relationship quality was measured based on videotaped interactions between members of the couple. These results suggest that engaging in fun activities (in this case, activity that is also novel, challenging, and arousing) leads to increases in relationship quality.

The Self-Expansion Model suggests that fun experiences would be beneficial because they add to one's self-concept and promote closeness. The influence of humorous experiences on closeness has been examined. Participants in this study were pairs of strangers randomly assigned to humorous tasks (e.g., blindfolded dance steps) or a no-humor

condition (e.g., dance steps without a blindfold). As predicted, participants completing the humorous tasks felt closer to one another, with these results being produced by the experience of self-expansion with the partner.

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See also Arousal and Attraction; Mate Preferences; Play Fighting; Self-Expansion Model; Similarity Principle of Attraction

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GAIN-LOSS THEORY OF ATTRACTION

The Gain-Loss Theory or model of interpersonal attraction is concerned with the effect that a sequence of positive, negative, or positive and negative evaluations about a person may have about that person's attraction to the person or persons making those evaluations. For example, when giving feedback to individuals on how they have performed on a task, is it better to start with what they have done well or what they need to improve? The model was first proposed in 1965 by Elliot Aronson and Darwyn Linder and was the subject of a relatively small number of studies carried out in the late 1960s and early 1970s. This entry defines the gain-loss effect in attraction and provides five explanations for its occurrence.

The model proposes that a change in evaluation (i.e., a gain or a loss) has a greater effect on a person's attraction toward the evaluator than does no change in evaluation (i.e., all positive or all negative). More specifically, the model states that a change in a sequence of evaluations of a person from negative to positive (i.e., a gain or $- +$) may be more rewarding to that person than a series of uniformly positive evaluations (i.e., all positive or $+ +$). Similarly, a change in a series of evaluations of a person from positive to negative (i.e., a loss or $+ -$) may be more punishing than a sequence of similarly negative evaluations (i.e., all negative or $- -$). Stated in this way, the model applies

primarily to the way a person feels toward the evaluator, although the gain-loss phenomenon is likely to also affect how the person feels about him or herself. The model itself does not explicitly say that the effect of these evaluations works through recipients' feelings about themselves. The most rewarding sequence is gain ($- +$), followed by all positive ($+ +$), all negative ($- -$) and loss ($+ -$). More support has been found for the gain effect than for the loss effect.

Five explanations have been put forward for gain-loss effects. Recipient anxiety or anxiety reduction is one of them. A negative evaluation is likely to bring about negative affect such as anxiety, hurt, and self-doubt. A subsequent positive evaluation is likely to reduce these negative feelings of anxiety. Consequently, recipients should feel more positively toward an evaluator who has reduced their anxiety than toward someone who has not made them anxious in the first place. Although it seems clear how this explanation may account for a gain effect, it is more difficult to see how it can be applied to a loss effect where a generally more negative evaluation should evoke greater anxiety.

A second explanation is an evaluation contrast one. Positive evaluations may seem more positive after negative evaluations than after positive ones. Similarly, negative evaluations may appear more negative after positive evaluations than after negative ones. This explanation implies that these effects should be less pronounced when a neutral evaluation is used because the contrast is less strong.

Evaluator discernment is a third explanation. Evaluators expressing uniformly positive or negative evaluations about another person are likely to be seen as being less discerning or discriminating by that person than will evaluators whose evaluations vary because the unvarying evaluations will be seen as being more a reflection of the evaluator than of the person being evaluated. A less discerning person may be seen as less attractive than a more discerning one. When evaluators change their evaluation, later evaluations are seen as being more carefully considered and accurate than earlier ones. Thus, later evaluations have greater effect.

A fourth explanation is a recipient competence one. The evaluation may affect how competent recipients feel and the way they subsequently behave. Recipients given a negative evaluation may feel less competent and may be motivated to make a more competent impression. Recipients receiving a positive evaluation after a negative one may feel that they have become more competent and that this increased competence has been recognized by the evaluator. Thus, they find the evaluator more attractive. Recipients obtaining a negative evaluation after a positive one may feel less competent than would those receiving a positive evaluation after a negative one because they have not had an opportunity to show how competent they are.

Evaluator flattery is a fifth explanation. Evaluators making all positive evaluations may be seen as trying more to flatter the recipient or to ingratiate themselves with the recipient than would evaluators who also make some negative evaluations that may be seen as trying to provide a more accurate evaluation. Evaluators who are seen as being flattering or ingratiating may be considered less attractive than are those who are seen as trying to be honest. This explanation has not been explicitly articulated to account for why a gain sequence may lead the recipient to see the evaluator as more attractive than a loss sequence. Presumably, the positive evaluations that follow negative ones may be perceived as a less strong attempt to flatter the recipient than all positive evaluations. It is not clear how this explanation could apply to accounting for a loss effect. Evaluators making negative evaluations after positive ones may be seen as trying to be more accurate than evaluators making positive evaluations followed by negative ones. Consequently, loss evaluators should be viewed as more positive

than gain evaluators but this effect has not been found. This explanation has not been considered a viable one for studies in which recipients were led to believe that the evaluator was not aware that her or his evaluations were being received by the recipients. In other words, in this situation there was little reason for recipients to believe that the evaluator was trying to flatter them.

Despite the relatively limited research on Gain-Loss Theory, this topic remains an important one particularly in everyday situations where positive feedback needs to be tempered with negative feedback.

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See also First Impressions; Ingratiation; Interpersonal Attraction; Liking; Reassurance Seeking; Rewards and Costs in Relationships, Self-Concept and Relationships

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GAY, LESBIAN, AND BISexual RELATIONSHIPS

Intimate same-sex relationships have existed throughout history and in places across the globe. This entry presents scientific knowledge about gay and lesbian relationships in contemporary society. Although the relationships of bisexuals are not well understood, key findings are highlighted. A notable limitation of current knowledge is that most research has been conducted in the United States with primarily White, middle-class people.

About 1 percent of adult women self-identify as lesbian and 2 percent of adult men self-identify as gay. Many of these individuals have an intimate relationship. In an illustrative project, demographers Christopher Carpenter and Gary J. Gates analyzed representative surveys and census data from California. They estimated that about 40 percent of gay men and more than 50 percent of lesbians age 18 to 59 are currently living with a same-sex partner. In comparison, about 60 percent of heterosexuals age 18 to 59 are currently living with an other-sex partner. At the time of this study, same-sex couples in California could register as domestic partners with rights and responsibilities similar to those of married heterosexuals. Carpenter and Gates found that almost half of cohabiting lesbians are registered as domestic partners, compared with less than a quarter of cohabiting gay men. U.S. Census data show that gay and lesbian couples can be found in all parts of the country.

The experiences of same-sex couples in the United States are influenced by the social stigma of homosexuality. Although social attitudes are becoming more tolerant, many gay and lesbian individuals and couples report incidents of social rejection, prejudice, and discrimination. In national polls, only half of Americans say that same-sex couples should be allowed to form legally recognized civil unions or domestic partnerships. The topic of same-sex marriage continues to be a source of heated controversy.

Despite the differing social contexts for same-sex and heterosexual relationships, there are many commonalities in the close romantic relationships of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and heterosexual individuals. Human needs for intimacy and the capacity to form strong emotional attachments affect all of us. Most adults want to have a committed love relationship, and lesbians and gay men are no exception. In one national survey, three of four lesbians and gay men said that if same-sex marriage were legal, they would like to get married at some time in their lives. Whatever their sexual orientation, most individuals seek similar qualities in a romantic partner, including affection, dependability, shared interests, and similarity of religious beliefs.

Relationship Satisfaction

Researchers have compared gay, lesbian, and heterosexual couples using standard measures of

love, intimacy, and relationship satisfaction. The consistent finding is that same-sex couples do not differ significantly from heterosexual couples on these measures. This does not mean, of course, that all same-sex couples have satisfying relationships but, rather, that lesbian and gay couples are no more likely to have good—or bad—relationships than are their heterosexual peers.

Further, the factors that enhance or detract from satisfaction in same-sex and heterosexual relationships are similar. For example, regardless of sexual orientation, relationship quality is greater when partners trust each other and have effective communication skills. On average, same-sex and heterosexual couples do not differ on these predictors of relationship quality. Relationships also benefit when partners receive support from people in their social network. The support experiences of same-sex and heterosexual couples do sometimes differ. When asked to name the individuals who provide them with help, advice, and emotional support, lesbians and gay men are more likely than heterosexuals to name friends and less likely to mention family members as support providers. On balance, however, same-sex and heterosexual couples usually receive comparable levels of social support, but from different sources.

No relationship escapes at least occasional disagreement or conflict. Lesbian, gay, and heterosexual couples generally report disagreeing about similar topics, with finances, affection, sex, criticism, and household tasks heading the list. They also report arguing with similar frequency. Same-sex couples face some unique problems, however, such as whether to disclose their sexual orientation or the intimate nature of their relationship to other people. Another central issue is how successfully partners are able to solve problems that arise in their relationship. Both self-report surveys and studies observing couples in laboratory settings indicate that lesbians and gay men are at least as good as heterosexuals in solving relationship problems.

Sexuality

In general, gay and lesbian partners report levels of sexual satisfaction comparable with those of heterosexuals. Greater sexual satisfaction is usually associated with greater overall relationship satisfaction. There is wide variability in sexual

frequency and a general decline in frequency the longer a couple is together. On average, lesbian couples report having sex less often than either heterosexual or gay male couples. Early in a relationship, gay male couples have sex more often than other couples do. The reasons for these differences in reports of sexual frequency are not well understood. Some speculate that gender socialization leads women to repress sexual feelings, to have difficulty initiating sex with a partner, or to define sexuality differently than men do. Others suggest that men are generally more interested in sex than women, leading to more frequent sexual activity in a couple with at least one male partner.

A consistent finding is that gay men differ from both lesbian and heterosexual couples in their attitudes and behavior about sexual exclusiveness. Data from the large American Couples study conducted by Philip Blumstein and Pepper Schwartz are illustrative. Only 36 percent of gay men said it was important to them to have a sexually monogamous relationship, compared with 71 percent of lesbians, 75 percent of heterosexual husbands, and 84 percent of wives. In actual behavior, only a minority of lesbians (28 percent), husbands (26 percent), and wives (21 percent) had engaged in sex outside their primary relationship, compared with 82 percent of gay men. Sexual fidelity is positively related to relationship satisfaction for lesbian and heterosexual couples, but not for gay male couples. One reason is that some gay male couples have agreements permitting sex outside their primary relationship.

Gender Roles

Western societies have traditionally defined heterosexual marriage as having distinct gender roles: the husband is the head of household, economic provider, and chief decision maker, and the wife is the homemaker and follower. It is often assumed that same-sex couples adopt similar husband-wife roles as a model for their relationships. Actually, most contemporary lesbians and gay men reject these roles.

Most gay men and lesbians are in dual-earner relationships. Both partners are employed, and neither is the exclusive breadwinner. When same-sex

couples live together, the most common division of household work involves flexibility, with partners sharing domestic activities or dividing tasks according to personal preferences. Although the equal sharing of household labor is not inevitable in same-sex couples, it is more common than among heterosexuals. Lesbians and gay men generally favor power equality in their relationships. Not all couples achieve this ideal, however. In summary, research shows that most contemporary lesbians and gay men avoid husband and wife roles, instead constructing a more egalitarian pattern of shared responsibilities and decision making.

Creating Enduring Relationships

Many same-sex couples desire long-lasting relationships. How successful are lesbians and gay men in attaining this goal? This question is difficult to answer with precision. Public records of heterosexual marriage and divorce provide standard estimates about marital stability over time. For same-sex couples, comparable records do not exist. Several studies have documented the experiences of gay and lesbian couples who have been together for 20 years or longer. The recent analyses of representative data from California by Carpenter and Gates found that gay men currently living with a same-sex partner had been together for an average of 10 years; gay men who had registered as domestic partners had been together for 12 years. Lesbians' relationships were slightly shorter: 8 years for women living with a partner and 9 years for women who had registered as domestic partners. On average, these gay men and lesbians were in their early 40s, indicating that they had spent a substantial proportion of their adult lives with their current partner.

Another approach to understanding the longevity of same-sex relationships is to conduct studies that follow couples over time. Lawrence A. Kurdek compared gay and lesbian couples with married heterosexual couples with and without children. During more than 10 years, the breakup rates for same-sex and heterosexual couples without children were similar: about 1 in 5 couples ended their relationship. In contrast, married heterosexuals with children had a substantially lower breakup rate of only 3 percent. In these comparisons,

relationship stability was affected by the presence of children, rather than by the partners' sexual orientation.

To understand why there may be differences in the longevity of same-sex and heterosexual relationships, it is helpful to consider factors affecting partners' commitment to their relationship. First, positive attractions such as love and intimacy make individuals want to maintain a relationship. Second, the availability of attractive alternatives to the current relationship, including other possible partners or the prospect of being alone, reduces commitment. Third, barriers to leaving a relationship are important. Barriers include investments that increase the emotional or financial costs of ending a relationship, as well as moral or religious feelings of obligation to one's partner. Research shows that these same factors affect commitment in both same-sex and heterosexual relationships. One difference is noteworthy, however. Gay and lesbian couples consistently report fewer barriers to ending a relationship than do heterosexual married couples. Same-sex couples are less likely to own joint property or have children together. In contrast to married heterosexuals who must pay for and go through a legal divorce, most gay and lesbian couples do not need legal proceedings to end their relationship. It is possible that as legal and social recognition for same-sex relationships increases and more same-sex couples become parents, the barriers to ending same-sex relationships will become more similar to those of married couples.

Couples' Counseling

When relationship problems arise, couples sometimes seek the aid of a counselor. Although many issues are common among all types of romantic relationships, therapists who work with lesbian, gay, and bisexual clients should be knowledgeable about the unique issues these clients may face. In 2000, the American Psychological Association adopted "Guidelines for Psychotherapy with Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Clients," designed to improve the education of mental health professionals and the quality of the services they provide.

Some therapists adopt approaches to therapy that affirm the value and legitimacy of gay, lesbian, and bisexual lifestyles. These affirmative therapies

emphasize the potential impact of societal prejudice and acknowledge the importance of same-sex relationships. Although many gay affirmative therapists are themselves gay or lesbian, an affirmative approach can be used by therapists regardless of their own sexual orientation.

Relationship Dissolution

When people are asked why a recent romantic relationship ended, gay, lesbian, and heterosexual partners mention similar problems. These include a partner's frequent absence, sexual incompatibility, mental cruelty, and lack of love. Other common reasons are a partner's nonresponsiveness (e.g., poor communication or lack of support from the partner), a partner's personal problems (e.g., an alcohol problem), or sexual issues (e.g., the partner had an affair).

The ending of a serious romantic relationship is often difficult. When asked to describe their emotional reactions to ending a recent same-sex relationship, lesbians and gay men describe similar emotions. Emotional reactions to a breakup differ for the partner who initiated the breakup (who may feel guilt but also relief and happiness) and the partner who was left behind (who may feel lonely, angry, and helpless). The reasons for the breakup may also make a difference.

After a relationship ends, former partners may experience such problems as financial stress, deciding on the nature of their continuing relationship with the ex-partner, and difficulties finding a new partner. Although partners' reactions to the ending of same-sex and heterosexual relationships are generally similar, there may also be distinctive issues for lesbians and gay men. For example, because gay male and lesbian communities are often small, there may be pressure for same-sex ex-lovers to handle breakups tactfully and to remain friends.

The death of a loved partner is often traumatic, and the emotional aftermath of bereavement appears to be similar for surviving partners whatever their sexual orientation. However, the social context of bereavement often differs for same-sex and heterosexual partners. Gay and lesbian survivors may receive less social support for their loss, especially if they have concealed the nature of their

relationship from family or friends. The lack of legal protection of the rights of same-sex couples can also pose problems. Under U.S. federal law, a gay or lesbian surviving partner is not eligible for spousal benefits from Social Security or the Veterans' Administration. Without wills or other legal documents, the survivor may have no claim to the estate of a long-term partner that they contributed to building. If children are involved, there may also be issues about child custody. For gay men, the effects of the AIDS epidemic have been devastating. The social stigma surrounding AIDS can heighten the difficulties of bereavement for the survivor.

Relationships of Bisexual Men and Women

Some individuals are attracted to both men and women. What are their romantic relationships like? A problem in answering this question is that the term *bisexual* is used in several distinct ways. One approach focuses on individuals who self-identify as bisexual, in contrast with those who identify as gay, lesbian, or heterosexual. Another approach characterizes a person as bisexual if his or her lifetime history of sexual behavior includes partners of both sexes. In a recent U.S. national survey, only 0.8 percent of adult men self-identified as bisexual, although 4 percent said they had had sex with both male and female partners since age 18. Similarly, only 0.5 percent of women identified as bisexual, but 3.7 percent had had sex with both male and female partners since age 18. Personal identity and behavior do not always correspond. Consequently, understanding the relationships of bisexuals requires studies that focus on specific subgroups of individuals who differ in their patterns of bisexual identity and behavior. Although there are many anecdotal accounts about the relationships of bisexuals, scientific research is extremely limited.

In the 1980s, Martin S. Weinberg and his colleagues interviewed self-identified bisexuals in San Francisco. Most of these White, college-educated individuals were permissive in their sexual attitudes. This and other studies permit a few generalizations about the relationships of self-identified bisexuals. Most bisexuals who are in a primary relationship have a partner of the other sex, and

some are legally married. Most bisexuals have partners identify as heterosexual, lesbian, or gay, rather than as bisexual. This can create relationship problems. Some heterosexual partners may view bisexuality as a sign of immaturity, indecisiveness, or promiscuity. Lesbians and gay men may also have negative stereotypes about bisexuals, believing that they are denying their true homosexual orientation or that bisexuals are likely to desert a same-sex partner for a heterosexual one. The extent to which bisexuals' experiences of satisfaction, conflict, and commitment differ depending on the gender and sexual identity of their partner is not known.

Another focus of research has been the experiences of teenagers and young adults who are developing their sexual identity and relationship preferences. A large-scale survey of more than 20,000 U.S. adolescents found that 3.9 percent of girls and 6.3 percent of boys reported romantic attractions to both males and females. Longitudinal studies have documented that some young people change their sexual identity and behavior over time, a pattern that has been termed *sexual fluidity*. Research by Lisa M. Diamond is illustrative. She interviewed women age 18 to 25, all of whom identified as not being heterosexual. Some women initially identified as lesbian or bisexual; others said they were questioning their sexual identity or rejected labeling themselves. During a 10-year period, more than two-thirds of these women changed their sexual identity, for instance, shifting from questioning to lesbian or from bisexual to heterosexual. The reasons for identity change were varied and included changes in whom the women were dating and pressure from friends or partners about their sexual identity. Research suggests that sexual fluidity is found among both women and men, but is more common for women.

Other patterns of bisexual behavior have also been studied. Many adults who currently identify as gay or lesbian have had heterosexual relationships in the past. Indeed, some individuals now in same-sex relationships were formerly in a heterosexual marriage and have children from that relationship. These individuals are typically included in research on same-sex relationships. In addition, some adults, typically men, identify strongly as heterosexual yet have casual sex with men. Public health researchers concerned with

sexually transmitted diseases often include these individuals in studies of men who have sex with men. Some social settings such as prison can lead individuals who view themselves as heterosexual to form romantic or sexual relationships with same-sex prison mates.

Conclusion

Scientific research on the relationships of lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals is growing. Many lesbians and gay men create satisfying, long-lasting relationships, even in the face of societal prejudice and discrimination. Although the social contexts for same-sex and heterosexual relationships differ, the internal processes affecting same-sex and heterosexual couples are remarkably similar. Limitations of available studies should be noted. Most research on the relationships of contemporary lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals has investigated the lives of White, middle-class Americans. Much less is known about the experiences of working-class or ethnic-minority couples in the United States or the experiences of individuals from other cultures.

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See also American Couples Study; Commitment, Predictors and Outcomes; Dissolution of Relationships, Causes; Gender Roles in Relationships; Satisfaction in Relationships; Sexuality

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GENDER-ROLE ATTITUDES

Gender-role attitudes are people's beliefs about the appropriate role-related behaviors for women and men and girls and boys. This entry focuses on the definition and measurement of gender-role attitudes. Research on correlates of gender-role attitudes are reviewed along with findings about how these attitudes relate directly to romantic and other relationships.

People described as having "traditional" gender-role attitudes believe that women should focus on being housewives and mothers, but men should have a job that supports their wives and children. Traditional gender-role attitudes are also associated with the idea that men, not women, should make important decisions and that men should behave in "masculine" ways whereas women should behave in "feminine" ways. Such attitudes are different from stereotypes. Gender stereotypes are beliefs about the *characteristics or nature* of men and women and boys and girls. Thus, the

belief that men are aggressive is a stereotype, but the belief that men *should* act aggressively would be a gender-role attitude. Related concepts include femininity and masculinity, which are based on stereotypes, but relate to one gender or the other. Femininity is a set of ideas about the nature of women and girls, whereas masculinity is a set of ideas about the nature of men and boys, based partly on stereotypes. Self-labels, that is, viewing the self as having masculine or feminine characteristics, are often a focus of gender-related research.

Measuring Gender-Role Attitudes

Several widely used scales assess gender-role attitudes. Each of these scales measures slightly different aspects of gender-role attitudes. The scale most often used by researchers is the Attitudes Toward Women Scale (AWS), originally published by Janet Spence and Robert Helmreich in 1972. This scale measures agreement with the traditional division of labor, with women being housewives (sample items: “It is ridiculous for a woman to drive a truck and for a man to dust furniture” or “Women should worry less about their rights and more about becoming good wives and mothers”) and men being supported in their roles as workers (a sample reverse coded item is, “There should be a strict merit system in job appointment and promotion without regard to sex”). Other items include these: Telling dirty jokes should be mostly a masculine prerogative, the initiative in dating should come from a man, and the husband has in general no obligation to inform his wife of his financial plans. Other items include that a woman should not expect to go to exactly the same places or to have quite the same freedom of action as a man. Thus, the emphasis is on male dominance in relationships. A person who agrees with these traditional attitudes is labeled as “sexist” by researchers using this scale. Those who disagree with these ideas and prefer that women and men be treated equally in the workplace and believe that women should have equal rights with men in the home are labeled as egalitarian or nonsexist. Although the original version had 55 items, most researchers prefer to use a briefer 15-item version of the AWS.

Many newer scales have been published, but none has been widely used. In selecting an appropriate

scale for measuring gender-role attitudes, it is important to assess exactly what the scale is measuring. The AWS focuses on views of equality for women and men in the workplace and of division of household labor. A few items assess interpersonal communication or other aspects of relationships. Issues such as the acceptability of men engaging in nontraditional activities outside the workplace are not addressed, nor is general positivity toward women or men.

In the mid-1990s, Peter Glick and Susan Fiske argued for a reconceptualization of sexism, or gender-role attitudes. As they pointed out, traditional gender-role attitudes contain two different components. First, there is a hostility toward nontraditional women. Second, there is what Glick and Fiske labeled as *benevolent sexism*, where men are seen as appropriately dominant over weaker women and where men are expected to take care of women. These two dimensions are included in their Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI). This scale is more explicitly concerned with relations between women and men and largely ignores ideas about roles and rights of women (which is the primary focus of the AWS). The 11-item Hostile Sexism Scale includes items such as, “Most women interpret innocent remarks or acts as being sexist,” and “Women seek to gain power by getting control over men.” The 11-item Benevolent Sexism Scale includes items such as, “Women should be cherished and protected by men,” and “Women, compared with men, tend to have a superior moral sensitivity.” The ASI measures something different than the AWS, but the scores tend to be highly correlated. The ASI is widely used by researchers today. Extensions of the ASI have included scales measuring hostility and benevolence toward traditional men.

A question of much interest to researchers is how gender-role attitudes differ among groups and whether they have changed over time. Because of its continuing popularity, it is possible to compare AWS scores obtained in the United States during the different decades in the latter part of the 20th century and into the 21st century. Such studies have shown a continuing trend for U.S. adults and college students to be *less* in favor of strong role divisions for women and men over time. Recent studies of college students using the AWS show high levels of egalitarianism. Despite this floor effect of low traditionality, AWS scores still show

some variability and show consistent relationships with other variables, as discussed later.

Unfortunately, these scales measuring gender-role attitudes are focused on the United States. Researchers have used scales such as the AWS or ASI in other cultures, but generally find that at least some of the items have to be omitted because of their lack of applicability in other cultures. Because of language differences as well as cultural differences, it is difficult to compare scores directly across cultures. However, attempts to do this generally show gender-role attitudes in the United States as less traditional than are those from other cultures. Others have attempted to develop parallel scales for other cultures, such as the Islamic Attitudes Toward Women Scale developed for Muslim cultures. This scale builds on the AWS and incorporates some of its items. New items include beliefs about the acceptability of women consenting to marriage, negotiating marriage contracts, clothing covering the body, veiling, and seclusion of women—issues of direct relevance to Muslim societies today. A study comparing scores on this scale of Pakistani immigrants in the United States indicated that those who had been in the United States longer were less traditional than were newer immigrants.

Correlates of Gender-Role Attitudes

Studies using scales such as the AWS have indicated that men support traditional gender roles more than women do. This can be seen in studies using the AWS, as well as in other measures, in college student samples, and in other samples. However, this pattern of men being more in support of traditional gender roles is not always seen in other cultures. For example, recent work indicates that women may be more supportive of benevolent sexism than are men in countries with high levels of gender inequality. Consistent with the finding of changes toward more egalitarian attitudes during the last half of the 20th century in the United States, data also show that younger and more educated samples tend to have less traditional attitudes and fewer gender stereotypes.

What makes some people more traditional than others? Researchers have only a partial answer to this question. First, those more strongly identified

with traditional religions tend to hold less egalitarian attitudes, being more in support of the traditional division of labor between women and men. Judaism, Christianity and Islam all place a strong emphasis on women's roles as mothers, so it is not surprising that those who attend religious services and receive more exposure to these ideas tend to be more traditional in their gender-role attitudes.

In addition, there is an effect of role modeling. Children growing up in families where their mother is employed outside the home tend to have less traditional attitudes.

The authors of the ASI suggest that high scores on the Hostile Sexism Scale are found in men who desire power over women and who may be likely to sexually harass women.

Relationship Issues and Gender-Role Attitudes

Beliefs about appropriate gender-role behaviors for women and men affect relationships in various ways. For example, people who believe in gender equality might have different expectations than might people with traditional gender-role attitudes about whether or not household labor should be shared. Expectations about childcare may also be directly affected. That women generally are more favorable toward gender equity but men have more traditional gender-role attitudes may create disagreements as couples develop their lives together and make basic decisions about employment and taking care of the home. Although in most households, women still perform most of the household labor, research has shown that husbands and wives who divide household labor more equally tend to be more satisfied with their marriages than are those who adhere to a strict traditional division of labor.

Acceptance of traditional gender-role attitudes may result in other strains to relationships as well. Traditional men and women experience more jealousy in their romantic relationships than do egalitarian men and women. Men who hold traditional gender-role attitudes are also more likely to engage in coercive sexual activities and are more accepting of a husband assaulting his wife than are egalitarian men. Thus, rather than complementing one another, traditional attitudes may put men and women at odds with each other, reducing relationship satisfaction, and creating strains on the

relationship. Another consistent finding is that gender-role attitudes affect choices of activities, especially in children. Those with the most traditional attitudes interact primarily with those of the same gender in their leisure activities.

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See also Feminist Perspectives on Relationships; Gender Roles in Relationships; Gender Stereotypes; Power Distribution in Relationships; Sex-Role Orientation

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GENDER ROLES IN RELATIONSHIPS

Gender roles are sex-specific, reciprocal claims and obligations. Because women and men move in many contexts and kinds of relationships, they occupy many roles. Understanding how gender roles shape behavior in relationships involves distinguishing between sex—biological differences between males and females—and gender—the cultural distinctions that people draw between masculinity and femininity. Gender is not a biological given, but is what people collectively agree that sex attributes mean. Men and women are expected to perform in ways consistent with these cultural ideals, and gender is taught and rehearsed daily throughout life. Though people may not always live up to the obligations specified by (or implicit in) gender roles, accountability to those ideals shapes behavior nonetheless.

Gender roles are sets of connected behaviors that are expected of men and women in specific contexts (such as family homes or public places of work). These expectations are upheld by ideologies (collective systems of beliefs about right and wrong) that legitimate these roles. For instance, many Western societies assign women most care work within family homes (gender role), on the shared understanding that they are more nurturing by nature (ideology). People give little girls dolls and boys trucks; girls and boys then develop different skills appropriate for jobs of different status, which people take as signs of natural differences, thereby justifying their gender roles within families. These gender roles are associated, in turn, with relative advantages and disadvantages. For example, men’s abilities to work for pay relatively unfettered by family care allow them to acquire greater status and wealth; women’s positions and well-being are thus often dependent upon men’s. In this sense, men’s privileges are intimately tied to women’s disadvantages, and none of this depends on individuals’ intentions. People reproduce gender inequality without necessarily meaning to do so.

Drawing on this understanding of gender and institutional contexts, this entry explores gender roles within three common relationships: romantic, family, and friendships.

Romantic Relationships

Women’s roles typically involve labor performed in the service of others, including care work and attending to the emotions of others. Researchers find that women prioritize the sexual and other needs of male dates more than vice versa, a finding that dovetails with research on communicative exchange that documents men’s conversational dominance and women’s greater deference. Further, men are more likely to decode women’s nonverbal cues as being sexual in nature and to interpret women’s friendliness as sexual interest.

Men, more than women, use physical attractiveness to select dating partners. Although traditional roles specify that men initiate dates, research indicates that, at least in Western society, women are more likely to ask men out than in the past and are more likely to want to share the expenses of the

date. Studies also show that men are more likely to view these women as more sexually interested than women who follow traditional dating protocols.

Whereas research suggests that men and women hold certain different attitudes and beliefs about romantic relationships, such differences are often exaggerated in the popular press and do not hold across cultures. Thus, research comparing men and women in the United States and China finds that culture explained more variation in beliefs about love and romantic relationships than did gender. And within the United States, race, ethnicity, and class differences are often as predictive of differences as is gender. That said, within the United States, most recent studies on romantic ideology find little or no gender differences. Large numbers of both men and women are likely to insist that love be the basis for marriage; not quite as high a proportion believe love is necessary for marriage maintenance. Despite these similarities, compared with women, men are more likely to say that they would be willing to marry without love, and they are less likely to view emotional satisfaction as important to marriage maintenance.

Sexual satisfaction is related to overall relationship satisfaction, whether among married, heterosexual couples or among gay men and lesbians in committed relationships, and gender roles play a role in shaping sexual intimacy. For instance, among single persons, wishing to nurture a partner, emotionally valuing a partner, and experiencing pleasure motivates coitus among men and women alike, but valuing a partner emotionally motivates women to engage in intercourse more so than it does men; women remain less accepting of casual sex. Similarly, research on “hooking up” among college students reveals that the prevalence of such activity does not signal gender equality in relationships. Men still initiate such activity, men’s sexual pleasure appears to be prioritized (as they are far more likely than are women to reach orgasm), and women remain more likely to gain bad reputations for having multiple sexual partners.

Despite their different gender roles, men and women have some similar expectations of intimate relationships. A sense of equity is important for both, and greater equality between men and women fosters healthier relationships for women and greater relationship stability and sexual satisfaction for men. Men who hold traditional masculine

ideologies report lower relationship quality, whether they are engaged in heterosexual or gay relationships; women who hold traditional feminine ideologies also report lower relationship quality.

Family and the Division of Labor

Historical and cross-cultural evidence suggest that there are no universals in the tasks that fathers and mothers perform apart from the earliest infant care and breastfeeding. Economic and structural changes have had enormous impact on both men’s and women’s access to social resources and subsequent gender relations within families. For instance, in the United States, industrialization and the 19th-century transition away from an agricultural, family-based economy changed the ways that men and women related to social institutions and to one another. Within the family-based economy, women, men, and children had worked together; both parents took responsibility for childrearing. The change to a market economy pulled men into paid employment outside the home; women were relegated to the domestic realm of unpaid work, which became devalued, given the premium placed on money in the new economy. Gender-role expectations altered such that middle-class fathers shifted from interacting with and teaching children, to providing financially for families (the “good provider”), and the home became a child-centered haven of mothers’ (the “homemaker”) responsibility, even though race and class relations precluded many men and women from living up to these idealized gender roles.

This “separate spheres” mentality of paid work for men and the domestic realm for women has been disrupted by economic changes from the 1970s on that created both a greater need and wider opportunities for women’s paid labor. Dual-earner households have become more prevalent, and men and women, married and single, are expressing more egalitarian gender-role expectations than in the past. Married men and women express desires to share equal responsibility for decision making, childrearing, and household chores, although for the most part, men’s behavior has lagged behind these expectations. Further, the ability to balance work and family varies by race and class.

According to the current construction of gender roles in U.S. families, women are expected to provide the bulk of caregiving at all stages of the life course. For instance, the motherhood role demands that women be the primary caregiver to children, even women who work full time, and the less-involved style of parenting for fathers has persisted well past the demise of the normative marital combination of breadwinner and homemaker. However, recent research finds that fathers within two-parent households have increased their interaction with and responsibility for children, though they still lag behind mothers' labor, and their contribution rises in relation to increases in education, income, number of hours worked by their wives, and propensity toward egalitarian attitudes. Fathers who spend more time with their children express greater satisfaction with their marriages, community, and family ties and report overall higher life satisfaction. The degree of involvement, however, varies by race; Hispanic fathers spend more time with their children on the weekends than White fathers do, followed by African-American fathers.

Change in gender roles concerning household labor has lagged even further, giving rise to the notion that women experience a "second shift," including primary responsibility for domestic labor; this unpaid work commences when they conclude their paid work. Gender relations are apparent in the consistent finding that husbands, but not wives, gender-role attitudes influence the distribution of household labor. Further, these ideologies vary by race and class. For instance, White men with higher levels of education are more likely to have attitudes that support women who deviate from traditional gender roles, such as working full-time. African-American men, who are more likely to have been raised in families wherein mothers worked for pay, also hold more liberal role attitudes toward their working wives. Thus, until recently, most of the decline in White women's domestic labor could be attributed to women simply doing less, or paying others to do the work for them, including housecleaning or purchasing services outside the home.

Recent evidence from U.S. time diaries shows some shift by husbands, and the ratio of women's to men's time in all unpaid work (housework, childcare, and shopping) has declined substantially

since 1965. This is both because of a decrease in women's housework and an increase in men's housework and childcare. Still, on average women do 1.6 times as much unpaid work as men. This situation is even less equitable when multitasking (doing two or more paid or unpaid work tasks simultaneously, such as doing laundry and preparing dinner, or doing laundry and clerical work) and all work time is considered. Because mothers do more paid work than in 1975 *in addition to* their unpaid work, and mothers do more multitasking, the ratio of mother's time to father's time spent in all work has *increased* since 1975.

Further, although in 1975 women and men had comparable amounts of free time, women now have less free time than men because women's time allocations to paid work increased more than their allocations to housework declined. Thus, access to free time is an emerging dimension of gender-related time use, and housework may be less important today in the symbolic production of gender.

The power relations underlying gender roles are perhaps most obvious in gay and lesbian families. Such families tend to be more egalitarian than heterosexual couples; partners have been raised with the same gender expectations, so the gender-related labor that is taken for granted in heterosexual households must be negotiated. In this regard, research finds that the perception of equity in housework is more egalitarian among lesbian couples than heterosexual couples. Same-sex couples, who have both grown up in a world of gender roles that devalue women's work in the home, tend to rate their relationship as inequitable if either has to perform more "women's work."

Friendships

Friendships provide emotional intimacy and are important to both men and women. Men's friendships tend to focus on shared activities whereas women are more likely to emphasize talking and emotional sharing. Further, women are more likely than men are to seek social support from friends when they have problems. And although men report more same-sex friends than women do, men are more likely to be intimate with women than with other men. Men report that

friendships with women are more satisfying than friendships with men.

The biggest gender differences in friendship appear in relation to self-disclosure. Even though both men and women report that they value intimacy, research finds that women share more about themselves and their feelings with same-sex friends than do men. Although some researchers point to socialization as an explanation for the observed differences, gender inequality, such as differential access to various social resources, plays an additional role. For instance, in the United States, the 19th-century transition to the market-based industrial economy changed the ways that men and women related to social institutions and to one another. Men's interactions in the public sphere allowed them little privacy and hence restricted their ability to engage in self-disclosure. In contrast, White, middle-class women, excluded from paid work and suffrage and confined to the domestic sphere, adopted new home-based responsibilities, including emotional responsibility for children and husbands and hence, self-disclosing intimacy with similar women nearby, such as neighbors, as well as with family.

This brief overview of gender roles in relationships points to the ways in which the expected behaviors of men and women are tied to gender relations and the power differentials therein. Women's gender roles tend to be tied to work for others, which gives them stronger support networks over the life course, whereas men's lend them greater autonomy and status.

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See also Dual-Earner Couples; Feminist Perspectives on Relationships; Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Relationships; Gender-Role Attitudes; Power Distribution in Relationships

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GENDER STEREOTYPES

Gender-associated beliefs influence how people respond to us from the cradle to the grave. From birth, our parents shape our world based, in part, on their beliefs about what boys and girls are and should be like. As we develop, we learn how to interact with members of the same and the other sex, both in groups and as individuals. Friendships, family relationships, romantic partnerships, and workplace associations are affected by cultural beliefs about the sexes. This entry focuses on gender stereotypes, defined as organized, consensual beliefs and opinions about the characteristics of women and men and about the purported qualities of masculinity and femininity. As will be discussed, people hold gender-associated beliefs about the basic categories of “woman” and “man,” but usually recognize that men and women are also simultaneously members of other social groups, and they hold more fine-grained stereotypes about these subtypes. The extent to which gender stereotypes influence relationships depends on the social context of the relationship and on the power and status associated with the male and female gender role.

Gender-Associated Beliefs

Until recently, most research on gender stereotypes focused on the basic category level. Early work from the late 1960s and early 1970s identified two constellations of traits, one associated with women and one associated with men. Stereotypes about women are represented by a *communal* or *expressive* cluster that includes traits such as emotional,

kind, and understanding. Stereotypes about men are represented by an *agentic* or *instrumental* cluster that includes traits such as active, competitive, and self-confident. These characteristics are the core of two well-known measures of gender stereotyping, the Bem Sex Role Inventory and the Personal Attributes Questionnaire. These measures are used to assess people's perceptions about their own traits and their beliefs about others' traits. In an average sense, women's and men's self-assessments correspond to the gender stereotypes they apply to others.

More recent work has demonstrated that gender-associated beliefs are multidimensional; to capture the full picture of gender-based stereotypes, one must consider the roles women and men occupy, their physical characteristics, their cognitive abilities, and their emotions. Women's roles, for example, are stereotypically assumed to include cooking the meals and caregiving, whereas men's roles are assumed to include being the breadwinner and being a leader. Men are stereotypically described as tall and rugged whereas women are described as pretty and petite. Women's cognitive skills are believed to include an artistic bent and strong verbal skills; beliefs about men's cognitive abilities center around their strong mathematical skills and their ability to reason. Finally, people hold stereotypic expectations about appropriate emotions for the sexes. In general, women are seen as both experiencing and expressing more emotion than men do; emotions associated with women include happiness, embarrassment, love, fear, and distress. Only two emotions, anger and pride, are stereotypically associated with men.

Characteristics of Gender Stereotypes

Gender stereotypes have several characteristics that merit attention. First, as with most stereotypes, there is both a descriptive component, representing the content of people's beliefs, and a prescriptive component, representing what people believe others *should* be like. In the context of a heterosexual partnership, for example, beliefs about gender roles often lead to the assumption that women ought to have greater responsibility for the children and that men should naturally assume the role of breadwinner. A second characteristic of gender stereotypes is that they are

remarkably stable. Respondents in the United States have beliefs about gender that are similar to those held by Germans or Koreans; John Williams and Deborah Best, for example, found that respondents in 30 countries held similar gender stereotypes. Respondents in the new millennium hold beliefs similar to respondents in 1970, and older adults hold views similar to younger people. There is an exception to the general finding that gender stereotypes are stable, however; Amanda Diekmann and Alice Eagly found that today's women are viewed as more agentic than women in the 1950s and that people expect that women and men will become more similar in agency in the future. Men's agency, however, is not viewed as changing over time, nor is either women's or men's communion. Such perceptions are consistent with the power and status women are gaining in a variety of roles.

One question that often arises is whether gender stereotypes are accurate and, at the group level, they appear to be. Judith Hall and Jason Carter, for example, studied 77 traits and behaviors and found that people's stereotypic beliefs correspond to women's and men's self-reported characteristics. This correspondence, however, does not tell us what individual women and men are like. Although men are generally more aggressive than women, for example, there are certainly aggressive women. At best, stereotypes provide global cues about group members' characteristics; that people can readily identify gender stereotypes does not mean that they should endorse them.

Gender Polarization

Another important characteristic of gender stereotypes is reflected in people's assumption that gender-associated characteristics are bipolar. That is, people believe that what is masculine is not feminine and vice versa. This perceived gender polarization leads people to view gender-associated characteristics as a package: a person with feminine traits, for example, is believed to occupy feminine roles and to have feminine physical characteristics. Similarly, a person who occupies a masculine role is believed to also have masculine traits and a masculine appearance. People also make predictions about a person's sexual orientation, based on their perceived gender-associated characteristics. Men with feminine characteristics,

then, are often assumed to be gay and, to a lesser extent, women with masculine characteristics are often assumed to be lesbian. Finally, gender stereotypes are strongly associated with judgments of power and status; the more powerful, higher status roles are associated with men and masculinity and the less powerful, lower status roles are associated with women and femininity. Yet men's greater perceived power does not mean men are preferred; instead, research suggests women are liked better than men, a finding Alice Eagly and Antonio Mladinic have dubbed the *women are wonderful effect*.

Subtypes of Women and Men

The research discussed so far addresses beliefs about the basic social categories of woman and man. However, research has identified more than 200 gender-associated subtypes. These subtypes capture the reality that women and men also are of a particular age and ethnicity and that they occupy many different social roles. These subtypes can be grouped into major categories including occupations (manager, secretary), family roles (housewife, family man), ideologies (punk, libber), physical features (jock, athletic woman), and sexuality (macho man, sexy woman). When classifying others into subtypes, people appear to first create separate subtypes for women and men. However, people also use a traditional (e.g., housewife) or modern (eternal bachelor) dimension in their groupings and make distinctions between younger (adolescent, prissy girl) and older (granddad, old maid) gender-based subtypes.

Susan Fiske and her colleagues have shown that stereotypes can be classified along two global dimensions: a warmth dimension, related to the communal stereotype associated with women, and a competence dimension, related to the agentic stereotype associated with men. These dimensions are applied independently when judging subtypes of women and men. People may view managers as competent, for example, but also see them as cold. Similarly, people may see housewives as warm but may not respect them. Echoing the research on basic social categories, subtypes that are viewed as competent are seen as having higher status than are subtypes that are viewed as warm.

Influence of Context

People need to process stereotypic information quickly to make sense of their social world; otherwise, they would be overwhelmed by the amount of information they face. Because of this, at first pass, people often automatically rely on gender stereotypes. Mahzarin Banaji and her colleagues, for example, have shown that when people are primed for (or subconsciously made aware of) gender stereotypic traits, they subsequently judge others in gender stereotypic terms and are faster at making gender-related judgments such as identifying which names are associated with women or men.

Despite the ubiquity of gender-based stereotyping, however, in actual interactions, perceivers may eschew these stereotypes, turning instead to a more fine-grained assessment of women and men. Kay Deaux and Brenda Major have proposed a comprehensive model of how, when, and why gender influences behavior. In their model, the context sets the stage for the interaction; if this context is highly gendered, such as a romantic setting, people are more likely to rely on gender stereotypes. In contrast, during a business meeting, people are likely to rely on workplace-related cues and, accordingly, may be less likely to use gender-associated beliefs as a guide. This model also assumes that perceivers and their interaction partners are not passive players; that is, both parties in an interaction work in tandem and how their interaction progresses determines the extent to which gender stereotypes influence that interaction.

Even so, gender-associated beliefs can create a double bind for people who step outside gender roles. Women who fulfill a traditional male leadership role, for example, can experience prejudice as a result of stereotypic expectations. Madeline Heilman has proposed the stereotype-fit hypothesis to explain why women are less likely to occupy the manager role than are men. Her model postulates that the characteristics associated with effective manager are similar to the characteristics associated with men (and quite different from the characteristics associated with women). Hence, people see congruence between "man" and "manager" and a disconnect between "woman" and "manager." The perceived fit for men and the perceived lack of fit for women results in more men being selected as managers. And, even when

women are chosen to be managers, the belief that their characteristics do not fit the role can result in more negative performance evaluations and, ultimately, can affect their opportunities for further advancement.

Although the stereotype-fit hypothesis addresses gender stereotyping in the workplace, research suggests that these processes apply in a variety of settings; men, for example, who assume primary care for their children often experience negative reactions from family and friends, presumably because of the perceived lack of fit between male and caregiver. More generally, passive men and aggressive women are viewed less favorably than are men and women who behave consistently with their gender roles. However, individuals who endorse a blend of gender-associated characteristics are liked more than are those who are one-dimensional, even if that one dimension is completely gender congruent.

A limitation of the research described here is that researchers, either implicitly or explicitly, assess stereotypes associated with White women and men from the middle class. The relatively few studies that have examined stereotypes of other groups show that this presents an incomplete picture. Gender-related beliefs about Black men and White men are similar, for example, but Black women and lower-class women are seen as less feminine than are White and middle-class women. Similarly, research suggests that stereotypes of other social categories, such as age and sexual orientation, are linked to gender stereotypic beliefs. Another limitation is that the people who are reporting their stereotypic beliefs are themselves usually White and middle class; the views of other social groups are largely unrepresented. Research addressing this shortcoming is long overdue.

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See also Cognitive Processes in Relationships; Culture and Relationships; Gender Roles in Relationships; Prejudice; Sex-Role Orientation; Workplace Relationships

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GOAL PURSUIT, RELATIONSHIP INFLUENCES

Goal pursuit (also called goals, motivation, self-regulation) is a common part of the everyday experience. People place great importance on their personal aims, whether they be career goals (e.g., finish a project by noon, impress a new client), health goals (make it to the gym every day), or financial goals (save money for retirement), to name a few common types of goals. Although people don't tend to think about how their personal goals might affect their relationships with friends, family members, romantic partners, and colleagues, research suggests that the impact of personal goals on interpersonal relationships can be strong. Similarly, although people aren't necessarily aware of it, interpersonal relationships with friends and family can affect the kinds of personal goals pursued and how they are pursued.

Imagine that Annie has a goal of becoming a successful lawyer. She knows that this goal will determine much about her professional and academic life—her path through school, where she considers moving, her financial plans, and her study hours will all be affected by her goal to

become a lawyer. Less obviously, this goal will determine much about Annie's social life as well—her friendships, family relationships, and romantic relationships will also be affected.

Now imagine that Annie starts a new romantic relationship. She knows that her new partner will determine much about her romantic and social life—the way she spends her weekends, her social activities, and her sex life. Less obviously, this new relationship will determine much about her professional and academic life as well—her academic goals, career goals, and financial goals will also be affected.

This entry discusses how people's personal goals shape their thoughts, feelings, and behavior in their most intimate relationships and how people's intimate relationships can shape their personal goal pursuits.

Interdependence of Goals and Relationship Partners

Relationship partners have many opportunities to facilitate or obstruct each other's goal pursuits within everyday interactions: For example, a husband can make breakfast for his wife, saving her time in the morning and giving her energy for a day at work, or he can forget to take out the garbage, costing her time and increasing her stress level before a day at work. As a more serious example, a husband can stay home with a new baby so that his wife can pursue her career, or he can accept a new job in a new city, disrupting his wife's career. Dozens of times throughout the day, in both tiny and consequential ways, people have opportunities to either help their partners pursue goals or (whether intentionally or accidentally) to stand in the way of goal pursuit.

Interdependence Theory describes goal pursuit as woven into the very fabric of social relationships. Indeed, few people could achieve their goals without facilitation by family, friends, colleagues, and romantic partners—if they were obstructionary, intentionally or unintentionally, goal pursuit would be exceedingly challenging. This is one way that researchers have thought about the interplay between goals and relationship partners—by suggesting that relationship partners can influence one's ability to achieve goals, and shape which

goals people choose to pursue. For example, people are likelier to pursue goals they feel their romantic partner will support and facilitate; they are also likelier to pursue goals that are compatible with their partner's goals. If Annie's husband hates exercise and enjoys spending his evenings relaxing with Annie, she is less likely to pursue a goal of training for a triathlon, knowing her husband wouldn't be supportive and that she would be interfering with his own goal to relax together at night. Ellen Berscheid's Emotions in Relationships Model emphasizes how the interplay of goals and relationships has important consequences for goal pursuit and for relationships: Feelings about relationship partners are thought to be determined by how those partners obstruct or facilitate one's goals, such that people feel closer to partners who help their goals, and less close to partners who hinder them. Both theories predict that when romantic partners' goals are compatible—Annie hopes to lose weight and Aidan wants to start cooking more healthfully—the couple will be more successful in their goals and feel more positive emotion toward each other. When romantic partners' goals conflict—Annie hopes to lose weight and Aidan wants to become an expert baker—the couple will be less successful at their goals and feel more negatively about each other.

Effects of Relationship Partners on Goals

How do friends, family members, and romantic partners influence people's ability to successfully pursue their goals? One answer comes from the literature on *social support*. Although there are many definitions of social support, most of the psychological research on the topic focuses on the benefits of helping relationship partners cope with stressful life events and challenges. For example, researchers have studied how relationship partners support individuals as they struggle through trying circumstances, such as preparing for the bar exam. A large body of research has established that social support of this type—helping partners cope with stress—leads to more satisfying relationships, as well as greater emotional and physical health and well-being. Of course, by providing support (or failing to provide support) in times of strife and challenge, relationship partners also

affect individuals' ability to successfully manage these challenges and succeed at their goals.

Social support can also consist, however, of more directly helping partners enhance their personal development and successfully pursue their goals. Brooke Feeney has shown that having a supportive partner frees people to pursue their goals more confidently, much as having a reliable parent nearby can free children to explore a playground more confidently. Thus, by openly offering support to each other, relationship partners can paradoxically increase each other's independence; this is one more route via which relationship partners can shape the self's goals.

Relationship partners can also have a more subtle impact on the goals that people pursue. Recent research has shown that individuals create—and over time, ultimately automate—mental links between relationship partners and the goals that individuals commonly pursue in the presence of these partners. In a long-term relationship, such as with a romantic partner or close friend, individuals slowly develop strong mental associations between their goals and these important relationship partners, links that can have important consequences for goal pursuit. That is, just being around a particular partner may automatically trigger the “linked” goals, which then may shape behavior.

Indeed, studies have shown that for students who have a goal to make their parents proud by achieving at university, subtle reminders of their parents can lead them to work harder and be more successful. These results suggest, for example, that if Annie often spends time with a certain friend when training for a triathlon, just being around that friend may trigger Annie's health and fitness goals. However, these findings have an important qualification: People don't always act in line with these triggered goals. Subtle reminders of overly controlling or manipulative relationship partners can actually produce the opposite effect. For example, when students are reminded of a controlling partner who wants them to work hard, they react by working *less* hard—to defy the controlling other's wishes. Thus, although in most situations people go along with their partner's goals for them, they are unlikely to do so when they feel their freedom is being threatened, as with a domineering partner.

Interpersonal goal conflicts are another route through which relationship partners can influence

each other's goals. For example, when people's personal goals (e.g., to eat healthfully to lose weight) conflict with their social or relational goals (e.g., to have fun with their friends at a barbecue), recent research has shown that relationship partners can lead people to temporarily abandon their personal goals. Of course, people will not always abandon their personal goals in favor of their social goals; indeed, recent research suggests that striking a balance between the pursuit of personal and social goals is important for life satisfaction and well-being.

Effects of Goals on Relationship Partners

Thus, research has suggested that relationship partners can influence goal pursuit. But what about the reverse? How do goals influence relationships? For example, if a romantic partner helps or hinders someone's ability to achieve a desired goal, how does this influence that person's feelings about the romantic partner?

Recent research has addressed this question by looking at how friends' and romantic partners' *instrumentality* (i.e., usefulness) for students' achievement goals affects how the students feel about their relationships. For example, in one study, students nominated relationship partners who were instrumental or non-instrumental for their academic achievement goals, and were subsequently reminded of their achievement goals by a technique known as “goal activation,” in which goal-related words are presented in a subtle fashion to activate the mental representation of the goal. Next, students evaluated their feelings of closeness to the relationship partner, as well as rated the importance of the relationship compared with other relationships.

When an academic achievement goal was activated, students felt closer to instrumental relationship partners, wanted to spend more time with them, and had greater motivation to approach those others. They also felt less closeness to relationship partners who weren't instrumental for active goals, wanted to spend less time with them, and had greater motivation to avoid those others. This research suggests, for example, that if Annie wants to lose weight, she would feel closer to her husband Aidan if he learned to cook healthfully

and feel less close to Aidan if he learned to become an expert baker of cakes and cookies.

Importantly, then, being instrumental for the achievement of a partner's goals can be beneficial for the relationship, and failing to be instrumental can have relational costs. Just as research has shown that being supportive for a partner's goals helps the partner achieve goals and be more independent, this research shows that being supportive for a partner's goals can reap benefits for the relationship.

Interplay of Personal and Relationship Goals

Of course, people don't just have personal goals—goals to lose weight, save money for a new car, or earn a new promotion. People also have important interpersonal goals—goals to make new friends, get along better with in-laws, or become closer to a new romantic partner. These kinds of relationship goals may surpass personal goals in their importance and influence; most people name their close relationships as their most important value in life. In many cases, personal goals (achievement, health, career goals) may ultimately serve more fundamental relationship goals (finding a romantic partner, building a happy family, belonging to a social group). If so, it would be counterproductive to promote personal goals at the expense of relationship goals: It certainly would not be wise to derogate your partner for not helping you lose weight if your reason for losing weight is to stay attractive for your partner.

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See also Approach and Avoidance Orientations; Emotion in Relationships; Goals in Relationships; Interdependence Theory; Motivation and Relationships; Social Support, Nature of

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GOALS IN RELATIONSHIPS

Goals may be defined as the events, outcomes, and feeling states that we desire. Most of the things we want in life occur in the context of our relationships with other people. If you can imagine what your life would be like alone on a desert island (like Robinson Crusoe), you can appreciate how achieving most of your goals would be impossible without other people. This entry will first consider some core social goals or motives that characterize all of our social interactions. Next, the special goals people seek in close, romantic relationships will be considered. The last sections will examine some of the factors that determine the relative importance of different goals, with a special focus on the different goals men and women may have for close relationships.

General Social Interaction Goals

Starting with William James, psychologists have long believed that goal seeking is a fundamental aspect of human behavior. One early social

psychologist named William McDougall proposed a list of instincts—such as fleeing because of fear and seeking because of curiosity—that guided all behavior. More recently, Susan Fiske drew attention to the interconnected goals of belonging, understanding, controlling, enhancing self, and trusting others in her BUCET (or bucket) framework. The goal of *belonging* leads people to seek out others to bond as dyads or become part of a groups. Our moods typically benefit from these associations, and our health, adjustment, and well-being may suffer if we are deprived of these social connections. The goal of *understanding* is instrumental to achieving a sense of belonging because we need to perceive others accurately to predict their actions and coordinate with them. In addition, a sense of understanding and certainty allows people to feel in control and is beneficial to health. Other people can promote our sense of certainty by agreeing with our opinions, providing us with social validation. The goal of *controlling* is evident when people strive for competence in their social interactions, often with the goal of assuming leadership or directing the behavior of others. When people feel that their sense of control is threatened, the need appears to grow stronger. For example, people with an ambivalent attachment style often feel suspicious of their partners, clinging to them in a jealous and controlling manner.

The goal of *enhancing the self* manifests itself in our efforts to keep our self-esteem at a high level and in our constant quest for self-improvement. Our interactions with other people are, of course, crucial to accomplishing this goal. For example, people seek out others who will provide social support by validating their opinions and complimenting them on their accomplishments. Just knowing that one is in a committed romantic relationship, in itself, can be a source of self-esteem for many people. One explanation for this increase in self-esteem is that the self “expands” when we form a close relationship, and this expansion increases our satisfaction with the relationship. Finally, the goal of *trusting others*, particularly those in our ingroup, allows us to maintain a sense of optimism and interact with others in a confident manner. When bad events do occur (such as interpersonal betrayal), they are typically unexpected and prompt a quick response to deal with them. People feel a sense of loyalty to their group that promotes cooperation

and prepares the group to compete more effectively with outgroups.

Although these five goals are believed to be a universal part of human nature, the strength of the goals may vary across different cultures. For instance, the goal of understanding seems to require greater social unanimity and harmony in a collectivist culture compared with an individualist or independent culture. Individualist cultures seem to be more accepting of diverse opinions and behavioral styles. As another example, compared with collectivist cultures, individualist cultures seem to promote a more trusting and optimistic view of others, particularly those in the outgroup.

Specific Goals Sought in Romantic Relationships

The five goals reviewed in the previous section are also relevant when people choose their romantic partners. For example, being married is likely to satisfy one’s need for belonging and provides opportunities for receiving social support and understanding from a partner. The marital link also carries with it a high degree of dependence and potential control over one’s family, especially when children are part of the relationship.

Marital partners are vulnerable to one another such that trust is central to the success of the relationship. The close, trusting bond of marriage can also enhance the self-esteem of the partners.

But when people consider entering into a romantic relationship, some unique goals come into play. The goal of finding sexual passion and excitement represents one such unique focus. Goals related to seeking social or economic status and preserving one’s independence may also become important as the relationship matures. Moreover, goals related to belonging and trust may take a different form in a romantic relationship. For example, people may desire a deeper level of commitment and intimacy from a romantic partner than from a casual friend or coworker.

Garth Fletcher and Jeff Simpson suggest that people have ideal standards (or goals) in mind when they evaluate intimate relationship partners and when they think about the relationship itself. These standards operate as knowledge structures or schema that allow us to evaluate the suitability

of prospective partners. For example, if our goal is to find a sexy, exciting lover, we may turn down the advances of someone who is rich, charming, but homely looking. Once the relationship is in progress, these goals also regulate the progress or changes that may take place. For instance, if one of the partners is primarily interested in social status, that partner may consider exiting the relationship if couple is facing bankruptcy or home foreclosure. In general, people will be more satisfied with their partner and the relationship to the extent they feel their goals and ideals are being met.

Much of the work in this area is guided by theorizing about how evolutionary pressures guide mate selection. The underlying assumption is that individuals seek mates who will promote their own reproductive fitness. A prospective partner can signal his or her mate value in a variety of ways. Qualities associated with (a) being a good parent; (b) appearing young, healthy, and fertile; and (c) having the potential to achieve high social status may be particularly important. With this evolutionary focus in mind, researchers in the area of close relationships have focused most on the following goals. First, people seek *intimacy, trust, and commitment* from their romantic partners. These qualities signal that a partner is likely to be a good investment in terms of providing emotional support, cooperation, and care giving, especially for children. Second, people tend to seek *passion and excitement*. A partner who is young, attractive, healthy, and energetic will score high along this dimension. Cues of this sort signal high reproductive potential (fertility). Third, people seek *social and economic status*. By mating with a partner who is ambitious or appears able to climb social hierarchies, one increases the chances of having sufficient material resources to live comfortably and raise a family. Fourth, people may value their *freedom and independence*. Strong values of this sort may interfere with the formation of a mating bond. For instance, some people shy away from marriage for fear of being “tied down.” But even in successful relationships, partners often need to negotiate how time and money are spent to preserve a sense of individuality.

Finally, people may rely on the relationship to *raise self-esteem*. Close relationships can bolster self-esteem in a variety of ways. Simply being married, for example, may carry some prestige, perhaps

indicating that one is valued and accepted. In addition, by linking ourselves with a partner who possesses socially desirable qualities (e.g., beauty, intelligence, or social status), we indirectly signal our own value. After all, if we can attract such a desirable mate, we ourselves must possess many good qualities. Psychological processes related to self-expansion and social support also come into play. Accordingly, the bond with our partner broadens our world and offers opportunities for our partner to support us in good times and bad. Partners often idealize each other, seeing both their partner and the relationship through rose-colored glasses. This tendency may further increase self-esteem and is associated with greater relationship satisfaction. Given these considerations, the dissolution of a close relationship can be devastating to our self-esteem.

Factors That Influence the Importance of Different Relationship Goals

The relative importance of the five specific relationship goals just presented is not rigid and is influenced by both situational factors and individual differences among people. The following section considers how goal importance is influenced by male versus female differences, length of the relationship, cultural factors, and individual differences in attachment style and sociosexual orientation.

Male Versus Female Differences

When discussing our ancestral past, evolutionary models suggest that men and women faced different challenges in mate selection. Men were faced with the challenge of finding women who signaled their reproductive potential with youth and good looks. Men who had sex with many such women tended to succeed in the reproduction game by leaving many children behind. In contrast, the challenge for women was to find men who could provide material resources (e.g., food and shelter) to the family unit. As products of their ancestral pasts, therefore, modern males put greater stress on a partner's physical attractiveness, whereas modern females put greater stress on a partner's earning potential or social status. Indeed, many studies—including those that analyze personal want ads—suggest that men often seek beauty in their partners,

but women often seek financial stability. Although these differences are certainly consistent with evolutionary theorizing, sociocultural explanations may be equally plausible. For example, the different preferences of men and women are likely to be shaped by traditional sex role socialization and the fact that, in many cultures, women suffer from restricted economic opportunities.

Short-Term Versus Long-Term Relationships

The different mating preferences of men and women described earlier are most evident in choices concerning a short-term mating partner, compared with a long-term partner. That is, when short-term relationships are considered, men are much more likely than women to seek a large number of partners who are young and attractive. Still, the sexes are alike in some ways. When it comes to choosing a partner for a long-term relationship, most people emphasize the warmth and trustworthiness of the partner. But when choosing a partner for a short affair, most people will emphasize the physical attractiveness of the partner. In addition, both men and women people are more selective about a long-term partner than a short-term one. When considering marriage, for instance, prospective partners are likely to place strong emphasis on all of the goals discussed.

Cultural Factors

In many individualist cultures, such as the United States, people tend to believe in romantic love, including the notion that one is entitled to a partner who is physically attractive. In some collectivistic countries such as India, however, the idea of romantic love is less prevalent. Instead, parents often arrange the marriages of their children with practical goals such as achieving long-term stability in the marriage and forging family alliances. Consequently, the goals of finding a partner high on intimacy/trust and social status tend to rank higher under these circumstances.

Individual Differences in Attachment Style and Sociosexual Orientation

Individuals who vary in their attachment styles may stress different relationship goals. For

example, someone with an anxious style of attachment might be especially concerned with intimacy/trust and self-esteem issues, but little concerned with freedom and independence issues. In contrast, someone with an avoidant attachment style might put less emphasis on intimacy/trust and self-esteem, but be highly concerned about maintaining some degree of independence outside of the relationship.

Finally, individuals vary in their sociosexual orientation. Some people have a more “restricted” sociosexual orientation in the sense that they would have sex with someone only if they felt a close, committed, emotional bond to the person. In contrast, those with an “unrestricted” orientation are willing to engage in sex without such preconditions. Not surprisingly, research indicates that people with an unrestricted sociosexual orientation put less emphasis on intimacy/trust when choosing a partner.

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See Also Attachment Theory; Belonging, Need for; Commitment, Predictors and Outcomes; Culture and Relationships; Evolutionary Psychology and Human Relationships; Ideals About Relationships; Intimacy; Mate Selection; Self-Esteem, Effects on Relationships; Self-Expansion Model; Sociosexual Orientation; Trust

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GOD, RELATIONSHIPS WITH

People may perceive themselves as being in relationships with other people, as well as with God or some Higher Power. (In this entry, “God” is used for brevity.) Many people experience connections to God that include relational elements: communication, attachment bonds, and the potential for conflict. However, this particular relationship differs in important ways from interpersonal relationships. First, although many people report that they can sense God’s presence, most people do not report seeing or hearing God in a direct, physical way. Second, God is typically seen as being much more powerful than humans. For example, the monotheistic (“one God”) traditions of Judaism, Islam, and Christianity usually portray God as all-knowing, all-powerful, and capable of being everywhere at once. Third, many people see God as morally perfect and incapable of sin. Given these important differences, relationships with God cannot be reduced to simple interpersonal relationships, even though they share many features.

The idea of a relationship with God fits most easily within certain faith traditions: those focusing on a personal God who intervenes in people’s lives. Such beliefs are more likely in Protestantism than in Zen Buddhism, for example. Existing research has overemphasized Western, Christian samples, yielding a somewhat lopsided picture of how humans experience the sacred. Yet the concept of a relationship with God may apply to some who do not regard God as a personal, relational being. For instance, studies suggest that people can become angry at impersonal forces such as tornadoes or illnesses. People can also experience a profound sense of communion with nature, which is usually seen as an impersonal force. Thus, some relational concepts presented here may apply to

faiths that do not include a personal God. For simplicity, this entry emphasizes religions that include one God. The dynamics become more complex in religions that include more than one God.

Communication

One crucial ingredient of relationships is communication, and most religions do frame prayer as communication with God. Prayer, like conversation, takes many forms: petitions, complaints, expressions of gratitude, and simple sharing of thoughts or happenings. At one level, prayer could be seen as an internal dialogue or a one-way form of communication, and some people do see it this way. Some see prayer as two-way conversation, believing that God speaks to them through forms such as sacred texts, impressions or images, or external events.

Yet prayer is not the same as ordinary conversation. Prayer involves a “virtual” element, because people typically do not claim to see or hear God directly. (Given the myriad communication problems that characterize human relationships, one can only imagine the difficulties that can ensue when one’s partner is not visible or audible!) Also, because God is often seen as holy and all-powerful, prayer sometimes takes the form of worship or confession of sins; this clearly takes it out of the realm of everyday interpersonal conversation.

Attachment Bonds

People often hold internalized images of God that reflect both their male and female caregivers from early in life. Studies also suggest that many people respond to God as an attachment figure: They want to stay close, seeing God as a secure base and a haven of safety, and they experience anxiety when there is a threat of separation.

One controversy in the attachment-to-God literature centers on how perceived relationships with God differ based on attachment style. Some evidence supports a correspondence hypothesis, in which people’s relationships with God mirror their relationships with parents or romantic partners. For example, people who see their parents as harsh, distant, or cold often tend to have similarly negative images of God. Other evidence supports a

compensation hypothesis, in which people compensate for insecure attachments in other relationships by seeking greater closeness to God.

As noted by faith development researchers, attachment bonds do not need to remain in a passive, infantile form. Some people experience connection with God as a leader-follower relationship, a mutual partnership, or a romantic love relationship. They may see themselves as partners or as a part of God's team. However, because people often see God as being holy and all-powerful, even a close partnership is usually not seen as an equal-status relationship.

Relationship Conflict

As with human relationships, negative events can prompt negative feelings and conflict in people's relationships with God. When people believe that they have transgressed against God, they often feel guilt, shame, and a desire to seek forgiveness. In other cases, God is seen as the one who has caused harm. When facing death, accidents, natural disasters, or even everyday disappointments, people who attribute such events to God can become hurt and angry. They may feel abandoned or betrayed, and some will assume that God is punishing or rejecting them. In many ways, the resulting emotions are similar to those surrounding interpersonal conflicts.

Here again, though, there are some key differences from interpersonal relationships. Because people usually view God as extremely powerful, many fear retribution (e.g., the lightning bolt from heaven) if they acknowledge anger or negative feelings toward God. As a result, people may hide negative feelings from others and perhaps even from themselves. The topic of anger toward God is often considered taboo.

Because people typically do not see or hear God with their senses, they often use cognitive means to resolve conflicts regarding God. For example, some people revise their God images, envisioning God as less powerful, benevolent, or protective than previously believed. Others conclude that God does not exist or that God's ways are ultimately unknowable.

Another difference from human relationships is that many people see God as incapable of error or wrongdoing. Thus, when negative events occur,

many people seek explanations that do not imply transgression on God's part. Some shift responsibility elsewhere, pointing the finger at themselves, another person, or the devil. Others reframe God's actions in a positive light, finding benefit in them or trusting that they are part of greater plans that are meaningful but mysterious.

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See also Anger in Relationships; Attachment Theory; Religion, Spirituality, and Relationships

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GOSSIP

Gossip is ubiquitous. Anthropological literature suggests it is virtually universal in human societies, and ethnographic data often reveal a high percentage of gossip in common conversation. Most people encounter gossip in one form or another in the course of a day, either in conversation or from the media. It can be entertaining or dull, useful or destructive. Some researchers have argued persuasively that gossip provided evolutionary advantage to the human species. Modern societies have institutionalized the activity in mass media. This entry focuses on the social functions of gossip, in the context of interpersonal exchanges and at the level of larger social groups.

Gossip may be defined as the exchange, in a context of congeniality, of personal information (positive or negative) in an evaluative way (positive or negative) about absent third parties. Interpersonal gossip is typically traded among (and about) people who have a common history or shared interests. Thus, the evaluative elements in

gossip arise from implicit comparisons to social norms to which the conversationalists tacitly subscribe. That is, if people share a social history, remarks exchanged about others in their circle will frequently express or imply comparisons to norms based on known elements of that history.

In defining gossip, the context, setting, and tone of a conversational exchange must be considered. Congenial informality is perhaps the key situational factor that differentiates gossip from other kinds of evaluative exchanges about someone not present. That is, a mood of familiarity, novelty, and a certain “thrill” are essential to the expression of gossip. Parents discussing their child’s performance in school with a teacher, for instance, although conforming to the letter of the definition given, would therefore not be considered gossip because the spirit of the conversation lacks the kind of spontaneity and excitement we usually associate with this form of communication.

Although researchers often include positive gossip in the domain, the behavior commonly elicits disapproval and opprobrium colloquially, primarily because the popular assumption is that it disseminates only negative content whose truth value is frequently in question. How much effort gossipers or gossipees take to validate the content of gossip may depend on the individual and the milieu (e.g., workplaces, Internet chat rooms, neighborhoods, dormitories, etc.). In gossipy conversation, phrases such as, “I’ve heard that . . .,” “It seems to me that . . .,” “An inside source said . . .,” “I saw him doing . . .,” “. . . or so I’m told,” and so on each convey a slightly different truth value on the accompanying information. Verification of gossip by the gossipee is typically cursory. People seem more likely to rely on casual and indirect confirmatory indicators, such as the status or expertise of the source, than to seek direct access to information when evaluating the truth of gossip.

Researchers have delineated numerous social functions of gossip. It is frequently described, for example, as an efficient and, occasionally, even exclusive means of gathering and disseminating social information. Along these lines, and as developed in social exchange theory, gossip can be seen as a kind of currency, traded like any other, and assessed for its value by the taker on the basis of timeliness, usefulness, and, especially, rarity. This accounts for how an individual may boost his or

her social status—temporarily, at least—by being the first to pass a piece of gossip.

Another important function of gossip is to help form and solidify friendships or intimacy. Between friends, sharing gossip is a way to telegraph confidence in the “dyadic boundary” and thereby cement the relationship and distinguish insider from outsider. Indeed, newcomers may find themselves struggling to stay up to speed in casual conversations among longtime friends, as meanings are firmly rooted in long and complicated histories of experience and information exchange. At the group level, what begins as trusted exchanges in private becomes the knowledge, norm, and trust margins of communities, cultures, and other bounded social identities. This phenomenon may be a means by which long-simmering ethnic tensions remain salient over decades or even centuries: Whispered gossip between members of one group perpetuates the inclusion of like members and the exclusion of members of another group, and the process is repeated innumerable times in innumerable private exchanges.

Perhaps the most evident social function of gossip is its simple entertainment value. As a form of immediate amusement and stimulation, gossip is readily available to everyone of almost any age in almost any situation for virtually no cost. The storytelling aspect of gossip can satisfy emotions in a quasi-literary way and may provide relief from the monotony of workplaces or from social isolation in any setting. Nearly everyone enjoys sharing gossip in one form or another (notwithstanding protestations to the contrary).

Finally, gossip is a means of social influence. As such, it may involve a different type of motivation than is generally encountered in its informative, friendship, or entertainment functions; the contrast hinges on influence being essentially a deliberate and meditated effort. In the workplace, for instance, sharing gossip with a new hire is a kind of informal initiation ritual that perpetuates norms, validates the status quo, or aligns political factions. More generally, with gossip, social cheats are criticized and paragons are praised. Norms are thus upheld, and group cohesion and boundaries are maintained. Culture in general depends on the repetition of norms and mores both formally and informally to enforce conformity on members. Gossip serves this social function well.

Learning what our fellow humans believe to be either praiseworthy or blameworthy is a serious task in life. To remove gossip from the behavioral repertoire would result in our learning important life lessons less early and less clearly. Therefore, gossip should not be reduced to a benign pastime, on the one hand, or to an evil instrument of indirect social aggression, on the other. It can mislead but it can also inform. It can fracture and mend. It can banish and welcome into the fold. Along with its ubiquity, this Janus-like character of gossip is why it has attracted more systematic attention and study recently.

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See also Cohesiveness in Groups; Group Dynamics; Information Seeking; Relational Aggression; Social Comparison, Effects on Relationships

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GRANDPARENT–GRANDCHILD RELATIONSHIP

As a result of increased life expectancy, most adults spend a considerable portion of their lives as grandparents. Increased life expectancy also means that most children have long-term relationships with multiple grandparents. As such, the grandparent–grandchild relationship is a significant family bond. Although there is great variation within individual grandparent–grandchild relationships, the relationship is highly valued and

beneficial. This entry examines the nature of the grandparent–grandchild relationship, variations in this relationship, factors that influence grandparent–grandchild involvement and closeness, and consequences of a positive grandparent–grandchild relationship.

Although grandparents can be abusive toward their grandchildren or absent from their lives, most grandparents and grandchildren have long-term, loving relationships marked by high levels of affection, contact, and emotional closeness. Grandparent–grandchild relationships have been described as mutually satisfying, particularly when they are reciprocal (both parties actively participate) and symmetrical (both parties share similar feelings).

Grandparents interact with their grandchildren in a variety of ways. They give gifts, serve as playmates, provide cognitive and social stimulation, offer advice, and supply emotional support. They also provide instrumental support in the form of money, free babysitting, or other tangible goods. Depending on the quality of the relationship between their children and grandchildren, some grandparents may serve as buffers within the parent–child relationship. Grandparents also link past and future generations and assume responsibility for transmitting family history, culture, traditions, and values. Additionally, grandparents indirectly influence their grandchildren by providing emotional and material assistance, serving as role models, stabilizing or assisting the family in times of crisis, and preserving extended family ties.

Although some adults find their relationships with their grandchildren to be uncomfortable or disappointing, most enjoy being grandparents. Grandparents appreciate the sense of biological renewal, symbolic immortality, emotional self-fulfillment, and vicarious accomplishment they receive from participating in their grandchildren's lives. Many grandparents also enjoy the opportunity to indulge their grandchildren without the added responsibilities of parenting and discipline. They may derive satisfaction from the opportunity to teach their grandchildren or provide them with financial or material resources. For grandparents who felt that their work responsibilities kept them away from their own children more than they would have liked, interacting with grandchildren may represent a “second chance” at parenting.

Just as not all grandparents enjoy their grandchildren, not all grandchildren feel close to or appreciate their grandparents. However, many grandchildren enjoy positive relationships with their grandparents. Although younger grandchildren thrive on the attention they receive from grandparents, adolescent and adult grandchildren often appreciate their grandparents' wisdom, support, and guidance. Older grandchildren may also view grandparents as confidants and approach them with problems that they do not feel comfortable discussing with their parents. Grandparents are so important to grandchildren that many adult grandchildren express a desire to support and care for their grandparents, especially when their grandparents need assistance with household responsibilities and personal care.

Variations in Grandparent–Grandchild Relationships

There is significant variation in how grandparents and grandchildren enact their relationships. Numerous researchers have identified distinct styles of grandparent–grandchild interaction. For example, in their seminal research, Bernice Neugarten and Karol Weinstein identified five ways that grandparents interact with their grandchildren:

1. *Formal* grandparents are involved in their grandchildren's lives and activities. However, they do not assume any parental authority or responsibility with their grandchildren.
2. Grandparents who are *fun seekers* enjoy an informal, pleasurable relationship with their grandchildren. They view time with their grandchildren as a leisure activity.
3. Grandparents who are *surrogate parents* assume caregiving responsibilities for their grandchildren.
4. *Reservoir of family wisdom* grandparents, who are typically grandfathers, behave as authority figures and sources of knowledge. They tend to have emotionally distant relationships with their grandchildren.
5. *Distant* grandparents have limited contact with their grandchildren. They may only see their grandchildren on holidays and birthdays.

Although there have been several other classifications of grandparent–grandchild relationships, this example illustrates the broad range of relationships that exist between grandparents and their grandchildren.

Factors Associated With Involvement and Closeness

The frequency of contact between grandparents and grandchildren, as well as the degree of emotional closeness within the relationship, has been associated with numerous individual and family factors. When considering frequency of contact, there is little association between the amount of contact and relationship quality. Thus, it is possible for grandparents and grandchildren to have limited contact, yet still report a highly satisfying relationship.

Individual Factors

Individual factors refer to personal characteristics of the grandparent or grandchild. Although the grandparent role is important and satisfying to both grandmothers and grandfathers, grandmothers tend to be more involved with grandchildren than grandfathers do. Grandmothers also tend to be more expressive in their relationships with their grandchildren—displaying a high degree of warmth and affection, especially to their granddaughters. In contrast, grandfathers tend to be more instrumental with their grandchildren, especially their grandsons, in that they provide assistance with education, employment, or finances. Grandchildren report the closest ties with their same-sex grandparents, with grandmothers and granddaughters reporting the closest relationships.

Lineage also affects grandparent–grandchild relationships. Because women are traditionally responsible for maintaining extended family relationships, maternal (the mother's side of the family) grandparents tend to be more involved with and closer to their grandchildren than do paternal (the father's side of the family) grandparents. Grandchildren also describe greater emotional closeness with their maternal grandparents, particularly their maternal grandmothers. Grandchildren are especially close to their maternal grandparents

when their mothers are single or the grandchildren have experienced parental divorce.

The age of the grandparent and the grandchild may affect their relationship. Younger grandparents, who tend to be in better physical health, are usually more active with their grandchildren. Although physical and cognitive declines may force older grandparents to be less involved with their grandchildren, grandparents' affection for their grandchildren usually does not diminish with age. Younger grandchildren tend to be more involved with their grandparents. Involvement begins to decline as grandchildren reach adolescence and continues as grandchildren launch their own careers and families. Despite these normative declines in involvement, grandchildren do not report age-associated declines in the quality of their relationships with their grandparents. Moreover, evidence indicates that involvement with grandparents increases again once grandchildren establish their careers and have children. Thus, involvement between grandparents and grandchildren may be cyclical and influenced by the grandparent and grandchild's stages in the life course.

Finally, the ethnic background of the grandparent and grandchild may influence their relationship. When compared with White grandparents, the grandparent role has been observed to be more important to Native American, African-American, Hispanic, and Asian grandparents. Additionally, minority grandparents are more likely than are their White counterparts to live with their grandchildren and assume significant childrearing responsibilities. Although there is wide variation in the exact nature of the grandparent–grandchild relationship among various ethnic groups, influential cultural factors include the degree of grandparental authority, the grandchild's sense of filial piety (responsibility to love, respect, and care for older family members), whether the grandparent lives with the grandchild, language compatibility, and degree of acculturation (how much a person or family has adopted the beliefs and behaviors of the dominant culture).

Family Factors

Characteristics of the family also influence grandparent–grandchild relationships. When grandchildren are young, their parents dictate the

amount and type of contact they have with grandparents. For this reason, the quality of the parent–grandparent relationship has a significant impact on the quality of the grandparent–grandchild relationship. More specifically, a positive relationship between parents and grandparents is associated with better grandparent–grandchild relationships. However, as grandchildren age, they can negotiate relationships with their grandparents that are independent of their parents. Generally, the quality of the relationship between adult grandchildren and their grandparents is similar to the quality of the relationship when the grandchildren were young.

Family structure can also affect interaction between grandparents and grandchildren. Divorce and remarriage can facilitate or disrupt grandparents' relationships with their grandchildren. For example, following a divorce, maternal grandmothers increase the amount of childcare they provide for their grandchildren. Maternal grandparents may also increase their financial support of their grandchildren. Alternately, as a result of divorce, paternal grandparents may lose contact with their grandchildren. Although some states allow grandparents who have lost contact with their grandchildren to seek visitation rights, some states do not allow grandparents to seek visitation. Remarriage also poses challenges for the grandparent–grandchild relationship. Grandparents often have a difficult time knowing how they should relate to their stepgrandchildren. Children tend to have better relationships with their stepgrandparents when they enter the family at a young age and live full-time with their stepgrandparents' adult child.

In response to changing family structures and other demands on families, many grandparents provide care for their grandchildren. The degree of responsibility grandparents have for their grandchildren ranges from occasional babysitting to full-time parenting. During the last 30 years, there has been a significant increase in the number of grandparents raising grandchildren. Hispanic, African-American, and Native American grandparents are especially likely to be raising their grandchildren. When grandparents assume responsibility for their grandchildren, they often experience numerous stressors including poverty, legal problems, health concerns, social isolation, and psychological distress.

Grandparent caregiving also affects the grandparent–grandchild relationship. The more a grandparent

provides care for a grandchild, the more likely the grandchild is to view the grandparent as a parental figure. Among grandparents who are not responsible for raising their grandchildren, the greater the degree of grandparent caregiving, the more frequent the contact and the closer the emotional relationship between the grandparent and grandchild. When grandparents raise their grandchildren, there may be increased emotional closeness. However, increased conflict and ambivalence is also common.

A final family characteristic that has been associated with grandparent–grandchild relationships is geographic distance. In an increasingly mobile society, many grandparents live a significant distance from their grandchildren. Greater geographic distance between grandparents and grandchildren has been linked to less frequent contact, less support, and lower levels of emotional closeness. However, the influence of geographic distance on the grandparent–grandchild relationship is complex in that it also intersects with the quality of the parent–grandparent relationship, the use of technology, the importance of grandparenting to the grandparents, and family members' previous experiences with grandparents.

Consequences of Grandparent–Grandchild Relationships

Research indicates that a positive grandparent–grandchild relationship is beneficial to the mental health and well-being of both grandparents and grandchildren. For example, Linda Drew and Merrill Silverstein found that grandparents experience increased symptoms of depression when they lose contact with their grandchildren. These depressive symptoms persist over time, which can be detrimental to grandparents' health, functioning, and personal relationships. Similarly, Sarah Ruiz and Merrill Silverstein found that when adolescent and young adult grandchildren are emotionally close to their grandparents, they experience fewer depressive symptoms. Although grandchildren from a variety of family constellations experience this benefit, grandchildren raised in single-parent families are particularly likely to experience decreased depressive symptoms as a result of having a close relationship with their grandparents. As this and other research suggests,

grandparents may play a protective role in that they may compensate for deficiencies in other arenas of their grandchildren's lives.

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See also Aging Processes and Relationships; Extended Families; Families, Intergenerational Relationships in; Kin Relationships; Life-Span Development and Relationships; Multigenerational Households

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GRATITUDE

Gratitude is a common interpersonal emotion. Feeling grateful was the third most common discrete positive affect experienced in a sample of older adults, reported by nearly 90 percent of those surveyed. Gratitude can also represent a broader attitude toward life—the tendency to see all of life as a gift. Gratitude thus has various meanings and can be conceptualized at several levels of analysis ranging from momentary affect to long-term dispositions. It has been conceptualized as an

emotion, an attitude, a moral virtue, a habit, a personality trait, and a coping response. The word *gratitude* itself is derived from the Latin *gratia*, meaning grace, graciousness, or gratefulness. All derivatives from this Latin root have to do with kindness, generousness, gifts, the beauty of giving and receiving, or getting something for nothing. This entry discusses why gratitude is important in human relationships and, more generally, in life itself.

Although a variety of life experiences can elicit feelings of gratitude, prototypically gratitude stems from the perception that one has received a gift or benefit from another person. Grateful emotions and behaviors typically result from the perception that another person has intended to promote one's well-being. Most existing theories concur that gratitude is mostly under a specific set of attributions: (a) when a benefit is evaluated positively, (b) when the benefit that one has encountered is not attributed to one's own effort, and (c) when the benefit was rendered intentionally by the benefactor. Existing research suggests that gratitude is a typically pleasant experience that is linked to contentment, happiness, and hope. There is consensus that gratitude can be regarded as a moral emotion in that it leads to behavior intended to benefit others. The experience of gratitude results from acknowledging the "gratuitous" role sources of social support may play in propagating beneficial outcomes in our lives. Gratitude aids in reciprocating kindness toward those who have been kind to us.

Gratitude serves important functions in human's social and emotional lives. Recent work has suggested that gratitude is a reliable emotional response to the receipt of benefits, and that the experience and expression of gratitude may have important effects on behavior in the moral domain. From the perspectives of moral philosophy and theology, gratitude is seen as a human strength that enhances one's personal and relational well-being and is beneficial for society as a whole. Gratitude is a moral affect—that is, one with moral precursors and consequences. By experiencing gratitude, a person is motivated to carry out prosocial behavior, energized to sustain moral behaviors, and inhibited from committing destructive interpersonal behaviors. Specifically, gratitude serves as a *moral barometer*, providing individuals with an affective readout that accompanies the perception

that another person has treated them prosocially. Second, gratitude serves as a *moral motive*, stimulating people to behave prosocially after they have been the beneficiaries of other people's prosocial behavior. Third, gratitude serves as a *moral reinforcer*, encouraging prosocial behavior by reinforcing people for their previous good deeds. Gratitude is also motivating. There is an energizing and motivating quality to gratitude. It is a positive state of mind that gives rise to the "passing on of the gift" through positive action. As such, gratitude serves as a key link in the exchange between receiving and giving. This is a response to kindnesses received, as well as a motivator of future benevolent actions by the recipient. In the language of evolutionary processes, gratitude leads to "upstream reciprocity." As much of human life is about giving, receiving, and repaying, gratitude is a pivotal concept for human social interaction. Moreover, gratitude may spur spontaneous acts of altruism.

Gratitude Interventions and Subjective Well-Being

From ancient scriptures to modern devotional writers, counting blessings is frequently recommended as a strategy to improve one's life. Considerable research has examined the ability of gratitude to produce positive psychological, interpersonal, and physical outcomes. Experimental studies use random assignment to gratitude-inducing conditions and control groups. Gratitude interventions have shown that undergraduate students, adults with neuromuscular diseases, clinical patients suffering from depression, and school-aged children have benefited from increased gratitude in their lives. Gratitude interventions, by increasing the intensity and frequency of grateful emotions, have been shown to have sustainable effects on emotional and interpersonal well-being, as well as physical health. For example, research has found that those who kept gratitude journals on a regular basis exercised more regularly, reported fewer physical symptoms, felt better about their lives as a whole, and were more optimistic about the upcoming week compared with those who recorded hassles (every complaint and annoyance) or neutral life events. Those keeping gratitude journals also reported higher levels of high

engagement positive emotions, such as interest, excitement, enthusiasm, and vitality. A gratitude intervention with schoolchildren resulted in those keeping gratitude journals feeling significantly more optimistic about their upcoming week compared with those who recorded hassles. The gratitude condition also elicited greater satisfaction with school compared with both the hassles and control condition. Similar to adults, counting one's blessings seems to be an effective intervention for well-being enhancement in early adolescents.

Expressing gratitude for life's blessings—that is, a sense of wonder, thankfulness, and appreciation—is likely to elevate happiness for a number of reasons. Grateful thinking fosters the savoring of positive life experiences and situations, so that people can extract the maximum possible satisfaction and enjoyment from their circumstances. Counting one's blessings may directly counteract the effects of hedonic adaptation, the process by which our happiness level returns, again and again, to its baseline, by preventing people from taking the good things in their lives for granted. If we consciously remind ourselves of our blessings, it should become harder to take them for granted and adapt to them. And the very act of viewing good things as gifts itself is likely to be beneficial for mood. Additionally, there are interpersonal benefits to feeling grateful. When feeling grateful, people feel closer and more connected to others, and less lonely and isolated. As a social emotion, expressions of gratitude are essential to successful, vital, and thriving long-term relationships.

Gratitude as a Trait

The grateful disposition is a generalized tendency to recognize and respond with positive emotions (appreciation, thankfulness) to the role of other's benevolence in the positive experiences and outcomes that one obtains. A self-report measure of gratitude as a personality disposition has been constructed. Items on the Gratitude Questionnaire reflect gratitude intensity (e.g., "I feel thankful for what I have received in life"), gratitude frequency (e.g., "Long amounts of time can go by before I feel grateful to something or someone," scored in the negative direction), gratitude span (e.g., "I sometimes feel grateful for the smallest things"),

and gratitude density (e.g., "I am grateful to a wide variety of people"). These individual difference measures emphasize the emotional component of gratitude more so than the moral component of reciprocity.

People who score highly on measures of gratitude as an affective trait tend to experience a high degree of life satisfaction and positive affects such as happiness, vitality, and hope. They also experience relatively low levels of negative affects such as resentment, depression, and envy and higher levels of prosocial behavior, empathy, forgiveness, religiousness, and spirituality. Among the Big Five personality traits, the grateful disposition is related most strongly to Agreeableness (positively) and Neuroticism (negatively). For people who are dispositionally prone to feel grateful, the amount of gratitude in their daily moods is determined so thoroughly by personality processes that their moods are resistant to the effects of gratitude-relevant daily life events (e.g., experiencing many discrete gratitude-eliciting events; experiencing gratitude to a large number of people) and their discrete emotional responses to these daily events (i.e., feeling intense episodes of grateful emotion in response). This suggests that gratitude interventions may be less effective in inducing grateful emotions in these people who are already prone to feeling gratitude.

Be it as a state or trait emotion, gratitude has clearly been linked to subjective well-being. Indeed, happy people tend to be grateful people. They also tend to be more successful in their relationships. Moreover, expressing gratitude seems to intensify our already felt positive affect in response to being the beneficiary to a benefactor's kind behavior (e.g., giving a gift). Subsequently, capitalizing on positive experiences by dwelling on them seems to be psychologically beneficial. Indeed, the ability to notice positive occurrences in one's life and to enjoy them allows us to have more fulfilling experiences. Gratitude is easily cultivated and is efficacious in kindling positive emotions generally and appears also to stimulate prosocial behavior including willingness to become an organ donor.

Gratitude and Resilience

In addition to the positive benefits that can accrue from the conscious practice of gratitude, additional

studies have shown that gratitude can buffer a person from debilitating emotions and pathological psychological conditions. One study examined the frequency of positive and negative emotions before and after the tragic events of September 11, 2001. Out of 20 emotions, gratitude (for life and loved ones) was the second most commonly experienced (only compassion was rated higher). Positive emotions were critical characteristics that actively helped resilient people to cope with the September 11, 2001, disaster, suggesting another potential role that gratitude can play in interventions. Indeed, a whole line of research shows that benefit-finding can help people cope with disasters, deadly diseases, and bereavement. Even painful experiences can become something for which people are ultimately grateful. Thus, the regular experience and expression of gratitude can help build personal and interpersonal resources for coping effectively with stress and adversity.

Gratitude may also offer protection against psychiatric disorders. A factor-analytically derived measure of thankfulness (which included items explicitly related to gratitude, along with others that seemed to have more in common with love and acceptance) was associated with reduced risk for both internalizing (e.g., depression and anxiety) and externalizing (e.g., substance abuse) disorders in a study involving 2,616 male and female twins. So, gratitude may facilitate positive interpersonal functioning, and it appears to buffer against psychiatric disturbance and harmful interpersonal behaviors.

Some Obstacles to Gratitude

Any discussion of the benefits of gratitude would be incomplete without consideration of factors that render gratitude difficult. Scholars have suggested a number of attitudes that are incompatible with a grateful outlook on life, including perceptions of victimhood, an inability to admit to one's shortcomings, a sense of entitlement, envy and resentment, and an overemphasis on materialistic values. Some of these obstacles are likely to be deeply ingrained in personality. A major personality variable that is likely to thwart gratitude is narcissism. People with narcissistic tendencies erroneously believe they are deserving of special

rights and privileges. Along with being demanding and selfish, they exhibit an exaggerated sense of self-importance that leads them to expect special favors without assuming reciprocal responsibilities. The sense of entitlement combined with their insensitivity to the needs of others engenders interpersonal exploitation, whether consciously or unconsciously intended. In short, if one feels entitled to everything, then one is thankful for nothing. Interventions to cultivate gratitude cannot ignore these obstacles for it may be necessary to confront them on their own terms before initiating a gratitude focus.

Conclusion

In the history of ideas, gratitude has had surprisingly few detractors. Aside from a few harsh words from a small handful of cynics, nearly every thinker has viewed gratitude as a sentiment with virtually no downside. Andre Comte-Sponville, a philosopher, recently called gratitude "the most pleasant of the virtues, and the most virtuous of the pleasures." It is virtuously pleasant because experiencing it uplifts the person who experiences it and edifies the person to whom it is directed as well.

But that people typically consider gratitude a virtue and not simply a pleasure also indicates that gratitude does not always come naturally or easily. Gratitude must, and can, be cultivated. And by cultivating the virtue, it appears that people may get the pleasure of gratitude, and all of its other attendant benefits, thrown in for free.

The science of gratitude is still in its infancy, and much is not known. A distinguished emotions researcher recently commented that if a prize were given for the emotion most neglected by psychologists, gratitude would surely be among the contenders. Basic issues, such as the emotional structure of gratitude; its uniqueness from other positive emotions; the consequences of its experience and expression for emotional, physical, and relational well-being; and the cognitive mechanisms that build and sustain gratitude over time require further study.

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See also Capitalization; Emotion in Relationships; Happiness and Relationships; Reciprocity, Norm of; Resilience; Social Capital

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GROUP DYNAMICS

Many of the interpersonal relationships that link people to one another are initiated by and organized within groups. Cliques, teams, crews, families, gangs, peer groups, military squads, professional associations, clubs, congregations, and the like are all groups, for they are networks of interdependent individuals with relatively well-defined boundaries and stable memberships. Groups, in many cases, are the wellsprings of relationships, for by joining a group, one becomes linked interpersonally to the other members of that group. These relationships,

however, are rarely static. Just as the dynamic processes that occur in groups—communication among members, shifts in influence and power as members vie for social status, pressures put on individual members to adhere to the group's standards, the eruption of conflict and discord as members find that others do not share their beliefs or interests—change the group, so they also change the relationships among members that the group sustains. This entry examines the role groups play as a source of enduring and significant human relationships, as well as the significant impact of group dynamics on those relationships.

Memberships as Relationships

The basic unit of analysis in relationship research is the dyadic pairing—the one-to-one link of one person to another. Individuals in a dyadic relationship—a father and son, two lovers, a leader and a follower, a teacher and student, two best friends—are interdependent: Their actions, affect, and cognitions are causally interconnected. These causal connections, or ties, may be strong emotional bonds, such as the links between members of a family or a clique of close friends. The links may also be relatively weak ones that are easily broken with the passage of time or the occurrence of relationship-damaging events.

When two people join in a dyad, an elemental group comes into existence. Although many of the features of larger groups, such as coalition building, shifting exclusions, and hierarchy, are necessarily absent in such groups, the dyad nonetheless includes many defining features of a group: interaction between the members; interdependence as members influence other's thoughts, actions, and emotions; patterning of behaviors over time and situations; shared goals; and a sense of inclusiveness.

As groups grow in size, the number of relationships that sustain the group increases. The maximum number of relationships within a group, where everyone is linked to everyone else, is given by the equation $n(n-1)/2$, where n is the number of people in the group. Only one relationship is needed to create a dyad, but the number of links in a group increases exponentially with increases in group size. Ten links, for example, are needed to

join each member of a 5-person group to every other member, 45 for a 10-person group, and 190 relationships for a 20-person group. In consequence, many ties between members in groups are indirect. Persons A, B, and C might all be group members, but A's influence on C is always mediated by person B. In groups, too, members may feel as though they are tied to specific members, to smaller cliques of members, and to the group as a whole.

In many cases, groups are created deliberately when people realize that they must collaborate with others to accomplish desired goals. Groups also come into existence, sometimes unexpectedly, when formerly independent, unrelated individuals, prompted by their personal needs or the press of environmental and social circumstances, seek a connection to others. Groups may, for example, emerge gradually over time as individuals find themselves interacting with the same subset of individuals with greater and greater frequency. These repeated associations may foster feelings of attraction, as well as a sense of shared identity as the interactants come to think of themselves as a group and people outside the group begin to treat them as a group.

Groups also tend to grow in size and complexity over time, as more members are added through both deliberate and spontaneous elaboration. A dyad may remain a two-person group throughout its duration, but more typically, groups grow in size as the core seed group establishes relationships with other individuals. A clique of adolescents, for example, forms when two friends are joined by two other individuals and they begin to recruit other friends to join the group. Groups also form when otherwise unrelated individuals are drawn to a single individual who becomes the informal leader, or hub, for gradually developing bonds among the various members.

The same factors that influence the development of such personal relationships as friendships and romances also influence the formation of member-to-member relationships. Just as people form romantic relationships with those who are similar to them, they also join groups comprising others who are similar to them. These similarities include psychological qualities, such as attitudes, values, and beliefs, but also categorical and demographic characteristics, such as

race, ethnicity, sex, and age. Members also tend to have similar individual and group level goals; they are each seeking their own individual outcomes and accomplishments, but they are also unified in their pursuit of shared collective outcomes. Groups, therefore, tend to be homogenous rather than heterogeneous—birds of a feather flock together even in human groups. Diversity actually tends to reduce the overall cohesiveness of a group, even though it may increase a group's creativity and efficacy in dealing with complex problems that require a range of experiences and expertise.

Interdependence Theory's emphasis on the economics of membership—the rewards and the costs of membership in a particular group relative to membership in alternative groups—suggests that people join groups that provide them with the maximum level of valued rewards while incurring the lowest level of costs. Rewards include acceptance by others, camaraderie, assistance in reaching personal goals, developing new interests, social support, exposure to new ideas, and opportunities to interact with people who are interesting and attractive. But groups have costs as well: time, money, exclusion by other group members, forced association with individuals—both within the group and in other groups—who may not be particularly likable, and the occasional need to modify one's personal preferences to conform to the dictates of the group. As with other types of personal relationships, individuals are more satisfied with a group if the rewards outweigh the costs, but degree of investment in the group (commitment) and the value of alternative group memberships are also critical variables that must be considered when predicting one's willingness to continue as a group member. When members feel as though they have invested a great deal of themselves in their group, perhaps because they have been a member for a prolonged period or because they have expended considerable personal costs to gain membership, then they are loath to terminate their membership even when the value of the group (the rewards relative to costs) declines. Individuals are also likely to remain in the group when they have no alternative; in most cases, membership in a group of low worth is psychologically more satisfying than membership in no group at all.

Group Dynamics and Relationships

Groups create relationships between members and substantially influence the nature and duration of those relationships. Group dynamics are the influential actions, processes, and changes that occur within and between groups over time. These dynamic processes change the group in predictable ways, and these changes naturally affect the relationships among the members of the group.

Early in the life of the group, *formative processes* strengthen the relationships that link members to one another. Initially, individuals may be unwilling to disclose personal information to others and may feel little loyalty to the group and its members. As the group becomes more cohesive, however, members may shift from the superficial and banal to more personal or even provocative topics. As members become acquainted with each other, they form general impressions of each other, and as they interact, each one in turn strives to make a good impression. Over time, as intimacy increases, group members express their trust in and commitment to the group, with the result that the group becomes more cohesive. Group cohesion is the integrity, solidarity, or unity of the group and tends to be closely linked to the strength and durability of the relationships between the members. Members of cohesive groups express greater attraction toward one another, they are more satisfied with their membership, and they are likely to resist leaving the group. Members of cohesive groups also tend to categorize themselves as group members, and as a result identify strongly with the group and their fellow group members. These *social identity processes* result in changes in self-conception, as individuals increasingly think of themselves in ways that are consistent with their conception of the prototypical group member and less in terms of personal, idiosyncratic qualities.

Increases in the cohesiveness of the group generally go hand-in-hand with increased group structure, as members come to occupy specific roles within the group and norms emerge that provide standards for behavior. These *structural processes* organize the group's procedures, interaction patterns, and intermember relations. Distinctive networks of communication and interaction often develop in groups, as cliques or coalitions emerge within the group. This sociometric differentiation

means that some members of the group enjoy strong, positive interpersonal ties with others in the group, but others might become more isolated from others. Status differentiation in the group, in contrast, creates differences in power and influence. When first formed, group members may be equal in their capacity to influence other individuals and the group as a whole, but status-organizing processes tend to replace this egalitarian structure with a more hierarchical one. Particularly in larger groups, the role of leader develops as one or more individuals take on the responsibility for guiding other members, often by organizing, directing, coordinating, supporting, and motivating their efforts.

Social influence processes also significantly influence members' relation to each other and to the group. As interactions become patterned and members become more group centered, the pressure to conform becomes greater and individuals' resistance to these pressures becomes weaker. As a result, individuals often change when they join a group, as their attitudes and actions align to match those of their fellow group members. They are also more likely to conform to a group's judgment rather than risk ostracism or weakening their positive relations with others. In extreme cases, group members will perform behaviors that they would not otherwise undertake because they do not want to lose their group's approval.

Conflict processes are also omnipresent, both within the group and between groups. When conflict occurs in a group, the actions or beliefs of one or more members of the group are unacceptable to and resisted by one or more of the other members. These tensions tend to undermine the cohesiveness of the group as well as cause specific relationships within the group to weaken or break altogether. Many group and individual factors conspire to create conflict in a group, but the most common sources are competition, disagreements over the distribution of resources, power struggles, uncertainty and disagreement over a decision, and personal antipathies. As conflicts worsen, members shift from weak to strong tactics, and the group may break up into rival coalitions that embroil formerly neutral members in the conflict. Conflict also often generates strong emotions, with the result that members who were once friends may become partners in an escalating series of hostile verbal exchanges. If unresolved, the conflict may eventually result in

the dissolution of the group. Once the group disbands, all the relationship that the group created and sustained may be severed, but more likely, the members will manage to create a newly configured group that does not include those who are thought to be the primary sources of the tension.

Groups and Relationships

Membership in a group creates significant and far-ranging interpersonal consequences for members. Fleeting, impersonal associations do little to meet people's need for meaningful connections with others, but membership in groups that create stable, reliable alliances among members—neighborhoods, cliques of coworkers, athletic teams, social clubs, and the like—is associated with gains in well-being and resilience to stress. Moreover, even though group membership is not often considered as essential a type of interpersonal relationship as are friendship and love relationships, people in groups can, in time, become so intimately connected that these relationships become the psychological equivalent of intimate relationships. Groups can be the source of distress and disappointment for their members, but they also securely link individuals together in a complex web of social relationships. As social creatures, individuals are embedded in a rich network of mutual, collective, and reciprocal group relationships; thus, individuals' actions cannot be understood fully without considering the groups to which they belong.

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See also Cohesiveness in Groups; Conflict Patterns; Cooperation and Competition; Developing Relationships; Interdependence Theory

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GUILT AND SHAME

Shame and guilt are members of a family of self-conscious emotions evoked by self-reflection and self-evaluation. People feel shame, guilt, or both when they fail, sin, or cause harm to another person. As a result, shame and guilt are often referred to as “moral” emotions because of the presumed role they play in fostering moral behavior. Although both are negative emotions precipitated by failures and transgressions, shame and guilt are not synonymous. Research suggests guilt is the more adaptive emotion, benefiting relationships in a variety of ways. In contrast, shame brings with it hidden costs that may actually interfere with interpersonal relationships. This entry begins with an overview of the difference between shame and guilt, followed by a discussion of the adaptive nature of guilt, and the maladaptive nature of shame. We conclude with a discussion of group-based shame and guilt.

What Is the Difference Between Shame and Guilt?

People often use the terms *guilt* and *shame* interchangeably. But recent research indicates these are distinct emotions. Some theorists have suggested shame is a more “public” emotion, arising from public exposure and disapproval, whereas guilt is a more “private” experience arising from self-generated pangs of conscience. As it turns out, research has not supported this public-private distinction regarding the actual characteristics of emotion-eliciting situations. For example, when researchers analyze people's descriptions of personal shame and guilt experiences, shame-inducing behaviors are no more likely to occur in public than are guilt-inducing behaviors.

Where does this notion that shame is a more public emotion come from? Although shame- and guilt-inducing situations are equally public in the likelihood that others are present and aware of one's failure or transgression, people pay attention

to different things when they feel shame compared with when they feel guilt. When feeling guilt, people are apt to think about their effects on others (e.g., how much a careless remark hurt a friend or how much they disappointed their parents). In contrast, when feeling shame, people are more inclined to worry about how others might evaluate them (e.g., “Do others think I’m a jerk?” “Do my parents see me as a failure?”). In short, when feeling shame, people often *focus* on others’ evaluations, but *actual* public exposure isn’t any more likely than in the case of guilt.

Another basis for distinguishing shame and guilt, and the distinction most strongly supported by social psychological research, centers on the *object* of one’s negative evaluation. According to this view, when people feel guilt, they feel badly about a specific *behavior*. When people feel shame, they feel badly about *themselves*. This differential emphasis on self (“*I* did that horrible thing”) versus behavior (“*I did* that horrible *thing*”) may seem minor, but it sets the stage for different emotional experiences and different patterns of motivation and subsequent behavior.

Shame is an especially painful emotion because one’s core self, rather than simply one’s behavior, is the issue. Shame involves painful scrutiny of the entire self, a feeling that “*I* am an unworthy, incompetent, or bad person.” People in the midst of a shame experience feel worthless, powerless, and “small.” When feeling shame, people are actually inclined to adopt a “shrinking” posture, as if they wish they could just disappear.

Guilt, on the other hand, does not affect one’s core identity because the focus is on a specific behavior, rather than the self. Guilt involves a sense of tension, remorse, and regret over the “bad thing done.” People in the midst of guilt are often preoccupied with the transgression, replaying the experience over and over again, wishing they had behaved differently. Rather than encouraging escape and avoidance, guilt motivates reparative behavior such as confessions, apologies, and attempts to fix the situation to undo the harm that was done, which is more likely to result in better outcomes.

Shame-Prone and Guilt-Prone Individuals

People react differently in similar failures or transgressions. Although most people have the capacity

to experience both shame and guilt, some people are more inclined to feel guilt, whereas others are more inclined to feel shame. For example, a shame-prone person might feel intense shame upon learning her scathing e-mail about office politics was mistakenly sent to her boss. In response to such a transgression, a shame-prone person might brand herself worthless and avoid her boss, possibly even missing work as a means of escape. A guilt-prone person, on the other hand, might respond to the same transgression with profound guilt. Such a person would be inclined to focus on the specific behavior, thinking about it over and over, feeling a sense of tension, remorse, and regret. In turn, this focus on the behavior is likely to prompt efforts to make amends with the boss, possibly by writing an apology or addressing concerns in a more appropriate forum.

Guilt as More Adaptive Moral Emotion

On the whole, guilt appears to be the more adaptive emotion, benefiting individuals and their relationships in a variety of ways. The following is a summary of the research literature in five areas—motivations, empathy, aggression, moral behavior, and psychological adjustment.

Hiding Versus Amending

Research consistently shows shame and guilt lead to different motivations or “action tendencies.” Shame has been linked with efforts to deny, hide, or escape the shame-inducing situation. Guilt, on the other hand, has been linked with reparative action—confessing, apologizing, and undoing. For example, when people are asked to anonymously describe personal shame experiences, they indicate they feel more compelled to hide from others and less inclined to admit what they had done, compared with when they feel guilt. In short, guilt motivates people in a constructive, future-oriented direction, whereas shame motivates people toward separation, distance, and defense.

Other-Oriented Empathy

Empathy is a highly valued emotional process that is an essential ingredient of warm, close interpersonal

relationships. Empathy motivates altruistic, helping behavior and inhibits antisocial behavior and aggression. Research indicates guilt and empathy go hand-in-hand, whereas shame is apt to disrupt an empathic connection. This differential relationship of shame and guilt to empathy has been observed at the levels of both emotion traits (dispositions) and emotion states. For example, researchers have consistently found, across various ages and demographic subgroups, that guilt-prone individuals express more adaptive forms of empathy, such as perspective taking and empathic concern, than do their less guilt-prone peers. In contrast, shame-proneness does not facilitate empathy. In fact, shame is more apt to be associated with personal distress (a self-oriented form of empathy).

Anger and Aggression

Based on her observations as a clinical psychologist, Helen Block Lewis first noted the relationship between shame and anger (or humiliated fury). She observed clients' feelings of shame often preceded expressions of anger and hostility in the therapy room. More recent empirical research has supported her claim. Studies of children, adolescents, college students, and adults have consistently shown proneness to shame is positively correlated with feelings of anger and hostility and an inclination to externalize blame.

Shame-prone individuals are more likely to externalize blame and anger but once angered, they are more likely to express their anger in a destructive fashion. For example, in a study of children, adolescents, college students, and adults, proneness to shame was consistently correlated with malevolent intentions, and a propensity to engage in direct physical, verbal, and symbolic aggression, indirect aggression (e.g., harming something important to the target, talking behind the target's back), all manner of displaced aggression (e.g., yelling at a roommate when an individual is actually angry at a professor), self-directed aggression, and anger held in (a ruminative unexpressed anger).

Shame and anger are similarly linked at the situational level. For example, in a study of anger among dating couples, shamed college students were significantly more angry, more likely to engage in aggressive behavior, and less likely to elicit

conciliatory behavior from their partners, compared with students not shamed. Described by some as a "shame-rage spiral," the findings suggest (a) shame can lead to feelings of irrational anger, (b) and destructive retaliation, (c), which can then prompt anger and resentment in the partner, (d) as well as expressions of blame and retaliation in kind, (e) which can then further shame the initially shamed person, reinitiating the cycle, and so forth—without any constructive resolution in sight.

In contrast, proneness to guilt is unrelated to anger. That is, guilt-prone people are no more or less likely to experience anger than are their peers. But once angered, guilt-prone individuals are inclined to manage their anger constructively, (e.g., engaging in nonhostile discussion or attempting to fix the situation), and they are disinclined to become aggressive.

Moral Behavior

Decades of research have failed to yield evidence for the "moral" self-regulatory nature of shame. Instead, recent research has linked shame with a range of illegal, risky, and otherwise problematic behaviors. In contrast, guilt appears to foster a lifelong pattern of generally following a moral path, motivating individuals to accept responsibility and take reparative action in the wake of the inevitable if only occasional failure or transgression. For example, one study found guilt-prone children were less inclined to become delinquent in adolescence than were their nonguilt-prone peers. Guilt-prone children were more likely to practice "safe sex" and less likely to abuse drugs. Even among adults already at high risk, guilt-proneness appears to serve a protective function.

Psychological Functioning

Finally, "shame-free" guilt is not associated with poor psychological adjustment or well-being, as Freud and Woody Allen would suggest. Research has found that, when differentiating between shame and guilt, the propensity to experience guilt is essentially unrelated to psychological symptoms. Numerous independent studies converge: shame, but not guilt, is consistently related to anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, and a host of other psychological problems.

When Does Guilt Become Maladaptive?

Why is guilt frequently cited as a symptom in such psychological disorders as anxiety and depression? What is the chronic, ruminative guilt described by so many clinicians? One possibility is many of these problematic guilt experiences are actually feelings of guilt *fused with feelings of shame*. It seems likely that when a person begins with a guilt experience (“Oh, look at what a horrible *thing* I have *done*”) but then magnifies and generalizes the event to the self (“ . . . and aren’t I a horrible *person*”), many of the advantages of guilt are lost. The person is faced with tension and remorse about a specific behavior that needs to be fixed, and he or she is saddled with feelings of contempt and disgust for a bad, defective self. In effect, shame-fused guilt may be just as problematic as shame itself. Research shows the unique variance in guilt (the part of guilt that is independent of shame) is most clearly related to positive interpersonal behaviors and adjustment. Co-occurring shame and guilt are associated with poor outcomes, much as is shame unaccompanied by guilt.

Vicarious, Group-Based, or “Collective” Shame and Guilt

Until recently, most research has focused exclusively on personal shame and guilt experienced in response to one’s *own* failures and misdeeds. A number of investigators have substantially expanded the literature on self-conscious emotions by considering vicarious or group-based shame and guilt—feelings experienced about the transgressions and failures of *other* individuals. According to Social Identity Theory, to the extent that the self is, in part, defined by interpersonal relationships and group affiliations, it is possible to construe the behavior of an ingroup member as reflecting on the self. Research findings on vicarious shame and guilt are similar in many respects to the research on personal shame and guilt experiences described thus far. For example, group-based guilt (feeling guilt for the behavior of an

ingroup member) has been associated with empathy and a motivation to repair or make amends. Vicarious group-based shame has been linked with anger and a desire to distance oneself from the shame-eliciting group or event.

Scientific study of shame and guilt is a relatively recent endeavor, and much remains unknown. The next generation of research on these moral emotions will no doubt further incorporate other related fields to better understand the development of moral emotions and the neurobiological mechanisms by which they function, with the ultimate goal of translating this knowledge into action for the good of society.

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See also Aggressive Communication; Anger in Relationships; Empathy; Morality and Relationships; Perspective Taking; Social Identity Theory

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H

HAPPINESS AND RELATIONSHIPS

Social relationships are often described as the most important factor in determining a person's happiness. If there is a single characteristic that best distinguishes people who are extremely happy from everyone else, it appears to be the quality of their social relationships. People who are more satisfied with their relationships report higher subjective well-being and greater objective health—including longer lives and less vulnerability to illness. Although social processes are important to people's happiness, the causal arrow often points in the other direction, with happiness leading to stronger and more satisfying relationships. The links between happiness and social relationships also vary depending on the definitions being used to investigate the topic. Happiness is frequently thought to consist of separable elements: positive affect, negative affect, life satisfaction, and satisfaction with particular life domains (e.g., work). As for social relationships, research has focused on relationship quality and satisfaction, various positive and negative relationship processes, and different types of relationships. Furthermore, definitions and methodologies can moderate the magnitude (and sometimes the direction) of relations between happiness and social relationships. This entry reviews research on relationships and happiness, and discusses implications for social policy and future research.

General Findings

Sociability

The degree to which people are sociable is one of the strongest predictors of frequent positive affect and life satisfaction. Researchers have used experience-sampling methodologies to collect information from people during in vivo social events. Typically, respondents are asked to complete a series of questions at random moments or immediately after every social interaction that lasts at least 10 minutes. By collecting comprehensive information about how people think and behave in their natural environment, researchers can examine factors that might influence the benefits of socializing. Most people—including those who are shy or introverted—consistently report greater positive affect when socializing compared with being alone. Similarly, people who spend a greater percentage of their time with others report being more satisfied with their lives. In the few longitudinal studies on the topic, being more sociable (as defined by self-reported talkativeness, assertiveness, and preferences for social gatherings) leads to greater happiness over time and, in turn, people experiencing more positive affect report larger and higher quality social networks across time.

The link between relationships and happiness is more modest, but still meaningful, when examining behavior in the laboratory. When talking to strangers, for example, research participants reporting being happier are observed to smile more

frequently and be more talkative, energetic, and humorous. In turn, strangers perceive happier people as more likable and show a stronger interest in forming relationships with them. In other studies, people induced into good moods were observed to be more sociable when interacting with strangers and more likely to be talkative, responsive, and generous and to initiate humor. The benefits of social interactions tend to be stronger when they are less formal and relatively unstructured.

The studies reviewed focused on positive affect and life satisfaction as markers of happiness that are moderately correlated with various social outcomes. That said, it should not be inferred that negative affect is associated with lesser sociability. Recent evidence shows that positive and negative emotions are distinct psychological and neural systems, so that the correlation between measured positive and negative affect is often minimal. Furthermore, a substantial literature indicates that negative affect is not related to the size of a person's social network, frequency of naturally occurring social interactions, or overall social activity. When getting acquainted with strangers, the average person experiences a surge in positive affect but no change in negative affect. In specific cases, however, stressful and hurtful social interactions can lead to profound increases in negative affect, and in turn, people suffering from depression and other emotional disturbances often behave in ways that lead to social rejection.

There is evidence for bidirectional relations between happiness and sociability. This conclusion, however, is tempered by important contextual influences. When happiness is defined by positive affect or life satisfaction, moderate to strong relations emerge with various measures of social activity. Negative affect is generally unrelated to social activity. In addition, not all social activities are equivalent. For example, taking part in highly structured social interactions and spending time with others during sedentary activities are typically unrelated to markers of happiness.

Real-World Relationships

How do different types of relationships influence happiness? Evidence indicates small positive correlations between frequent, intense positive emotional experiences (called *trait affect* by

researchers) and marital satisfaction, the number of close relationships a person has, and the frequency of contact with these individuals. These correlations are larger in magnitude when family members are excluded and the focus is on friends and other self-selected relationships. Some studies show that people are happier when they are with friends compared with strangers or family members or are alone. Thus, although family relationships are associated with each element of well-being across the life span, friendships appear to be more important.

Perhaps the primary exception to this generalization is early parent-child attachment bonds. The presence of a warm, enduring relationship with a caregiver early in life promotes happiness and success in life. The quality of parent-child relationships predicts high levels of emotional adjustment, social competence, and life satisfaction. The underlying mechanisms appear to be bidirectional because parents with emotional difficulties and dissatisfied lives are also less likely to form strong, secure bonds with their children.

Sexuality and the intimate connections that characterize romantic relationships are uniquely relevant to psychological well-being. Generally, married people are happier than are single adults who, in turn, are happier than are those who are divorced or widowed. Yet these results often ignore context. For example, when people are highly satisfied in their marriages, their general life satisfaction often surges upward. In contrast, problematic, conflict-laden relationships lead to infrequent positive affect, frequent negative affect, and disruptions in life satisfaction. Another important contextual factor is the nonrandom selection of romantic partners. People often choose spouses based on desirable personality traits that are readily apparent before marriage. In longitudinal studies, for example, people who are generally happy are more likely to have satisfying marriages whereas people who eventually divorce show lower levels of happiness even before their relationships had begun. This fits with the larger body of research showing that happier people engage in social behaviors that foster healthy relationships including altruism, generosity, affection, empathy, responsiveness, cheerfulness, and supportiveness.

Although there are fewer studies on relationships within organizational settings, happier people

also exhibit better relationships at work. These positive relationships translate into greater productivity and work satisfaction and a sustainable source of meaning and life satisfaction. Thus, it appears that the degree to which a person is happy has direct implications for the health of families, work environments, and communities. Preliminary evidence for these types of societal benefits can be found in the fact that even in economically disadvantaged communities, strong social relationships may buffer the dire effects of poverty.

Evolutionary and Biological Perspectives

Human beings, like our primate cousins, are social animals who naturally dwell together in family units and larger communities. Social relations appear to be fundamental to human adaptive evolution as evidenced by kin selection, specific neural circuitry for recognizing faces, moral social norms (such as those related to obedience and reciprocal altruism), and a wide variety of important social and psychological mechanisms. If sociability is, in fact, an evolutionary advantage, then it is interesting to ponder how happiness might be implicated in this process.

Historically, emotional states have been viewed as instrumental to survival. For example, negative emotional states such as fear are thought to improve survival in threatening situations by limiting thoughts and actions, leading to rapid responding. Positive emotional states are thought to accompany nonthreatening situations and promote social coalition building, personal skill development, and a variety of expansive cognitive and behavioral repertoires. Joy, specifically, has been found to promote playfulness, which, in turn, facilitates better relationships. Thus, happiness appears to be a critical element for human survival because it leads directly to helping others, engaging in group recreation, and a propensity to form mutually beneficial social coalitions.

Preliminary evidence also indicates a beneficial, direct link between specific neurological activity and social relationships. For instance, the hormone oxytocin is released during intense social interactions and appears to facilitate pair bonding. This hormone stimulates feelings of joy and love and initiates behaviors such as affection and caretaking.

Oxytocin further interacts with opioids to attenuate psychological and biological stress responses. During stressful situations, the release of oxytocin leads to social support seeking and nurturance behaviors. As evidence of its role in strengthening social bonds, oxytocin is released by mothers when breastfeeding infants and by adults when engaged in sexual acts. Interestingly, the effects of oxytocin depend on an animal's social role. Oxytocin makes dominant animals more aggressive and hypersexual whereas submissive animals become more affiliative and acquiescent. Essentially, oxytocin modifies emotions, cognitions, and behaviors to increase the likelihood of strong, functional social bonds (there are diverse paths to reaching these social bonds). One of the hormone's by-products appears to be an increased ability to form satisfying relationships and find happiness.

A Note About Culture

Culture is a fundamental social construct that plays an interesting role in the link between social relationships and happiness. Several researchers have identified areas in which cultural norms influence happiness. For example, cultural factors influence how individuals value and define the experience of happiness itself. Asian cultures, for instance, place a premium on low-arousal positive emotions such as peace and contentment, whereas individualists in many Western cultures prize high arousal positive emotions such as exuberance and joy. Researchers have found that parental expectations influence individual happiness and that these differ across cultures. Similarly, some cultures appear to value mastery over enjoyment, and individuals in these cultures are more likely to sacrifice short-term happiness for long-term achievement. Taken together, the research on culture and happiness indicates that cultural processes are an important moderating variable.

Important Caveats

Despite research findings indicating that social relationships play an important—if not central—role in personal fulfillment, there are several important caveats. First, most of the research on

happiness and relationships is correlational and, therefore, causal directions remain uncertain. Second, relationships may also have psychological costs. For example, empathic responses to friends and family members can lead to personal distress (e.g., when witnessing a friend experience hardship), guilt (e.g., when one has hurt a loved one), or a lack of sense of self (e.g., when attempting to meet the needs of others at the expense of unmet personal needs). Although close personal relationships usually come with a variety of benefits, heavily investing in others can have drawbacks if that person leaves or betrays the relationship. For example, research on the happiness of widows suggests that the average widow may take years after her spouse's death to regain former levels of life satisfaction. Finally, it should be noted that whereas relationships generally promote happiness, and vice versa, this connection depends on the type of relationship. There is evidence of gender differences, with women deriving greater benefits from social affiliation and support but less happiness in marital relationships compared with men. The relation between happiness and social ties also may differ based on the specific type of relationship under consideration (e.g., family, work, friends). Thus, caution is warranted in assuming that relationships universally promote happiness.

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See also Bereavement; Dark Side of Relationships; Emotion in Relationships; Fun in Relationships; Health and Relationships; Need Fulfillment in Relationships; Singlehood

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HARD-TO-GET PHENOMENON

The *hard-to-get phenomenon* refers to the notion, held across diverse cultures and espoused by sources ranging from Socrates to Ovid to the *Kama Sutra*, that individuals experience greater attraction to a person who is or seems difficult to attract than to a person who is or seems easy to attract. Although theorizing on the hard-to-get phenomenon dates back to ancient times, the phenomenon did not receive empirical attention until the 1970s. This entry briefly reviews and evaluates the empirical research on the hard-to-get phenomenon in romantic contexts.

Laboratory Experiments

In 1973, Elaine Hatfield (formerly Walster) and her colleagues published a series of six experiments designed to test the hypothesis that hard-to-get women are more romantically desirable to men than are easy-to-get women. The first five experiments uniformly failed to provide any evidence in support of the notion that hard-to-get women are more attractive than easy-to-get women. In one study, for example, women who initially declined a date with a man before eventually accepting it were no more or less desirable to

the man than women who eagerly accepted the date right away. After these five failures, Walster and colleagues went back to the drawing board and recognized that there are actually two distinct ways in which a man can think of a woman as being hard to get: (1) how hard it is for *me* to get her and (2) how hard it is for *other men* to get her. The scholars hypothesized that men would be most attracted to the woman who is *selectively* hard to get—easy for them to get but hard for other men to get.

In a sixth study, college-aged men evaluated the desirability of five college-aged women who had ostensibly matched with them through a dating service. (In reality, these women's profiles were created by the researchers.) The experimenter explained that three of the five women had previously attended a session in which they had completed five "date selection forms," one for each of their five male matches. For each of these three women, the participant saw that one form included ratings of himself and the other four forms included ratings of fictitious men. One of these women was *uniformly hard to get*, rating all five of her matches as not especially appealing. One was *uniformly easy to get*, rating all five of her matches as highly appealing. And one was *selectively hard to get*, rating the other four men as unappealing but rating the male participant as highly appealing.

The men exhibited an overwhelming preference for the selectively hard-to-get woman. She was the top choice of 59 percent of them, with each of the other four women (including the two who ostensibly had not yet completed their date selection forms) winning top-choice honors from only 7 to 15 percent. The men viewed this woman as having all of the advantages of her competitors, but none of their liabilities. For example, they perceived her as being just as popular as the uniformly hard-to-get women (while being less cold) and just as friendly as the uniformly easy-to-get woman (while being more popular). Subsequent research including both men and women participants revealed a second reason why selectively hard-to-get individuals are so desirable: Being liked by such individuals raises one's self-esteem.

The notion that people who are selectively hard to get are especially desirable has gone largely unchallenged, but a series of studies from the mid-1980s partially resurrected the notion that

being uniformly hard to get (or at least not being uniformly easy to get) can also inspire others' romantic interest. In contrast to the studies by Walster and colleagues, participants in these subsequent studies learned how *generally* selective a target person was—that is, without the target directly evaluating the self. Participants found targets who were moderately to strongly hard to get more desirable than targets who were easy to get in these circumstances where personal rejection was no longer implied by the hard-to-get manipulation.

Recent Real-World Evidence

Recent research by Paul Eastwick and colleagues has sought to extend research on the hard-to-get phenomenon beyond the laboratory. Scholars employed speed-dating procedures to test whether people are attracted to others who are selectively hard to get, uniformly hard to get, or both. Men and women participants completed a brief questionnaire after each of their 12 speed dates, indicating the degree to which they experienced romantic desire for that partner.

Two key results emerged. First, when a speed dater found one of the partners more desirable than the others, that partner tended to reciprocate this unique liking. This finding is consistent with the well-validated notion that people are attracted to others who selectively like them. Second, when a speed dater tended to find all of the partners desirable, those partners tended *not* to find him or her desirable in return. This finding is consistent with the notion that people are not attracted to others who are uniformly easy to get; instead, they prefer somebody who is uniformly hard to get. This study suggests that being uniformly hard to get might make individuals more desirable, but peppering one's selectivity with unique liking for a particular partner will enhance the degree to which that partner desires the self.

Conclusion

Overall, the laboratory and speed-dating studies provide robust evidence that people tend to be attracted to selectively hard-to-get others (those who uniquely like the self). These studies are less

definitive in discerning whether people tend to be more attracted to others who are uniformly hard to get than to others who are uniformly easy to get, but preliminary evidence from real-world dating encounters suggests that there may be some truth to the notion that uniformly hard-to-get people are especially desirable after all.

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See also Initiation of Relationships; Interpersonal Attraction; Reciprocity of Liking; Social Relations Model; Speed Dating

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HEALTH, RELATIONSHIPS AS A FACTOR IN TREATMENT

Close relationships such as marriage can have either a positive or negative impact on an individual’s successful adjustment to and management of a chronic health condition. Because of this influence of family on health, researchers have developed family-oriented, psychosocial, or behavioral treatments to supplement the medical care received by the ill individual. This entry describes the reasons that relationships are important to consider in the treatment of chronic illness in adulthood, the different types of family-oriented treatments, and the evidence for the effectiveness of these treatments.

Why Are Relationships Important in the Treatment of Health Conditions?

The rationale for involving a family member in treatment can be found in the biopsychosocial model of health and illness, specific marital and family systems frameworks, and family caregiving and care-receiving models. These theoretical frameworks have been supported by empirical evidence that close social relationships affect biological systems, health behaviors, and psychological well-being. Specifically, emotionally and instrumentally supportive actions by family members, as well as family conflict and criticism, affect immune function, blood pressure, and depressive symptoms, as well as future illness events (e.g., recurrence of cancer, myocardial infarction). Family members’ attitudes toward illness and their own health behaviors also affect patients’ decisions to follow recommendations for medical treatment and their ability to initiate and maintain difficult changes in diet and exercise.

Many of the linkages between family and health have been observed across chronic conditions as diverse as heart disease, chronic pain disorders, arthritis, Type 2 diabetes, renal disease, breast cancer, and spinal cord injury. An example of positive associations between family and health is the finding that individuals with Type 2 diabetes who have more supportive families are also more adherent over time for glucose testing, insulin injection, and a dietary regimen. In addition, for people with end-stage renal disease who are undergoing hemodialysis, greater perceived family support has been associated with greater psychological well-being, adherence to fluid-intake restrictions, and survival at a 5-year follow-up. To provide an example of negative associations between family and health, interpersonal conflict has been linked with greater disease activity (e.g., joint swelling) in people with rheumatoid arthritis.

In turn, physical illness can take a toll on patients’ close family members. Patients’ illness symptoms, negative mood, and need for emotional support or physical assistance often become taxing to family members over time. These experiences may result in family members’ psychological distress, decreased relationship quality with the patient, caregiving burden, and poorer physical health. These consequences are especially likely in

cases where the health condition is life threatening or results in a high level of dependency. For example, a study of recently hospitalized individuals with cancer showed that despite patients' improvement or stabilization after discharge, their family caregivers continued to experience high levels of psychological burden 6 months after patients' hospitalization. Spousal caregivers of individuals with Alzheimer's disease (AD) have been shown to have an impaired immune response to influenza virus vaccination, as well as impaired wound healing, in comparison with individuals who are not caregivers to a spouse with AD but similar to those caregivers in other ways (e.g., age, gender).

A logical conclusion that can be drawn from this body of research is that incorporating a close family member in a psychosocial or behavioral treatment for chronic illness may have a positive impact on the patient as a result of enhancing the family member's empathy and supportiveness. The family member may also become more helpful in practical ways such as monitoring the patient's blood pressure at home and providing more effective assistance with activities of daily living such as dressing, getting around the house, and managing medications. In addition, the family member is likely to experience decreased burden stemming from improvements in patient functioning, validation of caregiving experiences (i.e., confirmation that the illness is difficult for him or her, as well as for the patient), and improved interactions with the patient. In other words, the bidirectional links between health and family relationships suggest that family-oriented treatments may benefit the health and well-being of both patient and family member.

What Approaches Are Used to Involve a Close Family Member in Treatment?

Some researchers have developed dyadic treatments by modifying patient-focused treatments to include a family member, most commonly the spouse or an adult son or daughter. For example, weight loss programs for obese individuals with a chronic illness have been modified to include the spouse. Other researchers have developed caregiver treatments that are targeted solely at the family member on whom the patient primarily

depends for assistance support. For example, stress management skills training has been targeted at spousal caregivers to individuals with AD or stroke. Both of these approaches are family oriented in their focus on the patient's closest family member, either with or without patient involvement.

Family-oriented treatments are most commonly psychological, social, or behavioral in nature or use a combination of these approaches. Psychological approaches may include stress management skills training, or information about the illness and its treatment, and may be targeted at the dyad or the family member alone. Socially focused approaches often take the form of peer support groups (i.e., meeting with other dyads who are dealing with the same illness, or other family caregivers) or counseling aimed at maintaining or improving dyadic relationship quality in the face of illness. Behaviorally focused treatments are often aimed at getting both patient and family member to work together in creating a healthier lifestyle. In addition, these behavioral treatments may be aimed at changing family members' overly solicitous reactions to patients' pain or fatigue, such as jumping in to provide assistance with various tasks before such help is warranted or desired by the patient.

Family-oriented treatments for chronic illness also vary in how intensively they involve the family member. Some of the less intensive approaches may enlist the family member's help in monitoring the patient's health (e.g., blood pressure checks) or encouraging healthy behaviors, or provide the family member with information about the patient's illness (e.g., causes, symptoms, available medical treatments). In contrast, treatments that more intensively involve family may also target supportive and unsupportive communications within the dyad (e.g., counseling for couples dealing with the wife's breast cancer) or address the family member's burden and concerns.

Is Including Family in Treatment an Effective Approach?

Reviews of the research literature indicate that patients who receive family-oriented treatment in addition to usual medical care benefit more than

do patients who receive medical care alone. Specifically, treatments that include the spouse result in small, positive improvements in depressive symptoms across various illnesses. In addition, behaviorally focused, family-oriented treatments for individuals dealing with hypertension or cardiovascular disease result in a small decreased risk for mortality that outweigh the benefits of medical care alone. Some research has examined whether the family member also benefits from family-oriented treatment. These studies have shown that family members experience small improvements in how depressed or anxious they feel, and report less stress or burden from caregiving, in comparison with family members of patients who receive medical care alone.

Another question that researchers have tried to answer is whether patients who receive family-oriented treatment benefit more than do those who receive patient-oriented treatment (with both groups also receiving usual medical care). This research literature indicates that the advantage of family-oriented treatment over patient-oriented treatment for patient health and well-being is not yet clear, and the comparative benefits for family member health and well-being are rarely assessed at all. The advantage of one type of treatment over the other seems to depend on factors such as specific treatment approach. For example, studies focused on rheumatoid arthritis or osteoarthritis have shown that family-oriented treatments that use cognitive-behavioral approaches (e.g., training spouses to help patients change their negative ways of thinking about and responding to pain) rather than psychoeducational approaches (e.g., providing information to both partners about the illness and its treatment) result in greater reductions in patients' pain or joint swelling than cognitive-behavioral interventions for patients only. The advantage of family-oriented treatment over patient-oriented treatment may also depend on patient gender. For example, a couple-oriented behavioral program for obese individuals with Type 2 diabetes resulted in more weight loss for female patients than did a patient-oriented program, whereas male patients lost more weight in the patient-oriented program.

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See also Health and Relationships; Health Behaviors, Relationships and Interpersonal Spread of; Marriage and Health; Social Support and Health

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HEALTH AND RELATIONSHIPS

Relationships can be broadly defined by their structural components such as the simple existence of social ties (e.g., married, belonging to voluntary groups) and by their functional components for what they may provide us (e.g., sense of comfort, available support). The notion that health, which encompasses disease-related morbidity or

mortality, could be influenced by relationships is relatively new. For a century, the dominant approach to understanding health focused on physiological and pathogen-related contributions to disease. However, these types of explanations paint an incomplete picture of human health.

Recent interdisciplinary research is beginning to unravel the complex mysteries of disease by simultaneously considering relevant psychosocial risk factors. Of these risk factors, one of the most consistent predictors to emerge is the quality and quantity of one's social relationships. This entry summarizes general research findings, including how researchers define and measure relationships, data linking relationships to health, potential pathways responsible for such links, and intervention approaches.

What Do Researchers Mean by Relationships?

Research on social ties and health often defines relationships in different ways. A broad distinction between structural and functional aspects of relationships is common but within these categories are numerous exemplars. Structural measures often tap into the extent to which a person is situated or integrated into a social network. For instance, researchers may ask participants if they are married, how many family members they have contact with, or if they participate in any social activities. This work has its roots in the concept of symbolic interactionism, a social-psychological concept that highlights the importance of meaningful social roles in the development of one's identity. The use of structural measures has been the most long-standing (and popular) approach to examining links between relationships and health.

More recently, many studies examine relationships and health in terms of the particular supportive functions they serve. These functions are usually organized along two dimensions. One dimension is what support is perceived to be available. The other dimension is what support is actually received or provided by others. What is perceived as available may or may not correspond to what is actually provided. For instance, individuals who perceive support to be available may not actually seek support as a first coping option, and just knowing support is available may alleviate stress

because it acts as a "safety net." Therefore, both measurement approaches are important. So what exactly is made available or provided by supportive individuals? Many researchers argue that the types of support that may be provided are what can be termed *emotional* (e.g., expressions of caring), *informational* (e.g., information that might be used to deal with stress), *tangible* (e.g., direct material aide), and *belonging* (e.g., others to engage in social activities) support.

Recent research on relationships and health is moving toward a more comprehensive view of relationships that is affecting how we measure it. The most important trend is probably the explicit acknowledgement of the detrimental influences of negativity (e.g., conflict) in close relationships on health. Although this has long been acknowledged in the larger close relationships literature, its impact on the health literature has been less given the prior emphasis on support processes. However, considering negativity in relationships is important because conflict in stable, long-term relationships (e.g., marriage, family) can theoretically influence the development of chronic conditions that develop slowly over time (e.g., cardiovascular disease).

What Is the Link Between Relationships and Physical Health Outcomes?

A large body of epidemiological studies shows that both the quantity and quality of one's relationships influence disease morbidity and mortality. Most of these studies have focused on the positive aspects of relationships and were well-controlled, long-term studies with thousands of participants, which gives us greater confidence in their conclusions. In this literature, structural aspects of relationships, especially composite measures of relationships (indicating the existence of important social contact—e.g., marriage, family members) and participation in voluntary groups appear to be consistent predictors of lower all-cause mortality rates. It is thought that structural variables, such as participation in social groups, increases (a) access to support, (b) self-esteem, and (c) purpose in life. These factors, in turn, may decrease risk for mortality via enhanced coping with stress and greater efficacy and motivation to care for oneself. Strong evidence also indicates

that functional aspects of relationships, such as emotional support, predict lower all-cause mortality. For specific diseases, reliable evidence links relationships to cardiovascular disease outcomes. Preliminary evidence also points to the influence of structural and functional aspects of relationships on infectious disease risk, with more controversial links to cancer outcomes.

Although the general findings from this literature are on strong ground, several emerging issues deserve attention. First, evidence indicates that not all functional types of support are beneficial for health. Of these, emotional support appears the most beneficial, whereas there is a trend for individuals who receive relatively high levels of tangible support to have higher mortality. A simple potential explanation based on the concept of support mobilization is that individuals who are more dependent on receiving tangible support are also more physically impaired to begin with. However, studies do not appear to support this explanation as most considered the influence of initial health status or limitations in activities of daily living. Several potential viable explanations for this link (e.g., negative psychological effects of dependence, increases in conflict) are currently being evaluated.

A second issue is that relationships, although sources of support and caring, may also be linked to interpersonal conflict. Many of our relationships contain a mix of both positive and negative aspects, which is important because conflict may cancel out any benefits of relationships or be detrimental in their own right. Evidence links negativity in relationship, such as divorce or family conflict, to poorer health outcomes. The negative aspects of relationship are often not highly related to the positive aspects. As a result, high levels of positivity in a relationship do not imply that there are no important negative aspects. This issue will need greater attention in future research.

A third issue is a focus on the person perceiving or receiving support, as well as on the person providing it. Research typically emphasizes the detrimental influences of such roles (e.g., the burden experienced by caregivers of a family member with Alzheimer's disease). However, under more moderate levels of stress (or choice in pursuing the role), some recent studies have shown that individuals who are providers of support have lower all-cause mortality. This emphasis is important because

health-relevant relationship processes unfold in a dyadic (e.g., wife, husband) or group (e.g., family) context. The emphasis on individuals who provide support is a step in the direction of modeling more complex interpersonal processes.

What Are the Pathways Linking Relationships to Health?

One of the most important areas of research is focusing on how relationships are managing to influence such acute and chronic physical health outcomes. These pathways are being examined from an interdisciplinary perspective and can broadly be categorized as psychological, behavioral, and physiological in nature.

Many studies have examined links between relationships and psychological or mental health outcomes. However, direct examination of these outcomes as pathways in epidemiological studies is missing. Nevertheless, the larger literature on relationships and mental health can be used to inform future studies because there are a number of promising links. First, relationships may influence one's interpretation (appraisal) of a stressful situation so that its harmful influences are mitigated. For instance, knowing that you have individuals in your life who can provide emotional or informational support may help you feel more confident about dealing with stressful changes in life (e.g., job, family). This might also increase your feelings of mastery or control over life. Relationships also appear to protect one from depression and anxiety by serving as a potential resource during times of need. Finally, relationships can influence self-related processes such as one's identity via social roles or an affirmation of the self as competent and worthy (i.e., self-esteem). These psychological factors are important because they may be linked to physical health in their own right (e.g., depression) and, hence, are promising mediators for future research linking relationships to health. Modeling these and related psychological processes remains a high priority for relationships and health research.

The importance of behavioral pathways is highlighted by social control theorists who have shown relationships to be related to better health behaviors. For instance, relationships (e.g., being married, engaging in social roles) are generally related to

more exercise, better diet, and cooperation with medical regimens. Social control theorists argue that relationships are linked to such health behaviors because they provide us with important incentives to live. An example would be a father deciding to take better care of his health so he can see his child grow up. Such theorists also argue that relationships provide us with direct social control because spouses can impose sanctions on their significant others if necessary (e.g., refusing to talk to them if they do not see a doctor). The context of social control is important to consider as relationships may not always be linked to positive influences (e.g., peer influences on drug use).

The behavioral factors examined by social control theorists are attractive as potential pathways because they are risk factors for physical health problems in their own right. Indeed, research suggests that at least part of the link between relationships and physical health is explained by such health behaviors. However, many studies continue to simply statistically control for health behaviors (confound) in examining links between relationships and health despite its theoretical role as a pathway.

Finally, physiological processes are increasingly being modeled as pathways linking relationships to health. This is particularly important because it allows health-relevant “intermediate” outcomes that confer risk to later (or in some cases immediate) health problems. The largest literature links relationships to cardiovascular processes known to predict disease. This research suggests that individuals who have greater support in their lives appear to have lower resting blood pressure, cardiovascular reactivity, and ambulatory blood pressure. Recent research also highlights links to immune-mediated inflammatory responses. Such research is promising given its potential to integrate research on relationship and immunity to cardiovascular disease, but the small number of current studies do not allow for strong conclusions.

More general links between relationships and aspects of immune function that can influence infectious disease risk are on strong grounds. These studies examine the functional ability of immune cells to mount a response (e.g., natural killer cell activity, antibody titers to vaccination) and show that positive aspects of relationships

(e.g., emotional support) predict stronger functional responses. Likewise, social stressors (e.g., marital conflict) appear to have detrimental influences on functional immune responses.

There is less research examining links between relationships and neuroendocrine pathways. Sufficient studies, however, exist suggesting social support is related to lower cortisol levels, whereas social conflict (e.g., marital) is linked to higher cortisol levels. These findings are important because cortisol has well-documented immunosuppressive effects. Future research on neuroendocrine pathways will be important because such hormones influence both cardiovascular and immune function. In the absence of such research, researchers will have difficulty modeling potential cascading links between physiological systems that ultimately compromise physical health.

A final physiological pathway starting to receive attention is seen in studies that use sophisticated imaging techniques to examine brain activity as a function of relationships. These studies complement work on psychological and biological pathways; preliminary evidence links relationships to lower activation of stress-related areas of the brain. Although only a few studies now exist, such research promises a more integrative picture of how relationships influence the central nervous system, with direct links to peripheral “downstream” health-related alterations.

Can This Work Inform Relevant Interventions?

Research on relationships and health is stimulating much interest in relevant interventions. Would it be possible to teach individuals to access their existing relationships in a way that is health-promoting? As it turns out, there is already an extensive literature on relationship-based interventions (e.g., marital, family, support) that differ in their focus depending on the relationship or disease context. Most of these relationship interventions that focus on health attempt to foster adjustment more generally in chronic disease populations such as cancer or HIV patients. Many of these interventions also do not directly focus on physical health but more on mental health (e.g., depression) and relevant behavioral change (e.g., smoking cessation).

Even these health-oriented support interventions differ dramatically in their approach and orientation. Benjamin Gottlieb proposed one widely used categorization scheme. He argued that support interventions can be categorized along two dimensions based on the provider of support. The first dimension has to do with the nature of the relationship between the support provider and participant. Is the support provider a newly formed relationship (e.g., practitioner, peers) or does it involve already established relationships from a person's existing support network? The second dimension focuses on the unit of support. Is support provided in a one-on-one setting or is it provided in a group setting?

Based on this typology, there are several types of relationship-based interventions in health research. The first type involves support from professionals. Such individuals can be good sources of support given their expertise in the disease context. These interventions often take the form of doctors, nurses, or other health educators who provide the patient with informational, but in some cases, emotional support. These interventions appear promising in fostering adjustment in disease populations, especially those involving educational interventions. However, some inconsistencies in this literature may be the result of the diverse patient populations examined who may have differing needs.

A second type of intervention with new relationships is grounded in peer support groups. In such interventions, a professional is often utilized to guide discussion but the focus is on what each member brings to the group context. An important guiding principle is based on experiential similarity in which members share a common basis (e.g., Alcoholics Anonymous; cancer support groups). The potential importance of such peer support groups in the health domain was spearheaded by the well-known results of David Spiegel's intervention in the 1980s, which found that cancer patients lived longer if they were in support groups. Recent evaluations of peer support groups have failed to replicate this effect on survival (perhaps due to less stigma and the greater support now available to cancer patients)—but continue to document positive influences on mental health outcomes. In general, such peer support interventions appear to foster adjustment, especially for individuals who may have deficits in their existing social network.

Finally, many relationship-based interventions in health utilize existing network members. These interventions usually attempt to mobilize a person's network via differing strategies. These usually including teaching the patient support-seeking skills and/or educating existing support members on the disease in question and how to best support the patient. It may also be important to teach the support provider additional coping skills as this can be a significant source of stress in some contexts (e.g., caregiver for an Alzheimer's disease patient). These interventions can be complex, given the long history of these relationships, but if harnessed carefully have shown to be beneficial for individuals.

A few additional comments about relationship-based interventions are important. First, it should be highlighted that such interventions in a health context are often cost effective, estimated in some cases to save the average patient thousands of dollars. A second issue is that most of the relationship-based interventions focus on individuals who are entering the health care system due to existing disease. Researchers such as Robert Kaplan have convincingly argued for the importance of primary prevention strategies that focus on healthy individuals. In the context of relationships and health, this is quite important because the major cause of morbidity and mortality are chronic diseases that develop slowly over time. Most of these early interventions have focused on social skills training in adolescents using a different set of outcomes (e.g., friendships, grade point average, etc.). Their potential influences on longer-term outcomes may be promising, as they may place individuals on more positive early relationship trajectories that then influence a wide array of outcomes.

Conclusion

There is a relatively large body of research linking relationships to physical health outcomes. As a result, recent research is examining the possible pathways responsible for such links. These studies are interdisciplinary in nature and helping to provide a more integrative picture of the complex links between social ties and health. This work holds great promise to not only complement

existing biomedical views, but also to highlight multiple potential entry points for intervention.

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See also Health, Relationships as a Factor in Treatment; Isolation, Health Effects; Marriage and Health; Mental Health and Relationships; Social Support and Health; Stress and Relationships

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HEALTH BEHAVIORS, RELATIONSHIPS AND INTERPERSONAL SPREAD OF

Human beings are embedded in networks of other individuals from the time they are born, and these *social networks* have important consequences for all aspects of human experience. A thorough understanding of the relationships that constitute these networks is crucial to understanding the nature of any individual. This is true with respect to social and personality aspects of the individual and true of physical attributes, including the health of the individual. Many studies have now shown that social isolation puts people at increased risk of disease and early death. Conversely, social relationships have positive effects on health and longevity. People with larger social networks, for instance, are generally healthier and live longer. This entry discusses the role of relationships in the health of individuals across the life course and how health states spread within a social network.

Health Depends on Relationships

The powerful role of relationships in determining the health of the individual begins in infancy. During this earliest stage of our lives, we begin to form intense bonds with our primary caretakers (typically our parents). If the infant is not allowed to bond normally, its health may suffer serious adverse effects. This kind of disturbance of relationships early in life has been implicated as the causal factor in a syndrome known as “non-organic failure to thrive,” wherein the child fails to grow normally and remains small and sickly. This occurs despite a lack of any apparent organic cause. First observed by Anna Freud and Dorothy Burlingham in their work with children separated from their parents during World War II, phenomena such as these have made the aspect of human relationships known as *attachment* one of the most powerful explanatory tools in the understanding of healthy child development.

Just as with infant–caregiver attachment, attachments later in life have been implicated in determining the health and survival of the individual. A careful examination of how health is related to human relationships reveals that our health is

inextricably linked to those with whom we share our lives. For example, death in one spouse increases the risk of death in the other in what is known as the *widower effect*. Even hospitalization of one spouse may increase the risk of death of the other. But the widower effect may be a special case of a broader socio-medical phenomenon whereby health outcomes in one person are associated with health outcomes in those with whom that person is in a relationship. These outcomes could include not just death, but also illness, disability, and health behaviors.

Scientific attention to the role of social ties as determinants of health has increased dramatically in recent decades, and the effects of social relationships on health are ubiquitous and important. For example, greater “social support,” usually measured as more frequent contact with people with whom we have supportive relationships, is associated with lower incidence of disease and with better adjustment to specific illnesses, such as cancer and heart disease. Many of these positive effects of social support may be the result of the stress-reducing nature of receiving social support. The many stresses of everyday life contribute to illness, but the assistance and emotional support of close others tend to ameliorate that stress. In this way, our relational ties may make us resistant to the long-term effects of stress and illness on our bodies, leading to better health and longer life.

The Spread of Health States Within a Social Network

One important question that does not yet have a satisfactory answer is the extent to which interpersonal health effects may be found outside of spousal relationships—among siblings, friends, coworkers, or neighbors. For example, might not a heart attack or stroke in one individual trigger changes in the health or health behavior of others? Might eating or exercise patterns in one person induce similar patterns in others?

Some of these questions suggest that health states and behaviors may spread from person to person, in the manner of a fashion trend. There may be epidemics of health problems such as obesity, alcoholism, suicide, or depression that might spread in a peer-to-peer fashion. A striking

illustration of such an interpersonal spread of health states is provided in a study by Nicholas Christakis and James Fowler, who examined the spread of obesity in a group of individuals enrolled in a large medical study known as the *Framingham Heart Study*. For each member of this group of 5,124 individuals enrolled in 1971, whom they term “egos,” the researchers identified a diverse set of individuals (their “alters”) connected via various kinds of social ties (e.g., spouse, friend, sibling, neighbor), for a total social network size of 12,630 individuals. Changes in family relationships (because of birth, death, marriage, or divorce) and other relationships (because of residential moves or new jobs or friendships) were captured across seven survey periods between 1971 and 2003. At each of these seven points in time, many physical measures were also taken, including height and weight. Obesity was found to spread among individuals in a variety of different relationships. With respect to mutual friends, for example, one becoming obese increased the other’s risk of obesity nearly threefold. Similar interpersonal social network effects were seen for other phenomena, such as smoking behavior or depression.

Conclusions

In summary, health is a social phenomenon supported by an architecture of social relationships. Within our social networks, the health of one person affects the health of others, often in profound ways. Illness, health behaviors, or death in one person can contribute to similar outcomes in others in their social networks, through a non-biological spread of disease. In this way, human relationships form a framework in which health states arise and are maintained. Understanding precisely how social network ties affect human health is an important new area of research on health and health care policy.

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See also Health, Relationships as a Factor in Treatment;
Health and Relationships; Helping Behaviors in
Relationships; Illness, Effects on Relationships;
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HELPING BEHAVIORS IN RELATIONSHIPS

Helping behaviors are behaviors intended to benefit a relationship partner in response to an actual or perceived need; examples include the provision of social support, willingness to sacrifice, and accommodation. Helping behaviors are a type of *prosocial behavior*, which is a broader category of social behaviors intended to benefit others. Although there are many forms of prosocial behavior (e.g., sharing, cooperating, adhering to norms of honesty, fairness, and reciprocity), only a subset of these are enacted in response to the needs of others and are thus considered forms of helping. This entry describes different forms of helping behavior, examines the motivational underpinnings of helping, and identifies the personality and relationship factors that predict effective and ineffective helping in ongoing relationships.

What Is Helping?

Helping behavior can take many forms, but the type of help most often studied in ongoing relationships is *social support*. Social support serves two broad functions: (1) to help others cope with stressful life events and (2) to facilitate their goal strivings. The first type of social support—assisting others during times of adversity—has been labeled *safe haven* support. This type of support involves the provision of *instrumental aid* (e.g., material resources, task assistance, problem solving) or *emotional support* (e.g., physical affection, comfort,

understanding) that is intended to relieve another person's distress, assist that person in his or her coping efforts, and protect or promote his or her health and well-being. Research has shown that receiving social support during times of adversity helps individuals cope more effectively with stress and is associated with better health and psychological adjustment.

The second type of social support—assisting others in their goal pursuits—has been labeled *secure base* support. This type of support involves the provision of *instrumental aid* (e.g., material resources, information) or *emotional support* (e.g., encouragement, validation) that is intended to facilitate another person's goal-strivings, personal growth, and exploration. Research has shown that when people receive support for their goal strivings, they have higher self-esteem and self-efficacy, are more motivated to pursue personal goals, and more likely to make progress toward actually achieving these goals.

Two related lines of work examine other pathways through which partners help each other achieve their goals and celebrate their successes. First, research on the *Michelangelo phenomenon* shows that people are more likely to become the person they want to be (their ideal self) when a partner affirms and validates their ideal self and behaves in ways that help move them toward this ideal. Second, researchers have shown that partners play a critical role in helping each other capitalize on positive events. For example, when one person shares a success with another (a process called *capitalization*), the benefits of this success for that person's well-being are amplified if a relationship partner responds with active, enthusiastic support (e.g., by expressing pride and excitement or sharing the achievement with others). This research demonstrates that relationship partners play an important role in helping each other benefit from the good times, rather than just coping with the bad times.

Another form of helping behavior is *willingness to sacrifice*. Situations involving willingness to sacrifice arise when relationship partners have conflicting goals, needs, or preferences (through no necessary fault of either partner). Sacrifice occurs when one partner forgoes his or her own desires to allow the other partner to fulfill an important desire. Sacrifice is a form of helping behavior

because it involves one person's willingness to forgo self-interest to respond to the needs of a relationship partner.

Other forms of helping behavior include *accommodation* and *forgiveness*. Situations involving *accommodation* and *forgiveness* arise when one partner engages in a negative act (a transgression or betrayal), thereby imposing an emotional or material cost on the other partner. *Accommodation* occurs when the offended person refrains from responding negatively and instead responds in a constructive manner that defuses negativity and promotes the well-being of the other person (and the relationship). *Forgiveness* occurs when the offended person ceases to feel resentment or anger toward the transgressor or ceases to demand punishment or restitution. Accommodation and forgiveness are forms of helping because one person overcomes negative thoughts, feelings, and behaviors to benefit the partner or the relationship. Moreover, accommodation and forgiveness are often motivated by the desire to meet the emotional needs of a partner. For example, forgiveness is often motivated by a desire to reduce another person's suffering by relegating the betrayal to the past and relieving the offender of guilt or shame.

In summary, helping behavior can take many forms in ongoing relationships and can occur during good times and bad times. Common in all these forms of helping is an act of caring or goodwill by one person that is intended to meet the needs of another, thereby promoting that person's well-being.

Although helping is intended to benefit others, not all helping efforts will be successful, and even well-intended behavior can have unintended negative consequences. For example, helpers may offer support in a way that leads the recipient to feel incompetent, indebted, or like a burden. Thus, researchers have focused on the quality of the help people provide as well as on whether people help (or how much they help). Effective helping behavior is characterized by two key features: *sensitivity* and *responsiveness*. *Sensitivity* reflects the degree to which the helper's behavior is in synchrony with, and appropriately contingent upon, the needs of the recipient. *Responsiveness* reflects the degree to which the recipient feels understood, validated, and cared for. Thus, regardless of the type of help being provided, the benefits of that

help will depend on the degree to which it is sensitive and responsive to the recipient's needs.

Providing effective help is not always easy—it requires a variety of skills (e.g., perspective taking, emotion regulation), adequate resources (e.g., cognitive and emotional resources), and sufficient motivation. As such, helping is likely to be easier for some people than for others and in some relationships compared with others. The following sections examine the motivational, personality, and relationship factors that predict whether people help and whether their helping behavior is sensitive and responsive.

Motivations for Helping

Social and evolutionary theorists agree that caring for others is a universal human tendency—human beings have an innate propensity to engage in actions that benefit others, to feel compassion toward those who are suffering, and to protect and promote the welfare of others. Nevertheless, the motivation to provide help in specific situations (and the quality of help provided) will vary across situations, people, and relationships. Researchers distinguish between two different aspects of motivation: (1) one's overall degree of motivation to help (felt responsibility for responding to another's needs) and (2) the specific form of that motivation (altruistic versus egoistic).

In general, people will be more motivated to help others if they feel personally responsible for meeting the others' needs and have the skills and resources to do so. Felt responsibility can vary across relationships (e.g., people feel more responsible for meeting the needs of their children than of their friends), people (e.g., people differ in their chronic level of *communal orientation*), and situations (e.g., people feel more responsible for helping when they are the only person present during a situation of need).

Even if individuals are equally motivated to care for others in terms of felt responsibility, they may differ in the nature of that motivation. Helping behavior may be motivated by the desire to promote another's welfare (*altruistic motivation*) or the desire to gain benefits for the self (*egoistic motivation*). These motives may be dispositional, relationship-specific, or situation-specific. One

important situational factor is the degree to which the helper feels *empathic concern* (sympathy, compassion) versus *personal distress* (alarm, anxiety, guilt) in response to a person in need; empathic concern increases altruistic motivation, whereas personal distress increases egoistic motivation.

Distinguishing between altruistic and egoistic motives is important because these motives shape helping behavior. Helpers who are altruistically motivated tend to be more effective helpers—they are more attuned to their partner's signals, more willing to expend effort to respond appropriately to these signals, and more likely to provide help in a manner that expresses their benevolent motives. In contrast, helpers who are egoistically motivated tend to be focused on their own needs, which interferes with their ability to provide optimal help to others. Although altruistic motivation is associated with more effective helping than is egoistic motivation, both forms of motivation mobilize helping behavior and increase the likelihood that an individual will respond to the needs of others.

Individual Differences in Helping

Because effective helping requires adequate skills, resources, and motivation, people differ in their willingness and ability to help others in need. Research shows that individuals who have a *secure attachment style* (who are comfortable with closeness and confident that they are loved) are more likely to provide sensitive and responsive support to their relationship partners and more likely to help for altruistic versus egoistic reasons. In contrast, insecure individuals are less effective helpers. Those who are high in attachment *anxiety* (worried about being rejected or unloved) tend to have an over-involved, intrusive caregiving style that is out of synch with their partner's needs, and although they are altruistically motivated to help others, they are also egoistically motivated (e.g., they help others to be loved and needed). In contrast, those high in attachment *avoidance* (uncomfortable with closeness) tend to be neglectful and controlling in their caregiving style, and they tend to help others for largely egoistic reasons (e.g., to gain benefits for the self or to avoid sanctions for not helping).

Researchers have also identified broad personality dimensions that are linked to helping behavior.

Individuals who are high in *agreeableness* (pleasant, kind, concerned with cooperation and social harmony), dispositional *empathy* (a tendency to take the perspective of others and to feel compassion for those less fortunate), *prosocial personality orientation* (a tendency to be concerned for the welfare of others and to act in ways that demonstrate this concern), *communal orientation* (adherence to a norm of mutual, noncontingent responsiveness to needs), and *compassionate love* toward humanity (an attitude containing feelings, thoughts, and behavioral predispositions focused on caring for, supporting, and understanding others) are more likely to provide help to others in need (strangers as well as ongoing relationship partners).

Individual differences in chronic social motives have also been linked to various forms of helping behavior. For example, approach and avoidance motivations have been linked to different motives for sacrifice in intimate relationships. Individuals who are high in *approach motivation* (who focus on attaining social incentives such as closeness and affiliation) are more likely to sacrifice to attain positive outcomes for their partner and their relationship (e.g., to make their partner happy, to increase closeness). In contrast, those high in *avoidance motivation* (who focus on avoiding social threats such as rejection and conflict) are more likely to sacrifice to avoid negative outcomes (e.g., to avoid feeling guilty, to avoid upsetting their partner). Approach motives for sacrifice are associated with better psychological and relationship outcomes. In related work, individuals who give priority to pursuing *ego goals* (who seek to construct, maintain, protect, and enhance positive images of the self) are less likely to cultivate supportive friendships than are those who give priority to *compassionate goals* (who seek to support and promote the welfare of others).

Evidence also suggests that chronic differences in self-regulatory resources affect certain forms of helping behavior. For example, individuals who have *poor self-regulation skills* (who have difficulty controlling their impulses) are less likely to engage in accommodation behavior in their intimate relationships. Likewise, individuals who are *chronically self-focused* are less effective support providers, presumably because they have fewer cognitive and emotional resources for discerning

and attending to the needs of others as well as more egoistic motives for helping others.

Finally, researchers have examined sex differences in helping. Overall, there are few differences between men and women in their helping behavior or in their motivations for helping, but two reliable effects have emerged. First, men are less likely than are women to provide sensitive emotional support to same-sex friends. This difference appears to be due primarily to norms concerning the appropriateness of comforting behavior in male same-sex relationships, but evidence also indicates that men are less skilled than are women at providing emotional comfort. Second, men are more likely to provide instrumental aid to strangers in need (a situation in which women may feel less comfortable or safe intervening), but it is not yet clear whether this gender difference also occurs in close relationships.

Relationship Features That Promote Helping

Although personality factors play an important role in helping behavior, the strongest predictors of helping in ongoing relationships are features of the relationship itself. Many of these features increase helping by increasing felt responsibility for the welfare of relationship partners. Felt responsibility is greatest in relationships that are high in interdependence, commitment, emotional closeness, and trust, all of which foster communal norms that encourage mutual responsiveness to needs. For example, according to *Interdependence Theory*, when one person's life is deeply intertwined with a relationship partner, and when that person is committed to maintaining this relationship, they enact *transformations of motivation* in which the desire to pursue self-interest in a given situation is replaced or supplanted by the willingness to pursue outcomes that promote the welfare of the partner or the relationship. Research shows that relationship commitment increases a variety of pro-relationship behaviors including accommodation, forgiveness, and willingness to sacrifice.

Relationships also differ in the norms that govern the giving and receiving of benefits. *Exchange relationships* (such as relationships with business partners) involve a tit-for-tat norm in which benefits are given with the expectation of immediate

and comparable benefits in return. In contrast, *communal relationships* (such as relationships with family and friends) involve a norm of mutual responsiveness, in which benefits are given in response to needs as they arise with no expectation of benefits in return. Relationships also vary in their level of *communal strength*. Communal strength reflects the degree to which a person feels responsible for meeting the needs of a partner and is willing to incur costs to meet those needs. For example, parent-child relationships are high in communal strength; parents feel a great deal of responsibility for meeting their children's needs and are often willing to incur large costs to meet these needs. Overall, research shows that people are more likely to help others with whom they have a communal versus an exchange relationship and that helping behavior increases as the degree of communal strength increases (e.g., people are more likely to help a spouse than a friend, and more likely to help a friend than a neighbor.)

Relationships highest in communal strength tend to involve kin. This pattern is consistent with evolutionary perspectives on helping. According to Kin Selection Theory, prosocial behavior evolved because it increases inclusive fitness (the successful transmission of one's genes from all sources to the next generation); therefore, helping behavior should increase as the degree of genetic relatedness increases between the helper and the person in need. Consistent with this approach, research shows that people are more likely to help kin than to help nonkin; and even among kin relationships, degree of genetic relatedness predicts additional variance in helping behavior. Some theorists have suggested that feelings of emotional closeness or communal strength (which promote helping behavior) may be proximal psychological mechanisms that mediate the link between genetic relatedness and willingness to help.

In addition to increasing the motivation to respond to the needs of another, relationship features also affect whether individuals are altruistically or egoistically motivated to help others. For example, altruistic motives are greatest in relationships that are high in compassionate love and emotional intimacy, partly because these qualities foster empathic concern, which is a critical source of altruistic motivation. Altruistic motives are also strong in relationships that are high in trust and

felt-security (confidence in a partner's love and commitment), partly because these qualities reduce self-protective (egoistic) motives for helping (such as helping to earn a partner's love or helping to increase a partner's dependence on the relationship) that can interfere with other-oriented emotions and actions. Research shows that when individuals feel secure and confident in their partners' regard, they are more willing to sacrifice, more accommodating, and more willing to forgive transgressions; they are also more likely to provide sensitive and responsive support to relationship partners during stressful and nonstressful times.

Nancy L. Collins and Lisa Jarmeka

See also Accommodation; Capitalization; Jarmeka
Caregiving Across the Life Span; Communal
Relationships; Compassionate Love; Empathy;
Forgiveness; Responsiveness; Social Support, Nature of;
Transformation of Motivation; Willingness to Sacrifice

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HISPANIC/LATINO FAMILIES

The U.S. Census reports that since the turn of the 21st century Hispanics/Latinas(os) have become the largest racial/ethnic minority in the country. In 2003, Hispanics/Latinas(os) surpassed African Americans, who were then the largest racial and ethnic minority, reaching an unprecedented 13 percent of the U.S. racial/ethnic population. The labels *Hispanic* or *Latina(o)* are panethnic concepts frequently used to describe Latin-American and Caribbean immigrants and their children. These concepts are a convenient, albeit controversial, way to describe this rather diverse community. The label *Hispanic* was introduced by the U.S. Census and is used mostly in government, policy, and social science reports, whereas the label *Latina(o)* is a community-based term frequently presented as a political alternative to *Hispanic*. Surveys conducted in the Hispanic/Latino communities suggest that endorsement of these labels varies a great deal by nationality and that sometimes both terms are used interchangeably. Yet, surveys also reveal that the preference for most immigrants and their U.S.-born second and third generation is to be identified by nationality. The lack of a standardized terminology can be explained by the demographic diversity in the Latino community and the politics of ethnic labeling.

Indeed, Hispanics/Latinos are a community differentiated by nationality (Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, and Cubans are the three largest groups), race (there are White, Brown, and Black Hispanic/Latinos), social class, and gender or sexuality. Within each of these communities, age, education, and immigration status further differentiates individuals and families. Most social scientists agree

that each group in the Hispanic/Latino community has had a unique history of migration, settlement, and incorporation into U.S. society. Mexicans, for example, are by far the largest group of recent arrivals, but with a long presence in U.S. history. Their entry goes back to 1848 when 40 percent of Mexico's territory became part of the United States as stipulated by the Treaty of Guadalupe de Hidalgo. As a consequence, the largest and oldest Mexican communities can be found in the Southwest and on the West Coast. Puerto Ricans do not cross a national border because they are U.S. citizens by birth, but their migration to the United States goes back to 1898 when the island became a U.S. territory (colony). Several generations of Puerto Ricans have called New York City home, making it the oldest and largest Puerto Rican community on the mainland. Significant settlements can also be found in Chicago, Philadelphia, Boston, and Orlando. Groups such as Cubans, Dominicans, and Guatemalans represent unique and complex chapters in the most recent Hispanic/Latino immigration waves. But, regardless of the differences that exist between and within these communities, the family is (and has been) an important institution in the Latino community across the hemisphere, the topic this entry seeks to address.

Unfortunately, descriptions of Latino family life and family relations have been distorted by both positive and negative stereotypes. *Familismo* is a concept frequently used to describe large extended family relations and the notion that Latinos place a high value on family, marriage, and tradition. Other cultural stereotypes that have become accepted scholarly concepts are the notions of *machismo* and *marianismo*. *Machismo* is a stereotypical construction used by social scientists to describe Latino men across social classes and locations as physically strong, tough, virile "machos" who demand respect and control of the family. Marianismo, on the other hand, is used to describe women as passive, docile, self-sacrificing, and submissive mothers and daughters. These concepts have been deployed by social policy analysts and social scientists to make blanket assessments and evaluations of Latino families as steeped in tradition and unable to change because of rigid gender roles. For example, machismo has become a convenient explanation for a range of social problems facing Latino families such as inability to adapt to

U.S. culture, poverty, and domestic violence. Similarly, the image of the docile mother, wife, and daughter attached to tradition has become a prevalent stereotype of Latinas and a convenient trope for explaining the perceived higher fertility rates and the lack of social change in Latino families. These stereotypes rest in the pervasive distortion of Latin America and the Caribbean as societies steeped in tradition with a rigid gender division of labor and the United States as a "modern," more flexible society where gender roles can be negotiated. Researchers seem committed to the *machismo/marianismo* dichotomy even when the historical conditions across the hemisphere suggest otherwise. The task for future researchers interested in studying Latino families is to learn to recognize how family gender relations are shaped by material and historical conditions. In other words, gender dynamics in Latino families have been forged historically and have varied by race and social class.

Historical Overview

We know that the institution of the family played an important role in the historical settlement of the Americas. Many of the values associated with Hispanic/Latino families today—large extended families, honor, respect, religiosity, among cultural values—are rooted in the colonization of the Americas by Spain and Portugal. Historians have documented how legal marriage and the social rituals of marriage were important markers of social status and the foundation of the successful transplantation of Spanish and Portuguese cultures to the Americas. Latin America and the Caribbean stand today as visual and tangible representations of the power of cultural transformation (some may say collision) when multiple cultures come into contact. Yet, we face a formidable task here because historical records have tended to privilege elites by preserving their history and neglecting how marginalized groups, in this case African and indigenous peoples, contributed to the cultural (re)construction of families in the Americas. An analysis and description of family life and family relations in the Hispanic/Latino communities requires recognition of how race, social class, and gender hierarchies were (still are) maintained and reconstructed through both the

material conditions and discursive practices of families across the hemisphere.

In colonial Latin America, endogamy characterized marriage for elite families, but that did not prevent Spanish and Portuguese men from establishing extramarital affairs with Indian and African women, defying the strict rules about procreation and sex ordered by the Catholic Church. Today, many Latinas/os continue to organize family life according to Roman Catholic religious ideologies. For example, premarital sex and birth control are for the most part prohibited. Historically, the state and church gave men patriarchal control and power over women and children in the context of family life. In Latin America and the Caribbean, that did not mean that women were passive and dependent. Elite colonial women, for example, helped run their large-estate households (*haciendas*) and in the absence of their husbands took control of family business. One characteristic of marriage among the elite was large age differences between older husbands and young wives, resulting in higher rates of widowhood among elite women. In some cases, women remarried, but widows in Latin America accrued a great deal of social status by virtue of their inherited wealth. Marriage was a family affair, and because most people among the elite married each other, it meant the consolidation of wealth and property. Marriage also guaranteed the successful transmission of wealth and power to the next generation of landed elites.

Marriage for poor and working-class Indian, African, and *mestizo* (mixed race) women and men had different meanings. Most Indian, African, and mestizos were frequently found in consensual unions and what historians call *concubinage*, semi-permanent relations with a married man. The patriarchal bargain for working women was that since historically men's wages have been higher, a consensual relation allowed women to exchange both sex and domestic work for a portion of men's earnings and emotional support. The working poor needed each other to survive, and as a consequence, this helped in the formation of social class solidarity. For families, social class solidarity allowed working-class men and women to face the constant intrusion of elites on family life. Consensual unions afforded both men and women some protection and economic stability. Today, consensual unions continue to characterize Latino/a

families across the hemisphere, and social class solidarity has characterized social protests and revolutionary movements in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Other social problems that shaped (and continue to shape) family life across the hemisphere were high rates of illegitimate children and the presence of female-headed households. The need for survival frequently brought women together in family-like arrangements where rent, work, and childcare were shared. Like today, female-headed households were among the poorest and most marginalized groups in Latin American and the Caribbean. Children in these family arrangements were also vulnerable to poverty, malnutrition, and other social problems. The historical continuities shaping Latina/o family life are striking, but one must also recognize how changing social and economic conditions have shaped the formation of other family patterns and social problems.

The stereotype of Latinas as home-bound, passive, and submissive has been challenged by the realities of family life and women's work experiences across the hemisphere. Latinas have supported their families through both work for wages in the formal and informal economy and the work done on behalf of their families such as reproducing the next generation of workers and caring for family members. Feminist scholars have captured this duality as the productive-reproductive dimensions of family life. Industrial and postindustrial capitalism (also known as *globalization*) has consolidated the entrance of women into wage labor across the hemisphere. Women in Mexico, Puerto Rico, Chile, Cuba, and Brazil have entered the labor market in great numbers both to supplement the wages of their husbands and to provide for their families given the high rates of single-headed families. The feminist movement in Latin America and the Caribbean has also raised expectations about the social role of women in Latina/o societies. The consolidation of women's role as providers has introduced many problems for families across the social spectrum partly because this change was not accompanied by any significant changes in men's roles and social policies to aid families with childcare and other social services. Instead, like women in the United States, Latin-American and Caribbean women face the double burden of working for wages and the second shift at home. Even in Cuba,

where the state has offered women a range of social benefits such as government-subsidized childcare and paid maternity leave, Cuban women continue to bear the burden of caring for their immediate and extended families.

Family, Gender, and Migration

Across social classes, internal and international migration has been a strategy used by both women and men to address a range of family needs, whether economic, educational, health, or gender related. The tendency to see migration as simply an economic act has been challenged by decades of research on the gendered dimensions of migration and settlement conducted among Hispanic/Latino communities. Feminist researchers in both Latin America and the United States have documented the multiplicity of ways family relations have been altered by migration practices and how migration strategies are forged to address a multiplicity of family needs and problems, including gender oppression. Gender oppression has emerged as an important factor shaping the contemporary migration of Latin-American and Caribbean women to the United States and other parts of the world.

Research with Mexican immigrants in California has documented how the spousal separation endured by men and women because of restrictive immigration laws has altered women's and men's roles in the family. It has pushed married women left behind to work outside the home and forced men in the United States to take on household tasks such as preparation of food, laundry, and cleaning. Researchers have also documented how some working-class immigrant men develop second families in the U.S. communities, thereby reproducing the historical tendency for men to have extramarital affairs and children outside marriage. One of the most intriguing areas of research is the work currently being conducted to analyze the changes in the social reconstruction of masculinity among Latino immigrant men.

Researchers have also documented how women use migration as a way to assert their gender identities and reunite families. Research with Central-American immigrants has documented how single mothers forge migration practices to provide for their families by becoming domestic workers and

surrogate mothers for privileged U.S. families. These transnational mothers, as they are frequently called, support themselves and their families across time and space. They have forged a gendered identity of themselves as working mothers that accounts for long absences and that splits social reproductive work between the United States and their countries of origin. Many of these women have entered the United States without documentation, thereby adding an additional source of stress to their family lives. In a post-September 11, 2001, world of border enforcement and deportations as a way to enforce immigration laws, Latina working mothers have become targets of government persecution. In 2007, the case of Elvira Arellano, an immigrant woman from Mexico who had entered the United States without documentation, called attention to the plight of working immigrant mothers. She had worked for many years in the city of Chicago, eluding immigration authorities. She had also given birth to a son, Saul, who was an American citizen by birth. She fought deportation by seeking asylum in a church in the city of Chicago and pleaded with government officials to allow her to stay and continue to raise her son, who by now was going to school. When she left the church to attend an immigrant rally in Los Angeles, she was arrested and deported to Mexico.

Research with Puerto Rican migrants in Chicago suggests working-class men tried to maintain a more traditional family life and division of labor by taking on two jobs, thus allowing women to stay home and care for children, a task many perceived as critically important to the cultural survival of the family given the dangers of living in large urban centers. Yet, economic needs frequently pushed working-class women to work outside the home and support their families. In Chicago, as in Puerto Rico, working-class women were responsible for both the reproductive work that supported their families and working outside the home. Educated and middle-class immigrant women in Chicago reported a more flexible gender division of labor, partly because they had already negotiated work and family arrangements in Puerto Rico. Indeed, researchers agree that working outside the home gives women a measure of freedom and empowerment, but such "liberation" can be seriously eroded by racial and social class hierarchies

that compound the difficulties faced by immigrants living in the postindustrial economies of destination societies.

For other immigrant groups, particularly Central-American immigrants, women have become primary breadwinners for their families because of labor market conditions in many U.S. cities, namely decline of manufacturing and need for service and unskilled work. The inability of some Central-American men to provide for their families leads to spousal separations, divorce, and domestic violence in the family. By contrast, indigenous Guatemalan immigrants come from more egalitarian family arrangements and thus perceive women's increased ability to procure jobs as an opportunity that benefits all in the family.

Children of Latino immigrants, many of whom have been born and raised in the United States, are also developing their own family dynamics and practices. Research conducted among second- and third-generation Latinos in California, Illinois, and New York suggests that, for example, parents are more likely to be educated and employed. Women have lower fertility rates when compared with their mothers, but researchers caution that some nationality variations are worth noting. Among Latinas, Cubans have lower fertility rates when compared with Mexican-origin women and U.S.-born Mexican women. Second- and third-generation Latinos are also more likely to live in nuclear families, in contrast to their immigrant parents. Second- and third-generation Latinos are also more likely to marry outside their group—in some cases, that means other Latino groups (Mexicans and Puerto Ricans) and across groups (Whites and Blacks). U.S.-born Latinos report a more egalitarian gender division of labor, but that is also shaped by social class differences.

In closing, the diversity that exist in the Latina/o experience makes generalizations difficult though key social processes such as globalization and migration have shaped family dynamics across the hemisphere.

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See also African-American Families; Asian-American Families; Families, Definitions and Typologies; Families, Demographic Trends

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HOLIDAYS AND RELATIONSHIPS

Holiday initially was derived from the longer term *holy day*, involving a relationship with a spiritual deity. The word now encompasses a range of secular, national, and religious celebrations inherently linked with personal relationships. Indeed, in the modern United States, spending a holiday alone is considered by many to be the pinnacle of isolation. Different holidays include different rituals, social partners, and types of relationships. Holidays provide a forum for explicating the nature of relationships. Celebrating a given holiday together can define the degree of intimacy between social partners. Some holidays expand social networks, whereas other holidays demarcate boundaries around close ties. Holidays also provide a sense of continuity and rhythm that allow for shared reminiscence and common bonds, particularly within families. Shifts in patterns of celebration can indicate transitions within those relationships. Finally, because holidays make explicit those aspects of relationships that may typically go unstated, holidays can generate intense emotions. This entry explains how holidays provide definition and continuity in relationships and how individuals may react to those celebrations.

The range of celebrations and festivities mimics the range of personal relationships in the modern world. Holidays help define ties between people, with some holidays encompassing a wide array of social ties, and other holidays limited to the closest ties. For example, a Christmas card list may include intimate, acquaintance, past, and business ties. Likewise, people celebrate national festivals such as the U.S. 4th of July with a conglomerate of friends, friends-of-friends, neighbors, and picnic lovers. By contrast, Thanksgiving brings together extended family, whereas an anniversary is a personal holiday, circumscribed to the two people in that relationship. Some holidays, such as birthdays, are semiprivate. Individuals presume a degree of intimacy with people who send a birthday card or gift.

Personalizing holidays can also establish intimate relationships or define cycles within those relationships. For example, romantic couples may create holidays to commemorate important moments in the relationship, such as eating

annually at a certain restaurant. During the development of the romantic tie, negotiations over how to spend holidays typically celebrated with family (e.g., Thanksgiving) may formalize the relationship. Childrearing also often entails the institution of new holidays or personalizing existing holidays to reinforce the family as a unit. Families may engage in a formal rite of definition such as the family reunion, or they may generate idiosyncratic holidays such as the annual camping trip, an ice cream party on the first day of school, or even the Pie Day one family dreamed up.

Holidays also generate discontinuity from the normal routines of daily life in favor of rituals or celebrations. Holidays recur on a cyclical basis, usually each year. In the modern world, we tend to conceptualize time as linear, viewing individuals and relationships as developing and changing. Holidays can facilitate this progression and further strengthen ties. For example, birthdays indicate the growth of a child and shifts in relationships with that child, whereas anniversaries mark the duration of a marriage. Yet, holidays also introduce cycles within relationships and generate feelings of continuity. The annual nature of the rituals is reassuring and may ground the relationship.

The repeated nature of holiday celebrations also allows for connection via shared memories and experiences. Reminiscence with social partners regarding past holidays allows people to feel connected in the moment, as well as over time. For example, holiday rituals generated in childhood often transcend to the next generation, with cookie recipes passed down on stained paper. Likewise, people derive connections from maintaining relationships that arise only at a holiday, including distant partners who exchange Christmas cards or an in-law's hard-of-hearing grandmother who attends Thanksgiving dinner. These individuals are not a part of everyday social networks, but provide a sense of stability over time.

Holidays are marked by symbols and rituals that provide a forum to render implicit features of relationships explicit. People may communicate sentiments they do not typically state. The greeting card industry has capitalized on this aspect of holidays, even marketing new holidays (e.g., Grandparent's Day) for expressing feelings of attachment. As such, items associated with the

holiday can take on deep meaning in the context of relationships, such as the ornament a grandchild made in kindergarten or the punch bowl a couple always uses on New Year's Eve.

Holidays also set up platforms for social exchange, both with regard to artifacts (e.g., holiday cards) and in terms of who is the host of the celebration. Social partners may celebrate a certain holiday at one person's house, and the next holiday at the other person's. Alternately, one person may always host a particular holiday, symbolizing that person's role as the leader in a set of relationships.

Because holidays are deeply embedded with formality and ritual, individuals may fall into traditional relationship roles they do not assume in daily life. For example, couples that try to be equitable in their housework may find gender roles intensify around holidays with the women in the kitchen baking and cleaning up while the men watch football games. Grandmother may be the "kinkeeper" who organizes all of her progeny to attend an event at her house.

Holidays also may mark critical transitions within relationships. When a son brings his new girlfriend to the annual Memorial Day cookout, family members note this event as an indicator of the seriousness of that romantic tie (for that matter, it may signify the same to the son and his girlfriend). In another setting, the entire family may be aware that grandfather's health is failing, but it is the evening when he allows someone else to lead the Passover Seder that formalizes his relinquishing the role of patriarch and the evolution of new familial roles.

Although the premise of a holiday implies celebration, holidays also may involve challenges. Some holidays include arduous rituals such as the fasting periods of Jewish Yom Kippur or Muslim Ramadan that place shared privation on adults within these communities. As such, these holidays may provide a forum for people to solidify relationships as they support one another through the fast and celebrate the end in a collective meal.

Even holidays intended to be festive may evoke negative emotions. The cyclical nature of holidays allows family systems to fall into established behaviors that may be maladaptive for some of the members. Popular media often portray the dread adults feel about returning to their parents' home to celebrate Thanksgiving with extended family.

Holidays can bring together large family groups with ingroup dynamics from the past that evoke individual distress or subgroup dynamics, such as the yearly family argument.

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See also Developing Relationships; Food and Relationships; Kinkeeping; Turning Points in Relationships

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HOMELESSNESS AND RELATIONSHIPS

People who are homeless sometimes lack positive relationships with others who might have provided them a social safety net to prevent homelessness. Indeed, some scholars consider social isolation or "disaffiliation" a defining characteristic of homelessness. This entry follows the more usual practice of defining homelessness in terms of residential status. Researchers in the United States tend to focus on *literal homelessness* or sleeping in shelters, public places, or other locations (such as cars or abandoned buildings) not intended for habitation. European researchers often include living with others because one has no place else to go, or having tenuous ties to housing, conditions

that are also labeled “precariously housed.” U.S. definitions of adolescent homelessness also tend to adopt a broader framework, including staying with strangers because one cannot or does not want to go home. This entry examines bidirectional associations between homelessness and both lack of positive relationships with others and presence of negative or disruptive relationships.

Homelessness and Lack of Positive Relationships

Researchers in this area most often study people in the midst of a homeless episode, rather than those on the verge of homelessness or the much larger group of people who have reestablished themselves in housing. Many, but not all, such studies find that some currently homeless people have impoverished social relationships with friends or relatives who might be able to help them. In some cases, the loss of social relationships clearly predates homelessness. Homeless adults, whether homeless by themselves or with their families, are more likely than are other poor people to have been separated from their families of origin, been placed in foster care, or had a parent die when they were children. The loss of a relationship, such as divorce, sometimes precipitates homelessness, and rates of single parenthood are high among homeless families in the United States, as they are among poor families generally. Perhaps a quarter of single homeless adults have experienced mental disorders such as schizophrenia that often involve social isolation, but such disorders are rare among homeless families.

In other cases, people draw on friends and relatives for housing and other supports before becoming homeless, but eventually wear out their welcomes with members of their social networks. A study in Chicago found that homeless adults had lacked steady jobs for an average of 2 years longer than they had been homeless, and a study in New York City found that over three quarters of homeless families stayed with friends and relatives before turning to public shelters. At the time of their initial shelter request, homeless families reported more recent contacts with relatives and friends than did a comparison group of poor families who remained housed. In these cases, it

may not be lack of social ties so much as the inability of social network members to supply material resources that leads to homelessness.

Even where lack of social relationships predates homelessness, the critical missing ingredient may be economic resources rather than emotional support. Rates of homelessness are much lower in Europe, and homelessness among families is rare even where rates of single parenthood are comparable to or higher than in the United States, probably because of more generous income support policies. In a longitudinal study in New York City, housing subsidies created the same levels of housing stability for previously homeless families as for families in the welfare caseload generally. After accounting for housing subsidies, no psychosocial characteristics or characteristics of relationships, past or present, predicted housing stability.

An episode of homelessness can also disrupt social relationships when it leads to residential mobility, loss of phone service, or relocation to new neighborhoods. Shelters sometimes require families to break up, with men and older boys segregated from women and younger children, and homeless mothers often become separated from their children, who may stay with relatives or go into foster care. Embarrassment by people becoming homeless or anger that friends and relatives did not do enough to help, along with guilt by network members, can lead to tensions. Nevertheless, most people maintain some contact with friends and relatives while homeless, and many intersperse stays on a friend’s couch with episodes of literal homelessness.

Homelessness and Negative Relationships

The presence of negative social relationships may be more important to homelessness than is lack of positive relationships. Friction with family is often marked for homeless adolescents, who are sometimes dubbed “runaways” or “throwaways.” Adolescents most often cite family conflict as their reason for becoming homeless and report high rates of neglect and both physical and sexual abuse. Adolescents who become homeless, like their adult counterparts, have frequently been in foster care.

Homeless adults, especially but not exclusively women, also report high rates of physical or sexual

abuse and domestic violence. Studies that use brief, global measures find higher rates of domestic violence among women in homeless families than in comparable poor families. However, studies that use detailed checklists of violent behaviors find high rates of violence in both homeless and housed groups and few differences between them. Whatever the relative levels, it is clear that homeless women experience high levels of interpersonal trauma.

In sum, research suggests that the association between homelessness and social relationships is bidirectional. Lack of positive relationships and presence of negative relationships can contribute to homelessness in the absence of other sources of support, and homelessness, in turn, can disrupt people's social ties to others.

Marybeth Shinn

See also Abuse and Violence in Relationships; Family Functioning; Foster Care, Relationships in; Social Networks, Effects on Developed Relationships; Social Support and Health

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HONEYMOON

Honeymoon refers to a social custom or ritual linked to the transition to marriage that follows the wedding and typically involves a distancing of the newlywed couple from their social network and exemption from nonmarital responsibilities. Although popularly thought to be a uniform custom practiced throughout the ages, the term itself is more recent and the practices defining the

experience are far from uniform, although unique to modern societies. This entry discusses the historical development of the honeymoon and the functions of honeymoons.

The term first appeared in Thomas Blount's *Glossographia* in 1656, in which the definition makes no allusion to any ritual or custom but instead is used to identify a stage in early marriage where love is at first intense and sweet (like honey) but then diminishes like the waning of the moon. The word likely originated from a Northern European tradition where the newlywed couple drank honey mead for the first month of their marriage (the passing of one full moon). There are, however, earlier precedents for certain aspects of the honeymoon ritual. The earliest can be found in the Hebrew Bible book Deuteronomy, where husbands are exempted from military and economic responsibilities for the first year of marriage. Another precursor may have been the Northern European tradition of abducting one's wife from a neighboring village and remaining in hiding for a period when her family would have stopped looking for her (about one month). Although these traditions share some common elements with contemporary honeymoons (exemption from nonmarital responsibilities and distancing from community), neither approaches the sophisticated customs, meanings, or functions of today's honeymoons.

Historical Development of the Honeymoon

Historical evidence suggests that the “tradition” of honeymooning began in the late 19th century and was mostly developed into a cultural practice during the middle and late 20th century. Although there is evidence of couples practicing a “wedding night” tradition before this time, this amounted to little more than an opportunity to consummate the marriage and, as John Gillis points out in his history of marriage, was often a night interrupted by the high jinx of friends, family, and townspeople. Perhaps the closest precursor to the honeymoon was the “bridal tour” taken exclusively by the wealthy as this tradition involved temporary exemption from nonmarital responsibilities and a trip to a foreign location. Often, however, this trip was made to visit relatives and establish the couple

in a network of wealth—not a purpose associated with the honeymoon of today.

Based on a review of popular press writings on the honeymoon, Kris and Richard Bulcroft and Linda Smeins identified three distinct cultural story lines (or narratives) in the development of the honeymoon as practiced today. These narratives tell us only about cultural meanings attached to the honeymoon. In actuality, there is little evidence to suggest that honeymoons were practiced widely as recently as 1900. The custom has grown in popularity since, however, with most couples today taking a honeymoon and many preferring a lengthy experience (a week or more) in a distant, and usually tropical, location. These changes in practice reflect the changing narratives.

Before 1930, the honeymoon narrative involved short trips after the wedding where the couple immersed themselves in a local natural setting (e.g., canoeing down a river, staying at a self-care cabin) where they played out traditional marital roles involving protection and provision by the husband and domesticity and emotional support by the wife.

Between 1930 and 1960, this narrative gradually gave way to a second one infused with high levels of anxiety related to a new emerging model of marriage premised on the importance of psychological and emotional fulfillment in marriage rather than the enactment of instrumental roles. This new narrative stressed the importance of the honeymoon as a transitional event where the couple was expected to engage in intimate disclosures and develop a sense of mutual fulfillment. To help relieve this anxiety, many of the articles in this period incorporated the advice of relationship “experts” (physicians, therapists, social workers, ministers).

The setting for honeymoon stories during this time remained much the same, although advances in transportation made longer trips possible and the emergence of the “honeymoon resort” replaced more rustic accommodations. These resorts were critical to the custom because they provided for all the instrumental needs of the couple, freeing them to engage in the deep emotional and psychological work now required in modern marriages. With the growing emotional significance of the honeymoon, it also became an event of greater significance for brides than for grooms.

Over time (beginning in the 1960s through today), the importance of honeymoon resorts increased but their character and function for the couple began to change. A dominant theme of this last narrative involves high levels of planning and orchestration of an event that is infused with symbols of romance, takes place in a natural but now exotic (foreign and usually tropical) environment, and includes a myriad of fun activities to ensure that the event is highly rewarding.

Purpose or Functions of the Honeymoon

Early sociological writing on the honeymoon proposed that the honeymoon was an important “stage” in the development of marriage. Rhona and Robert Rapoport argued that the honeymoon was a “critical role transition” where the future of a relationship depended on the ability to complete two sets of “developmental tasks.” Two individual tasks to be accomplished were (1) developing sexual competence and (2) developing a facility for living with someone else. Two couple tasks were (1) developing a mutually satisfying sexual relationship and (2) engaging in a mutually satisfying shared experience that could help sustain their interest in the relationship later in marriage. Although these are four important factors in the development of relationships, the importance of honeymoons as a critical custom to help couples achieve these goals is more dubious, especially in a time when cohabitation and premarital sexuality are more the norm. If these were the reasons behind honeymoons, then the custom should be less widely practiced today instead of being more popular than ever before. These reasons also fail to explain why couples have become increasingly drawn to more elaborate, planned, and exotic honeymoon settings.

Reflecting on changes in relationships in modern society and in the honeymoon narrative suggests an alternative reason for taking honeymoons today. Perhaps this custom plays a part in helping couples confirm that they have made the best choice of partner by having a meticulously planned and “perfect” experience; obtain a sense of authenticity in their relationship by going to an exotic (nonmodern) tropical locale that provides heightened sensory experiences; and develop a couple

identity in an increasingly unconnected social world by going to a place imbued with meaning of class privilege and wealth, where they will be singled out as a newly married couple and where they can record their couple experiences for later presentation to others. Alternatively, or in conjunction with these reasons, participation in the honeymoon today may be fueled by economic interests present in a highly developed capitalistic society. Honeymoons are big business today. Whether the economic value of the custom drives its popularity, the personal and couple needs that do so, or a combination of both, there is little likelihood that this custom will become less important in the foreseeable future.

Richard Bulcroft

See also Marriage, Expectations About; Marriage, Transition to

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HOOKING UP, HOOKUPS

Casual sexual interaction among adolescents and young adults, especially college students, has been an important topic of study in the last three decades. *Hooking up* is a contemporary form of casual sexual relating popular among youth. *Hookups* are brief sexual encounters between individuals who are not-at-all, barely, or somewhat acquainted and with whom there is no

expectation of further relating. In keeping with the popular definition of casual sex, neither commitment nor emotion is expected in hookups. Hookups involving partners who know each other and may even be friends are referred to as “friends with benefits.”

Hookups involve a variety of sexual behaviors, including but not limited to sexual intercourse. More than half of older adolescents and young adults have hookup experience; some estimates are as high as 80 percent. Some evidence suggests that about half of individuals who hook up tend to engage in vaginal sexual intercourse as part of the interaction. Kissing, petting, and oral sex are also common in hookups.

Researchers and practitioners have viewed forms of casual sex as physically risky behavior, primarily increasing the hazard of contracting sexually transmitted diseases. Thus, a primary goal of research on casual sex, including hookups, has been to determine who is most likely to hook up and under what circumstances to develop prevention programs to effectively reduce the physical risks associated with these risky casual sexual behaviors. For example, researchers have examined personality and social factors common among youths who hook up. Individuals who have a preference for risk taking are more likely to hook up, as are individuals who have permissive sexual attitudes.

Individuals who begin to use alcohol at an early age, and especially those who tend to binge drink, are more likely to hook up. Alcohol use is also common before and during hookups, particularly those involving partners who do not know each other. Such risk takers, especially under the influence of alcohol, are also more likely to engage in sexual intercourse and are less likely to use condoms or other contraceptives during the hookup.

Youths are more likely to hook up in some situations than in others. Research on hooking up has focused primarily on college students. Only a few studies have studied noncollege-attending late adolescents and young adults; hooking up appears to be more frequent among youths in colleges and universities than among youths not attending college. Research on the transition from high school to college has revealed an increase in casual sexual behavior upon entering college. Researchers have also studied youths on vacation, especially during spring break, the famed college holiday. The likelihood of

engaging in hookups during spring break is quite high, as is other risk-taking behavior, such as lack of condom and other contraception use and bingeing on alcohol.

Youths' perceptions of social norms, or how common hooking up is in a particular situation, influences their likelihood of hooking up. Moreover, youths practice "pluralistic ignorance" wherein their perception of how comfortable or enjoyable their peers find hookups is greater than their own experience. This motivates youths to engage in hookups, partly because their skewed perceptions of their peers' experiences lead them to anticipate a positive experience and because they seek social acceptance and conformity with what they perceive as the norm. For some youths, hookups are seen as a route to social acceptance and status.

More recent research has further explored the subjective experience of hookups, including what motivates youths to hook up, and the unexpected emotional risks associated with hooking up. Motivations for both men and women include sexual desire and interest in sexual exploration and experimentation, as well as the possible outcome of positive social or interpersonal consequences such as popularity or romantic commitment. Some researchers have found that women are more likely than men to engage in casual sexual intercourse to increase their chances of starting a long-term relationship with their partners, whereas men are more likely than women to engage in casual sex to show their sexual prowess and enhance their social status.

Yet, research has also shown that hookup experiences are rarely simple and often result in complicated emotions. Most youths experience mixed positive and negative emotions during and after hookups. Women are more likely to feel certain negative emotions after hookups than men. Some hookups result in unwanted sexual interaction and can include sexual aggression and violence.

Young men and women have become more similar in sexual behavior patterns during the past two decades. However, it appears that youths' attitudes about sex, particularly the sexual double standard, are not changing as quickly. The sexual double standard is the Western cultural mandate that men are encouraged and rewarded for seeking opportunities to initiate and engage in sexual activity with a number of women, but women are

encouraged and rewarded for abstaining from sexual activity and controlling men's access to sexual activity. As a result, men experience validation for their sexuality whereas women experience chastisement for their sexuality. Such external responses are frequently internalized such that men feel pride in their sexuality and women feel shame and guilt.

The sexual double standard continues to play a role in some young adults' attitudes toward hooking up and especially in self-evaluations of their own sexual experiences. Women are more likely than are men to report feeling bad or used after their last hookup experience, and they are more likely to feel shame and regret for *their* (versus their partner's) behavior. Evolutionary psychology explains sex differences in emotional reactions to sexual experiences consistent with findings on the sexual double standard. This theory posits that women's negative affect following casual sex (i.e., "low-investment copulation") is adaptive—a warning that steers women away from low-investing men. In contrast, cognitive and social constructionist theories explain how cultural gender attributes may influence emotionality in casual sexual experiences. Cognitive theorists assert that emotional responses are labeled according to cultural *feeling rules* that are learned through socialization. Social constructionists view emotions as expected parts of social *scripts*, also learned through socialization. With traditional gender socialization comes sensitivity to expectations and "interpretational frameworks"—such as the sexual double standard—guiding specific emotional responses in sexual interactions.

In summary, hooking up is a significant feature of contemporary Western youth culture. Hookups are also complex interpersonal experiences that often surprise youths with their emotional intensity and complications. Just beginning to be explored by researchers and practitioners is the role of hookups in youths' development of important relationship skills. Hookups infrequently lead to the formation of a committed relationship, and when they do, the relationship tends to be short-lived. Also of interest is how hookup experiences and associated emotional ramifications affect later efforts to establish a stable love relationship.

Elizabeth Paul

See also Casual Sex; Dating and Courtship in Adolescence and Young Adulthood; Friends With Benefits; Sexuality in Adolescent Relationships

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HORMONES RELATED TO RELATIONSHIPS

Hormones are the chemical messengers of the body and are linked to romantic love, sexual arousal, social attachment between parents and their children, aggression, and many other aspects of human relationships. To understand how hormones play a role in relationships, it is first necessary to understand what hormones are and how they operate in the body. This entry explores what is known about the association between hormones and relationships, specifically social attachment, romantic relationships, and sexual behaviors.

What Are Hormones?

The word *hormone* comes from the Greek for “to arouse,” which is the primary function of these chemical messengers. The nervous system controls the release of the hormones. Most hormones travel through the circulatory system to stimulate target cells; however, some of these chemical messengers are released by nerve cells into the junction between two nerve cells (the synapse) or transported by the cerebrospinal fluid. Hormones

are also called neuroregulators because they stimulate or inhibit functioning in the nervous system. The steroid hormones are produced in the testes (androgens including testosterone) and ovaries (estrogens and progestins). Two of the hormones most associated with human relationships, oxytocin and vasopressin, are considered neurohormones or neuropeptides because they are manufactured in the hypothalamus area of the brain and then stored for subsequent release from the nerve terminals in the posterior pituitary gland. The hypothalamus is a part of the brain involved with the regulations of functions such as emotional behavior, arousal (including sexual arousal), biological rhythms, and homeostasis of the systems in the body.

Social Attachment and Love

Social attachment is thought to be at the heart of emotional bonds formed between people. This can be the bond between parents and their children, couples in love, and other forms of social bonds. The first of these bonds to be formed is the attachment between a caregiver and an infant. This attachment provides a secure foundation for the infant’s development, providing protection, nourishment, and socializing interactions. Research indicates that secure attachment between the child and caregiver is important to healthy child development.

Caregiver–Infant Social Attachment

Mothers experience a series of heightened hormonal processes before and during the birth of their children, including stress hormones from the adrenal glands and the release of oxytocin and vasopressin. Oxytocin is integral to the muscular contractions necessary for labor and delivery as well as to the production of milk by the breast tissues. Suckling by infants also increases oxytocin production. In both women and men, oxytocin and vasopressin appear to dampen stress by regulating the neuroendocrine components of the body that control stress-related hormones and enhancing the function of the parasympathetic nervous system that physiologically soothes the body (e.g., slow heart rate, lower blood pressure). Neural receptors for oxytocin are highly concentrated in

the parts of the brain associated with parenting behavior, emotional bonding between people, sexual behavior, and the capacity to form social attachments. Oxytocin and vasopressin are essential to a series of critical attachment behaviors in both women and men, including social recognition memory (learning the identity of the infant or adult partner), recognition of social and emotional facial cues (critical to successful nurturance), and trust (critical to the security of the relationship). Higher levels of oxytocin during and after pregnancy are associated with better maternal bonding behaviors in women including affectionate touch and warm thoughts about the baby. Experimental studies with men have found that the inhalation of oxytocin is linked to increased trust and enhanced ability to read facial emotional cues. These neuropeptides play a role in social attachment, and the lack of social attachment may affect the development of offspring. For example, orphans raised in aberrantly low caregiving and neglectful environments exhibited lower than normal levels of oxytocin in response to their adoptive mothers' physical contact. These orphans also exhibited abnormally low levels of vasopressin.

Dopamine, a hormone linked to addiction and the reward centers of the brain, also plays a role in attachment. The release of oxytocin and vasopressin during bonding behaviors is associated with the stimulation of the reward centers of the brain and the secretion of dopamine, leading some scientists to conclude that attachment is addictive and that neurohormonal pathways associated with addiction evolved to facilitate social attachment, rather than drug abuse.

Romantic Attachment

Attachment with an adult partner displays many of the same patterns found between adult caregivers and infants. Oxytocin, vasopressin, and dopamine are found in higher concentrations during the early phases of intense romantic attachment and bonding. The concomitant increases of oxytocin and vasopressin with dopamine during the initial phases of romantic attachment (and stimulations of the reward centers of the brain) are consistent with couples' experience of euphoria and may be why individuals feel "addicted" to the person they love. Research indicates men and

women who feel greater support from their partners also exhibit higher levels of oxytocin than do those individuals who do not feel as supported by their partners. The ability to recognize and remember the person one is romantically attracted to is enhanced by the presence of oxytocin and vasopressin (paralleling what happens in the association between these hormones and social recognition memory between mothers and their infants). The human capacity for trusting loved ones is also linked to oxytocin.

Several other hormones are linked to falling in love, including an increase in testosterone in women but a reduction in testosterone among men. The stress hormone cortisol is found to be higher in couples during the initial phases of falling in love. An interesting sex difference associated with social attachment is that vasopressin in men tends to heighten bond formation with both infants and adult partners and increases aggressive behaviors toward others. In mammalian animals, increased levels of vasopressin in the males are linked to territoriality and guarding—all behaviors that could be associated with protecting female partners or offspring.

There is little research on hormones associated with other kinds of social attachment beyond parents and their infants or romantic bonds between adults. However, what the field knows about the complex relationship between hormones and love suggests that the formation and maintenance of social attachment is rewarding and is enhanced because of the action of hormones.

Sexual Behaviors

Love and sex are frequently considered two sides of the same coin; however, the hormonal substrate of relationships highlights the different (if overlapping) roles these two kinds of behaviors play in relationships. As indicated, attachment and love are most frequently linked to oxytocin and vasopressin. Sex-related behaviors are more closely associated with the sex hormones (also called sex steroids).

The origins of sex begin during fetal development when all humans have a female structure. During the second trimester of pregnancy, for males, the influx of fetal testosterone induces masculinization of the brain. The hormonal changes

that lead to the masculine brain are different than those testosterone-associated triggers that result in the distinct male body and gonads. Puberty occurs when circulating sex hormones reach adult levels and children become biologically and sexually mature. For men, with adult levels of testosterone and sexual maturity comes sexual desires and what is termed *mating effort*—a heightened amount of competitive aggression toward other men and an increased interest in sexual consummation. When adult men have suppressed or low levels of testosterone their sexual appetite declines. High levels of testosterone in men is linked to aggression and greater effort to exert dominance in their interactions with women partners. This dominating behavior by high-testosterone men is associated with more aggressive relationship conflict, poorer relationship quality, and a greater rate of divorce.

The contributing roles of testosterone and oxytocin in men's sexual behavior is linked to the nature of their relationship (or lack of relationship) with women. Men may form more permanent bonds with women because of the unique character of women's sexual receptiveness. Unlike other mammals, human females are sexually receptive not just when they are at peak fertility, but throughout their monthly cycle, leading theorists to suggest that this "hidden" ovulation may result in human males investing more time in forming a permanent bond to achieve reproductive success (i.e., having children who live to have their own offspring). This bonding behavior (attachment) in men appears to be associated with greater levels of oxytocin and lower levels of testosterone. There is a drop in testosterone in men when they are falling in love, when they are in committed romantic relationships, and when they make the transition to fatherhood. There is an increase in testosterone in men around the time of divorce but a decrease in testosterone again once they remarry. Men who are sexually attracted to only their wives have lower levels of testosterone than do married men sexually attracted to women outside their marriage. Fathers with lower levels of testosterone are more responsive to the cries of newborn babies. Thus, heightened levels of testosterone appear to be associated with men's pursuit of sexual relationships and lower levels of testosterone (in combination with increased levels of

oxytocin) are linked to social bonds with a mate and paternal behaviors.

Female sexual desires in humans are more complex than for males and not as well understood. There are conflicting research findings about whether sexual desires for women peak around the time of ovulation when estradiol (an estrogen) and testosterone levels are highest. Some evidence suggests that testosterone levels in women are high before, and after, sexual intercourse and during physical cuddling. Research also indicates that oxytocin may play a significant part in women's sexual desire and sexual pleasure, perhaps more of a part than oxytocin plays in men's sexual desire and pleasure. Given the strong association between oxytocin and attachment, this increased role for oxytocin in women's sexual behavior is consistent with evolutionary theories that suggest attachment has a more important role in women's reproductive success.

The source of these differences in sexual desire between men and women is thought to be partly the result of contrasts in the organization and structure of male and female brains. For example, in some female mammals, such as rats, the infusion of oxytocin into sectors of the brain with oxytocin neuroreceptors increases sexual behavior, but only if these females have higher levels of circulating estrogens. However, more sophisticated ways of measuring neurohormonal activity in the brain are needed to provide fuller understanding of the interaction between hormones in women's and men's sexual desire.

One of the unique qualities of humans, noted by virtually all scientists when discussing the nature of hormonal influences on relationships, is that attraction, attachment, and sexual desire cannot be simply explained by the biochemical interactions of these chemical messengers in the brain and body. Hormones may be necessary for building human relationships, but they are not sufficient for such bonds to be created. The interaction between higher cortical processes of the brain, emotions, cultural context, and developmental experience most likely play the greatest role in our choice of whom to build relationships with and the strengths of those relationships. Nonetheless, hormones help facilitate or damage our connection to other people.

Sybil Carrère

See also Attachment Theory; Biological Systems for Courtship, Mating, Reproduction, and Parenting; Falling in Love; Father–Child Relationships; Mother–Child Relationships in Early Childhood; Sex and Love; Social Neuroscience

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HOSTILITY

Individual differences in anger, hostility, and aggressiveness have always been of interest to basic and applied behavioral scientists, given the importance of these aspects of emotion and social behavior in many different domains—including personal relationships. Much of the recent interest in this topic stems from findings that these personality traits are associated with reduced longevity, increased risk of death, and the leading cause of death in industrialized societies—cardiovascular diseases such as coronary heart disease and stroke. The health consequences of hostility may involve the fact that these personality traits are also associated with difficulties in personal relationships, such as low social support, marital strain, and risk for divorce. Strain, disruption, and low support in personal relationships, in turn, confer increased risk of premature mortality and specific serious health problems such as cardiovascular disease. This entry discusses the association of hostility with health, mechanisms underlying this association, and the potential health benefits of interventions that modify this trait.

The term *hostility* has both a general and a specific use in this literature. In the specific sense, it

refers to a collection of cognitive characteristics involving negative attitudes toward others, primarily consisting of ill will, a tendency to denigrate others, and enmity. Closely related traits include cynicism, mistrust, and a hostile attributional style. *Cynicism* refers to the belief that people are generally motivated by selfish concerns rather than by genuine concern for others, and *mistrust* is the expectation that other people are likely to be sources of mistreatment. A hostile attributional style involves the tendency to view the actions of others as reflecting aggressive intentions. Hence, as a cognitive trait, hostility involves the a desire to inflict harm or see others harmed, a relational view of being in opposition to others, the expectation that other people are likely sources of wrongdoing, and a tendency to devalue their motives and worth.

These cognitive or attitudinal traits often co-occur with affective and behavioral characteristics, consistent with the use of hostility in the more general sense. For example, *trait anger* refers to the tendency to experience anger frequently and intensely, often with little provocation and for a prolonged period. Related emotional traits are the tendency to experience resentment and contempt for others. Aggressiveness refers to the tendency toward verbally or even physically hurtful, attacking, or destructive actions. Although *hostility* refers most precisely to the cognitive facet of this interrelated set of traits, the term is sometimes used to refer to the overall set of cognitive, affective, and behavioral characteristics.

For centuries, medical writers have speculated that hostile personality traits contribute to the development and often lethal outcome of cardiovascular disease. The earliest descriptions of coronary syndromes in the medical literature also contained speculations that psychological stress and strong negative emotions such as anger contributed to the disease. Current interest in this hypothesis began when researchers attempted to identify specific unhealthy elements within the broad and multifaceted Type A coronary-prone behavior pattern, comprising achievement-striving, competitiveness, impatience and time-urgency, excessive job involvement, as well as easily provoked hostility. Decades of subsequent research have produced mixed but generally converging evidence that hostility, anger, and related traits are associated with reduced longevity, atherosclerosis,

incident coronary heart disease, recurrent coronary events, stroke, and death from cardiovascular disease.

These statistical associations raise questions about underlying mechanisms. Genetic factors and unhealthy behavioral lifestyles (e.g., smoking, physical inactivity, imprudent diet) likely contribute to the health consequences of hostility. However, the nature and impact of personal relationships also seem to be involved. For example, hostile persons report that they experience less social support than less quarrelsome persons report, and low social support is a well-established risk factor for poor health. Further, hostile people report more conflict in close relationships, and behavioral observation studies of marital interactions confirm that trait hostility is associated with greater levels of negative behavior during the discussion of areas of disagreement between spouses. Longitudinal studies demonstrate that these personality traits are associated with increases in conflict and strain in marriage over time. Hence, hostility is not simply a reaction to difficulty in close relationships; it also seems to be a contributing cause.

Psychophysiological research indicates that hostility and related personality traits are associated with cardiovascular, neuroendocrine, and immunologic responses to social situations that could contribute to poor health. For example, unlike more agreeable people, hostile individuals benefit less from social support provided during psychologically stressful situations. Such social support typically reduces physiological stress responses, but hostile persons do not demonstrate this protective effect, perhaps because of their suspicious and mistrusting view of personal relationships. Similarly, hostile persons respond to conflicts with family members such as spouses with enhanced physiological stress responses. Dissipation of these stress responses seems to require more time for hostile persons, and they may also be more prone to display physiological reactivity when they recall and ruminate or brood about prior episodes of conflict and perceived mistreatment. Hence, a general pattern of reduced positivity in social relationships, increased exposure and reactivity to negative interpersonal interactions, delayed recovery from these episodes, and more frequent psychological re-experiencing could combine to produce a generally greater level of chronic physiological activation

and strain on body systems. Repeated over years, this hostile psychophysiology of daily life could contribute to many different serious health problems. However, no studies to date have tested this full mediational account of how personality traits such as anger and hostility lead to poor health.

Psychological interventions intended to reduce stress and related negative traits such as anger and hostility have been found to have health benefits among persons with established heart disease. These interventions teach skills for the reduction of emotional and physiological arousal, modification of attitudes and appraisals of others that otherwise promote anger and other negative emotions, and the development of more constructive skills in managing interpersonal conflicts. Although no studies have tested the hypothesis that interventions designed to reduce anger and hostility can prevent the initial occurrence of cardiovascular disease, there is growing evidence that such treatments can facilitate recovery after coronary events and reduce the risk of recurrent coronary events. Research demonstrating that hostility is associated with increased difficulties in close relationships such as marriage suggests another potentially important application of this research. There is considerable empirical support for several interventions intended to reduce marital distress and improve relationship functioning. Although anger and hostility are often included as targets in such interventions, these are typically not a main focus. Hence, techniques specifically designed to modify individual differences in anger and hostility may be useful additions to relationship therapies.

Timothy W. Smith

See also Agreeableness; Anger in Relationships; Couple Therapy; Marital Satisfaction and Quality; Social Support and Health; Stress and Relationships; Trust; Warmth, Interpersonal

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HURT FEELINGS

Whoever said, “stick and stones may break your bones, but words will never hurt you,” never interacted with other people. In one of the first studies to explore hurt feelings, people describing how it felt to have their feelings hurt often used terms such as *stung* and *crushed*, or they said they felt their heart break. Although some people seem more prone than others to getting their feelings hurt, no one is immune to the emotional and physical pain that often accompanies a critical remark, a forgotten birthday or anniversary, a broken promise, an unreturned phone call, or a betrayal, such as infidelity. Despite the pervasiveness of hurt feelings, surprisingly little research has been devoted to the topic. Only within the last decade have researchers begun to investigate hurt feelings, and these studies have been limited primarily to Western cultures. Unlike some other emotions, hurt is an interpersonal emotion that arises in every relationship, although it is more likely in close relationships than in relationships with strangers. This entry provides an overview of what is currently known about this painful yet pervasive phenomenon, with particular attention to the conceptualization of, responses to, and consequences of hurt feelings.

Conceptualizing Hurt Feelings

People know what it *feels* like to have their feelings hurt, but what are hurt feelings? Depending on the behavior eliciting them, hurt feelings can be either short-term or long-term. Short-term hurt feelings, resulting from behaviors such as negative

comments, inattentiveness, or interpersonal conflict, make the person who is hurt feel bad but are unlikely to have lasting effects on a relationship unless the slights are repeated. Long-term hurt feelings, on the other hand, such as those resulting from infidelity or a related type of betrayal, make the target feel bad and have more negative effects on relationships than do short-term hurt feelings, in some instances leading to the dissolution of those relationships.

Conceptually, hurt feelings seem similar to a number of other types of emotions and, indeed, are often accompanied by other emotions, such as anger, guilt, fear, anxiety, and sadness. However, the appraisals that produce these other emotions differ from those that produce hurt feelings. Furthermore, when participants are asked to write about the experience of having their feelings hurt, they have no trouble distinguishing hurt feelings from other emotional states.

The defining feature of hurt feelings is perceived relational devaluation, the perception that other people do not value their relationship with the target as much as they once did or as much as the target would like them to. A critical comment, for example, suggests that the person making the remark does not view the target as favorably as he or she once did. Similarly, partners who are unfaithful send a clear message that they do not value their relationship with the target as much as they once did. Researchers have found that the amount of hurt people report experiencing varies directly with the degree to which they feel relationally devalued.

Not surprisingly, then, people's feelings are hurt most often by those closest to them. In an adaptation of the old adage that “we only hurt the ones we love,” researchers have found that hurt feelings are perpetrated *most often* by close friends and romantic partners. Rarely is a stranger the source of hurt feelings. On those rare occasions when our feelings are hurt by strangers or acquaintances, the hurt stems from the fact that rejection by a stranger implies an immediate negative evaluation that signals a high degree of relational devaluation. In addition, at times, the closeness and familiarity of close relationships may help inoculate against the sting of hurt feelings. A tendency to give the benefit of the doubt may be present in close, *satisfying* relationships, which attenuates the sort of malicious

attributions that might otherwise trigger perceptions of relational devaluation.

Although most people think of hurt feelings as resulting from direct emotional injury by another person, people may also experience *empathic hurt feelings*, feeling hurt because someone close to them has been hurt. Parents, for example, may feel the gut-wrenching pain of hurt feelings when their child is rejected or emotionally hurt by someone. Empathic hurt feelings are similar to but distinct from compassion. A parent may feel compassion for a friend's child whose feelings are hurt. Yet, the feeling is far different from that accompanying the experience of empathic hurt feelings when their own child is hurt. In addition, the pain people associate with empathic hurt feelings is often worse than that experienced when their own feelings are directly hurt. When another's feelings are hurt, there is often little people can do to help alleviate another's pain. People do not have the ability to soften another person's hurt feelings by reassessing the situation, as they do with their own hurt feelings.

Variations in Hurt Feelings

To experience hurt feelings, something has to happen that is appraised as a sign of relational devaluation. The range of comments and behaviors, however, that can be appraised as relationally devaluing and emotionally painful is virtually limitless. A leading researcher in the area of hurt feelings found the most common types of hurtful messages to be accusations ("You're such a hypocrite"), evaluations ("Going out with him was the biggest mistake of my life"), and informative statements ("You aren't a priority in my life"). The hurt associated with each of these types of messages is not difficult to imagine; however, some messages and behaviors are more hurtful than others. People who have their feelings hurt by accusations or evaluations can at least respond to those accusations and evaluations by refuting the claim or by asking the accuser for specific examples or explanations. At minimum, the target can "save face" by defending himself or herself. When people's feelings are hurt by informative statements, however, such as "I'm attracted to someone else," there is little that people can do to defend themselves. Thus, not surprisingly, research

has found informative statements to be perceived as more hurtful than accusations or evaluations.

In addition, some people are more likely to experience hurt feelings than others are. Although a number of individual difference variables may predict the proneness to experience hurt feelings, a key variable is rejection sensitivity. Individuals high in rejection sensitivity expect that others will devalue and reject them, and, consequently, are more likely to perceive rejection and relational devaluation even when it is not actually present. Thus, they are more inclined to have their feelings hurt than are people lower in rejection sensitivity. Furthermore, relative to people low in rejection sensitivity, people high in rejection sensitivity are more likely to respond with anger and retaliation to the perpetrator, creating a self-fulfilling prophecy by eliciting the very rejection they thought they perceived initially. Interestingly, in some cases, rejection sensitive individuals will preemptively avoid establishing close relationships with others or withdraw from existing relationships to avoid any chance of being hurt in those relationships.

Responses to and Consequences of Hurt Feelings

People react to having their feelings hurt in a number of different ways. Some people blame themselves, wondering what they did to make another person devalue their relationship with them. Not surprisingly, these individuals are likely to experience feelings of low self-worth as they wrestle with feeling rejected and betrayed by others. Others lash out in anger at the individual who hurt them, challenging the other to account for his or her hurtful behavior. Still others more calmly ask for an explanation of the hurtful behavior and may, in turn, forgive the perpetrator. Yet, other individuals acquiesce. Forgiveness is more likely if the perpetrator offers a genuine apology for his or her behavior, if the hurtful behavior is relatively minor, if the issue is of little importance to the target, and if the target does not respond with anger. Despite the variability in responses to hurt feelings, most hurt individuals respond actively, either expressing anger, countering with a hurtful comment, or telling the perpetrator that he or she had hurt their feelings.

The type of response offered varies largely with the perceived intent behind the perpetrator's behavior. Individuals who perceive that the slight was unintentional, the result of an oversight, absent-mindedness, or forgetfulness, are likely to respond by forgiving the perpetrator. On the other hand, people who perceive that the perpetrator intended to hurt them tend to respond by either blaming themselves or, more likely, actively retaliating against the perpetrator. Not surprisingly, compared with those in less satisfying relationships, people in satisfying relationships report being hurt to a lesser degree (e.g., perceive lesser intentionality by the perpetrator) and indicate that hurtful events have less of a negative effect on the relationship. People in satisfying relationships are also more likely to respond in actively constructive ways when their feelings are hurt, suggesting that members of the dyad discuss and work through hurtful exchanges.

Importantly, however, victims and perpetrators of hurt feelings, as with many other emotions, often differ in the perceived intent behind behavior. Victims evaluate hurtful experiences more negatively than perpetrators do and impute more negative intent and less remorse to the perpetrators than the perpetrators assign to themselves. Perpetrators, conversely, surprisingly evaluate the long-term effects of hurtful events on the victim as more severe than victims perceive them to be. Thus, many people who experience hurt feelings because they perceive that another intentionally did something to hurt them may actually be misperceiving the actual motives of the perpetrator.

The consequences that follow hurt feelings also vary with the type of response offered. People who internalize hurt feelings and the cause of the hurt ("what did I do wrong?") often experience emotional difficulties, such as depression and lower self-esteem. Alternatively, people who respond in anger are less likely to experience depression because they are venting their negative feelings. However, because they direct their negative feelings at the individual who hurt them, they more

often experience relational distance and irreparably damaged relationships. If forgiveness follows, damage to the relationship may be minimized.

Robin Marie Kowalski

See also Attribution Processes in Relationships; Betrayal; Dark Side of Relationships; Empathy; Forgiveness; Guilt and Shame; Rejection; Rejection Sensitivity

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I

IDEALIZATION

Sara met Burke 2 months ago, but already her head is swimming with thoughts of marriage. They met at a party and immediately “hit it off.” She feels as if they had known each other their whole life, and she believes that they agree on everything because they have so much in common. After only 2 months, she is convinced that he really loves her for the person she is, and that he is the perfect man for her, the type of guy she always wanted. Like Sara, people who are enthralled with a person tend to bend reality and *idealize* their partner. It is not uncommon to hear from a person who is immersed in the waters of romantic love, “He/She is the most wonderful person I have ever met!” Although this statement might be true, it might also indicate that they have not been dating for long. This possibly myopic view of a romantic partner’s strengths or attributes can lead to what was first called *idealization* by social scientist Willard Waller. What is idealization? How has it been conceptualized and assessed? What is the theory behind idealization and its effects on relationships? These questions are the focus of this entry.

Conceptualization and Assessment

Idealization has been defined and assessed in a variety of ways. Two research teams, headed, respectively, by Blaine Fowers and Laura Stafford,

have focused on descriptions of partners or relationships that are laced with unlikely positivity. Thus, individuals may describe their relationship as perfect (e.g., “Our relationship is a perfect success”) and refer to their partner as someone who completely understands them (e.g., “My partner completely understands and sympathizes with my every mood”). Both groups of researchers assessed idealization with *The Idealistic Distortion* scale.

In contrast, Susan Sprecher and Sandra Metts describe idealization as romantic beliefs individuals may have about a potential partner. These beliefs entail unrealistic expectations about liking everything about the partner, being in the perfect relationship, and having a perfect partner who will completely accept, love, and understand one. Sprecher and Metts measure idealization with a three-item subscale of their *Romantic Beliefs Scale*. Their scale is grounded in the idea that people enter relationships with a set of beliefs or schemas about how a relationship should be. The three items making up the idealization subscale are: “The person I love will make a perfect romantic partner; for example, he/she will be completely accepting, loving, and understanding”; “I’m sure that every new thing I learn about the person I choose for a long-term commitment will please me”; and “The relationship I will have with my ‘true love’ will be nearly perfect.” Individuals who agree with these statements display idealistic beliefs because it is naïve to think that a partner will be able to meet one’s *every* need, please one in *every* way, and be *always* loving.

Other researchers have taken a different approach. Yumi Endo, Steven Heine, and Darrin Lehman have compared perceptions of partners with perceptions of the “typical” or median partner. Thus, idealizations (or positive illusions) are defined as occurring when the majority of people rate their partner’s qualities more favorably than the qualities of the typical or median partner. This definition of idealization is based on the idea that it is logically impossible for the majority of partners to be better than the “typical” or median partner for a given quality or set of qualities.

This approach differs from the one taken by Sandra Murray, John Holmes, and their colleagues. These scientists assess idealization by comparing people’s ratings of themselves with their partner’s ratings of them. Here, *idealization* is defined as the partner rating qualities of the target individual more favorably than does the target person him- or herself. Their definition is based on research indicating that ratings tend to be positively biased. That is, people rate their own qualities more favorably than the qualities of the “typical” or median person. Because self-ratings are positively biased to begin with, they represent a conservative standard against which to evaluate a partner’s perceptions for signs of positive bias. They found that idealization positively affected relationship well-being and had a self-fulfilling effect: Idealized individuals also behaved more positively in their relationship.

Finally, Paul Miller, John Caughlin, and Ted Huston distinguish between positive illusions as a cognitive process, in which people interpret their partner’s behavior charitably, and behavioral processes, in which people form an overly positive image of their partner because the partner behaves more positively in the relationship (i.e., puts his or her best foot forward) than with other people. In the latter case, partners may not be around each other enough to view their partner’s undesirable attributes and characteristics in other settings, thus contributing to potentially skewed illusions of their partner in the absence of contradicting evidence. In a recent study, Miller, Sylvia Niehuis, and Huston have separated out these two processes by using people’s perceptions of their partner’s behavior as a standard against which to assess perceptions of their partner’s personality for signs of an interpretive bias. In their 13-year study of newlywed

couples, the authors found that when partners idealized each other, it often promoted more love in their relationship, and there was some evidence that their positive illusions provided a safeguard against further declines in love later on. Nevertheless, further analysis revealed that if partners entered the marriage idealizing their partner, they were not less likely to divorce. Thus, although idealizing the partner may have a positive influence on the relationship, it may not create a high enough barrier to ward off relationship dissolution.

Theory on Idealization

In his classic paper on “The Dating and Rating Complex,” Waller argued that a natural byproduct of courtship behavior is the process of idealization. He defined *idealization* as the process by which a person creates a mental image of the dating partner that has less to do with reality and more to do with the person’s feelings for the dating partner. According to Waller, early in the dating relationship, partners see each other fairly realistically. As the relationship develops and feelings of love for the partner deepen, however, both partners “put their best foot forward,” displaying only some aspects of their personality in an effort to live up to the image they think their partner has of them. It is this “interaction of idealizations” that leads to the “cumulative idealization of the courtship period,” carrying romantic partners further and further from reality. Waller maintained that idealizing partners increasingly lose their ability to make objective, rational, and realistic assessments of each other’s character and personality traits. He warned that marriages formed at the height of idealization may be at risk for later disillusionment because, once married, spouses may be less motivated to continue to engage in impression management. Moreover, with increasing interdependence, evidence of the spouse’s shortcomings inevitably begins to emerge. This lack of congruence between previous perceptions and new evidence may be experienced as threatening because it has the potential to undermine the belief that the partner truly is the “right person.” Some researchers have argued that this is the point at which positive illusions may begin to unravel, leading to later disappointment and disillusionment. Others,

however, suggest that emerging evidence of imperfections may actually fuel the idealization process. That is, people may interpret evidence of shortcomings in a way that helps them maintain a positive image of their partner. To this end, they may use a variety of cognitive strategies, such as exaggerating the importance of their partner's strengths in order to downplay their partner's weaknesses. For example, Sara might embellish Burke's intelligence and writing ability because of his inability to verbally express himself. Another cognitive strategy often utilized is finding evidence of strengths in the partner's weaknesses. For example, Sara might assuage her disappointment in her partner's communication deficiency by attributing it to his strong and stoic nature. Finally, individuals might create "yes, but . . ." refutations that link shortcomings in their partner to greater virtues. For example, Burke's friends might point out that Sara is lazy, whereas Burke might say, "Yes, she is lazy sometimes, but it's nice that she is so laid back."

Is Idealization Helpful or Harmful to Romantic Relationships?

Does idealization early in marriage set up spouses for disappointment, as some scientists have suggested, or does it help protect people from becoming disillusioned? Although research on positive illusions generally finds that dating partners and spouses tend to be happier in their relationships the more they are idealized by their partners, some research suggests that idealization may be associated with greater decline in affection and love early in marriage and later divorce. For instance, research by Niehuis, Linda Skogrant, and Huston suggests that two different illusion processes during courtship may set up spouses for disillusionment early in marriage. The first is characterized by deep romantic feelings for the partner, quickly intensifying intimacy behaviors, and rapidly developing commitment to marriage over the course of relatively short courtships. It is more likely experienced by young couples, in which the female partner becomes pregnant before marriage. Perhaps not surprisingly, these couples' commitment to becoming married wavers relatively often, suggesting that these individuals may have rushed

into marriage without carefully evaluating how well suited they really are to each other. Dating partners who experience this type of idealization likely become disillusioned early in marriage because of their discoveries about their partner and the quality of their relationship. Although deep feelings for each other may protect them early in their marriage, they are likely to divorce later on.

The second type of illusion process is characterized by relationship problems and a hesitancy to commit to marriage. Although partners in these relationships also love each other, their feelings for each other are less deep. Partners in these relationships often take longer before they say "I love you" and before they have sexual intercourse for the first time. They tend to have extraordinarily long courtships, and, unlike most couples who quickly enter into a regular dating relationship, they often date each other casually for a long period of time. Their commitment to marriage tends to waver, and their accounts of how their courtship developed over time often differ vastly. At the same time, many of these couples "test" their relationship by cohabiting before marriage, and they work hard at improving the quality of their relationship. Thus, partners in this type of relationship seem to be acutely aware of relationship problems, but they marry anyway, failing to recognize the implications of these problems for the quality and stability of their marriage later on. Unfortunately, these couples likely become divorced within the first 7 years of their marriage.

Stafford and Andy Merolla also found evidence that idealization may have a negative effect on relationship stability. Although individuals in long-distance dating relationships idealized their partner more, were more satisfied with their interpersonal communication, and evidenced greater relationship stability than individuals in geographically close dating relationships, they were also more likely to dissolve their dating relationship once they were no longer geographically separated. Together with the finding that idealization was also greater when partners had less frequent face-to-face communication, these findings suggest that idealization may be fueled by lack of accurate knowledge of the partner in day-to-day interactions and may have negative consequences for relationship stability.

How do these latter findings fit with research that shows that people who idealize their partner are more likely to establish satisfying premarital and marital relationships, experience more love as newlyweds, and are better able to sustain feelings of love in marriage over time, compared with people who do not idealize their partner? It is not clear yet under which circumstances idealization has a positive or negative effect on relationship stability, but Niehuis and her colleagues have speculated that the association between idealization during courtship and relationship stability may be curvilinear, such that low levels of idealization may be insufficient to weather significant relationship problems, whereas high levels of idealization may reflect lack of accurate information about the partner. Similarly, Lisa Neff and Benjamin Karney have argued that, although most newlyweds idealize each other on a global level (e.g., “I feel positively about my spouse”), they differ in terms of how much their global idealizations are based on accurate, specific perceptions of one another (e.g., the extent to which both partners agree on the target person’s intellectual capability, social skills, or physical attractiveness). In other words, idealization grounded in accurate perception of the partner’s specific qualities (i.e., agreement with the partner’s assessment of his or her own qualities) is associated with greater relationship well-being and stability than idealization based on less accurate partner perception.

Sylvia Niehuis and Jeremy Boden

See also Disillusionment in Marriage; Predicting Success or Failure of Marital Relationships; Processes of Adaptation in Intimate Relationships (PAIR) Project; Romanticism

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IDEALS ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS

How do people know whether they are in a good or a bad romantic relationship? How do people decide whether to go on a date, live together, get married, or look for another mate? One answer to such questions is that individuals’ judgments about a particular person or relationship are based on the consistency between ideal standards, on the one hand, and perceptions of the current partner or relationship, on the other hand. This entry describes findings and research that suggest that, from the beginning to the end of romantic relationships, ideal standards play a crucial role.

Origin and Nature of Ideal Standards

In New Zealand, Australia, the United States, hunter-gatherer cultures in Africa, and in many other countries and cultures, the same factors are important in mate selection: personality factors such as warmth and intelligence, attractiveness and health, and the possession of status and resources or the ability to gain them (e.g., ambitiousness). Moreover, there is remarkable agreement across both genders and cultures about which factors are more important in selecting mates for long-term relationships. Warmth and trustworthiness is rated number one, with physical attractiveness, good health, and status and resources typically coming in a close second.

But why are these particular kinds of mate standards universally important? One standard explanation is that they represent biological evolutionary adaptations, which implies that their presence confers reproductive advantages. A warm and sensitive partner is likely to be a supportive mate and a good parent. A partner with plenty of money and status (or with the ability and drive to attain such assets) will also have the means to look after the partner and the children. These two sets of qualities

signal that the partner can offer good levels of investment for the family over long periods of time. Attractiveness, in contrast, is generally thought to signal good health, physical strength, and so forth (a good-genes factor).

Men and women have somewhat different standards in long-term relationships. Men give more importance to attractiveness and vitality than women; whereas women tend to give more weight to warmth, trustworthiness, status, and resources than men. These findings have been replicated consistently within Western cultures by research using standard rating scales or by analyzing the contents of personal advertisements, and these specific gender differences are widespread across cultures.

These gender differences are explained by evolutionary psychologists using parental investment theory (originally developed by Robert Trivers in the early 1970s). Mothers typically invest more time, energy, and resources in their children than men and are capable of having fewer children than men. Thus, the male's propensity and ability to invest in the children should matter more to women than vice versa. However, culture also plays an important role. Alice Eagly and Wendy Wood, for example, found that as women's empowerment (indexed by their earnings, their representation in legislative government, and their involvement in professional positions) increased relative to men across cultures, women placed less value on the status and earnings of a mate.

However, there also exist large individual differences that operate within gender. This means that, although there are mean differences according to gender in the importance attached to such standards, there also exists considerable overlap in responses. Thus, many women strongly desire a hot, passionate relationship, and many men are preoccupied with the search for intimacy and commitment. Both men and women will also trade off traits in different ways. Some will be happy to accept an individual who lacks ambition and drive if he or she is kind and supportive. Others may be willing to strike up a sexual relationship with someone who is less than honest if he or she happens to be strikingly beautiful. Of course, people have idiosyncratic standards as well, such as the expectation that their future partner will like the Rolling Stones or have an interest in stamp collecting. However, research shows that the standards

held most firmly almost always fall into the three categories just mentioned.

What explains these strong individual (within-gender) differences? Perhaps the major factor causing individuals to attach different amounts of importance to specific ideal categories is how they rate their own mate value. Research shows that these two kinds of ratings (self-perceptions of mate value and the importance given to mate standards) are moderately positively correlated. For example, more attractive people (who also perceive themselves as more attractive) give more importance to the goal of choosing an attractive mate. In contrast, those who tend to see themselves as sensitive and warm give more importance to the goal of finding a mate with similar qualities.

Why then do people not want a perfect 10? Imagine that Mary is assiduously on the lookout for someone who is handsome, remarkably fit with a wonderful body, and rich. First, there are not a lot of people who fit this description. So, Mary is likely to remain single for a long time waiting for Mr. Right. Second, when Mary does meet Mr. Right, he is unlikely to reciprocate her interest because Mary is not a perfect 10. Third, if Mary does form a relationship with such a person, it is likely to be a high-maintenance affair, making Mary feel insecure and inferior, and involving high levels of vigilance to ward off mate-poaching efforts by other women. In short, for Mary to set her standards at such a rarified level is unrealistic and likely to leave her on the shelf, miserable, or both.

Thus, the name of the mating game is to obtain the best deal available given the prevailing circumstances, especially taking into account what the individual has to offer. This process is one principal cause for assortative mating—the tendency for people in existing relationships to be similar to one another in many ways, including physical attractiveness.

Ideal Standards Never Sleep

The role of ideal standards does not stop after a mate has been selected and a relationship is underway. As knowledge of the partner develops and individuals and perceptions change, people continue to evaluate their partners and relationships in terms of how they meet expectations and standards.

The discrepancies between expectations or standards and perceptions of reality are then used to accomplish three key goals in intimate relationships: evaluation, prediction, and control.

Taking the evaluation goal first, research has consistently found that the more closely people perceive their partners to fit their ideal standards, the happier they are. A study by Garth Fletcher and colleagues traced a sample of 100 individuals over the first year of their dating relationships (none had been dating for more than 1 month at the beginning point). Not surprisingly, 50 percent of the sample had broken up after 3 months, but the entire sample evaluated their partners and relationships, right from the beginning, according to the perceived gap between standards and perceptions. The smaller the discrepancy, the happier people were and the less likely they were to break up.

However, individuals who stayed together also tended to adjust their standards to fit their perceptions more closely over time, a finding that has been reported in other research by Sandra Murray following dating couples over time. This kind of process may reflect unconscious rationalizing or what is termed *motivated cognition*. Murray has also reported with longitudinal research that holding biased idealized beliefs of the partner actually become more accurate over time, apparently by encouraging the partner to move closer to those ideals, such as becoming more sensitive and warm. Such processes tend to produce more relationship satisfaction over time for both partners.

Ideal standards are thus not set in concrete, but are flexible entities prone to change over time. They are also applied differently according to the situational context and the goals of the individual. For example, several studies have found that men express much more modest requirements than women on factors like warmth, loyalty, intelligence, and status, specifically in short-term mating contexts. Given that men are more open to casual sex than women, women can afford to be much choosier than men in such a context. However, women as well as men give less weight to qualities that signal good investment in the relationship (e.g., status and kindness) in short-term liaisons.

Overall, there is one quality that neither men nor women will happily compromise on when shifting from a long-term to a short-term sexual relationship—namely, physical attractiveness. This

finding is consistent with the theory that physical attractiveness and good health form the primary “good genes” factor. In a short-term relationship, all one is getting out of the deal (reproductively speaking) are (potentially) the other person’s genes; thus, this finding provides good support for an evolutionary take in the underlying causes for mating preferences.

Relationships are composed of two interdependent individuals. Thus, understanding how ideal standards work needs to go beyond perceptions and standards focused on the self. Mary’s behavior and happiness is not only dependent on the gap between her own standards and perceptions, but is also a function of how she thinks her partner sees her (so-called reflected appraisals). Reflected appraisals exert enormous influence in relationships. If Mary thinks she falls far short of her partner’s standards, this is a recipe for unhappiness and disillusionment. Not that such perceptions are disconnected from reality. Research shows that people are biased to some extent, but that they are also accurately attuned into both what their partners are like and to how they are perceived by their partners in reality (as measured by the self-reports of their partners or observers).

In short, provided prior pivotal expectations are reasonably met in close relationships, the conditions are set for love and commitment to flourish. If reality falls well short of expectations, however, people will experience strong emotional reactions. When people perceive that they fall well short of their partners’ standards, they experience emotions like sadness and guilt. In contrast, if individuals perceive their partners as the locus of the problem, they are more likely to experience anger and resentment. The emotions that people experience when perceptions and standards drift apart also bring the control function into play. Nickola Overall and colleagues found that people are motivated to try and change features of their partners to the extent that they perceive them as failing to meet their own standards.

People use a variety of tactics when trying to change their partners, including nagging, diplomatic suggestions, team approaches (such as going on joint diets), and subtle ploys (buying a get-rich-quick book for the partner’s birthday). Unfortunately, people report poor success rates when trying to make their partners more attractive, sensitive, or

ambitious. This is perhaps not surprising given the difficulty of changing such traits, but relationship satisfaction is enhanced when change attempts are seen as successful. Generally, however, the more strenuously people try to regulate their partner, the unhappier they seem to become. The reason seems to be that when people try to change their partner on central traits, like sensitivity or attractiveness, they also communicate powerful and corrosive messages (reflected appraisals) that their partner is just not good enough.

Garth J. O. Fletcher

See also Attraction, Sexual; Courtship, Models and Processes of; Evolutionary Psychology and Human Relationships; Expectations About Relationships; Idealization; Mate Preferences; Mate Selection

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ILLNESS, EFFECTS ON RELATIONSHIPS

Illness can have many effects on relationships, from contributing to their deterioration to strengthening them. The extent to which illness impacts relationships depends on the duration and

severity of the illness, the characteristics of the ill persons and their partners prior to and during the illness, and the quality of the relationship and other social networks. This entry describes the differential impact of acute and chronic illness on relationships, caregiver burden and coping, the impact of illness on adults and children, and the ways in which illness may affect communication and sexuality.

Acute Versus Chronic Illness

During times of acute illness, relationship members may adapt to the illness by rearranging schedules to provide care or make hospital visits. These changes are often short term, and the relationship roles usually return to the pre-illness state, especially in long-term relationships such as marriage. However, this pattern may not be the case during a severe or life-threatening condition. In these cases, the illness may have a long-term impact even after it has resolved. In the aftermath of a life-threatening illness, one's mortality becomes more salient, and there may be greater incentive to pursue activities that give meaning to life. Thus, one may have an increased motivation to pursue relationships that maximize positive affect and minimize negative affect. Relationship partners may reevaluate the importance of the relationship and other activities given life's finite timeframe. In some cases, partners will take greater appreciation in the time they spend together or may make decisions aimed at enhancing the relationship. In other cases, a life-threatening illness may cause partners to decide to end an unsatisfactory relationship and find new relationship partners that can satisfy their needs for positive affect and intimacy.

In chronic benign illnesses (e.g., chronic musculoskeletal pain), partners often report reduced marital satisfaction after the onset of the illness. Chronic illness may also contribute to caregiver burden experienced by those who provide informal unpaid care, including spouses, adult children, or other family members and friends. Caregiver burden can consist of physical caretaking and financial responsibilities that exceed one's ability to manage within the context of one's own life. Social burden may include limiting or eliminating social activities to care for the loved one. Emotional

burden, including feelings of sadness, anger, and resentment about having to provide care, is also possible. Although not all caretakers experience burden, it can have a negative impact on mental and physical health, the quality of the relationship, and the quality of care. For instance, greater burden is related to an increased likelihood of abuse of the ill person. Although not studied as thoroughly, patients' perceived self-burden on others may also occur. This type of burden consists of guilt or resentment about receiving care from others and may relate to psychological distress and social withdrawal. Burden is reduced when coping skills appropriate to the situation are used.

Coping Skills

Coping skills are generally classified into two types. Problem-solving coping strategies are typically effective in situations amenable to change (e.g., acute illness) and include gathering information about the illness and seeking social support. Emotion-focused coping strategies such as venting distress, putting the problem into perspective, and active acceptance may be better for situations that are chronic and unchangeable. Active acceptance is characterized by a willingness to experience the illness and a realization that the illness does not have to interfere with one's activities. Contrast this type of acceptance with a passive acceptance in which one gives up pleasurable activities because of feelings of helplessness and lack of control over illness. Therefore, one way to counteract burden is to teach patients and family members coping skills directed toward facing the illness.

Several interventions have been developed to improve coping skills among couples and families dealing with illness. When spouses participate in coping skills treatment programs, chronically ill patients experience significant improvements in coping skills and psychological distress. Furthermore, improvements in marital satisfaction during treatment are related to improvements in mental health, which suggests that coping skills not only affect one's ability to cope with illness, but also one's relationships. Family-based interventions may also help children cope with their illness. Children and parents can learn together appropriate coping skills for dealing with different aspects of the illness.

Children and Adolescents

Chronic illness also impacts the relationships of ill children and adolescents. In children and adolescents, parents may take more control of the relationship and the child's behavior in an effort to facilitate healing or management of the disease. Chronically ill adolescents tend to perceive their parents and siblings as being more positive or caring toward them during the illness. The positive changes in the relationship that adolescents perceive include the parents being nicer, friendlier, and more helpful. Greater paternal involvement has also been shown to lead to more favorable outcomes in maternal functioning, marital satisfaction, and family functioning.

Children's illness can also affect the physical and mental health of their families. For example, parents may feel strain from meeting the demands of caregiving and other roles (e.g., paid employment), and this strain may lead to psychological distress and marital discord. Parents may also suffer from feelings of guilt, worry, and helplessness because they may feel at fault for a genetically related disease or because they are unable to take away discomfort or illness. Further, parents may experience fear of their child's mortality.

Illness in parents may also affect the relationship between parents and their children, although many parents report that their illness increased intimacy in the family relationships. Children may be particularly frightened or upset upon hearing about a parent's illness, especially if the illness is life threatening or disfiguring. Hence, parents need to take into account their child's developmental stage when discussing symptoms and prognosis. For example, parents of young children may use simple terms to describe the illness (e.g., *sick*, *tired*), rather than complex diagnostic terms (e.g., *multiple sclerosis*). Parents of older children may wish to discuss the illness in more detail (e.g., "cancer makes some cells grow too fast and they crowd out my healthy cells").

Finally, chronic illnesses in children may also impact friendships. For instance, it may be difficult for children to find peers who can share concerns about the illness, bring normalcy to everyday routines, and tolerate the uncertainty of illness outcomes. Illness in the parent can also impact children's relationships with friends. Children may be embarrassed

by their parent's illness, may be reluctant to bring friends home, or may become more isolated from their friends because of the time and money that is invested in care for the parent.

Impact on Communication

The impact of illness on relationships is greater when individuals feel stigmatized about their illness. Stigmatization may involve fear of contracting the illness as in infectious diseases (e.g., HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis B) or fear of encountering negative feedback from others by associating with people who have visible disabilities (e.g., physical disabilities). It is difficult for persons with illness to communicate about their pain if they believe that their loved ones are afraid of or embarrassed by them. Without communication, it becomes more difficult to cope with the illness, including seeking and evaluating appropriate treatments. Family members and friends, in turn, may avoid talking about the illness or providing support because openly talking about the illness is uncomfortable or distressing.

Persons with nonstigmatizing illnesses also experience communication difficulties because of fears of how other people will react to the information. Individuals may try to protect close loved ones from negative emotions or sadness by limiting the amount of illness-related information they divulge. In addition, people may wish to avoid communicating about the illness because they believe that talking will make them feel worse emotionally. In less close relationships, many people prefer not to let friends and acquaintances know about the details of their illness because it will upset the balance in these relationships.

However, many people, including those in a long-term romantic relationship, approach illness directly as a team and openly communicate about treatment options. This communication has the potential to enhance the relationship even in the midst of negative emotions such as fear. In addition, there may be less conflict about other issues (e.g., parenting, finances) during the illness, which helps couples focus on treating the illness. In these cases, the illness enhances intimacy and helps families find meaning in the illness. However, in other cases, the illness can disturb communication. For instance, if other aspects of the relationship are

neglected and the sole focus is on the illness, there may be deterioration in intimacy and well-being. Well family members may also withdraw from the sick person to avoid negative feelings or to avoid having to engage in caregiving behaviors. Interactions between ill persons and their partners may also become strained if the patient begins to catastrophize or verbalize helplessness about symptoms because family members often judge these emotional responses as aversive.

Even without direct communication about illness, family members and close friends may still be able to infer the effects of illness on the patient based on the behaviors of patients and the personal characteristics of the observers. Inferences can be made based on patients' behaviors such as limping, rubbing the affected area, or facial expressions of pain. The observers' own personal experience with illness may also enhance their ability to detect pain or discomfort in their family members. Observed behaviors and personal experience may contribute to the observers' understanding of the family members' illness and affect the extent to which they engage in empathic responses or instrumental support behaviors aimed at reducing distress in the patient. Thus, intimacy-building behaviors can still take place between the ill person and his or her relational partners even if the patient avoids verbally communicating about the illness so long as the observer is able to infer the patient's experiences.

Impact on Sexuality

Chronic illnesses may also impact sexuality. For instance, disease- or treatment-related fatigue, pain, and treatment (e.g., chemotherapy, antidepressants) can interfere with the sexual response cycle (e.g., desire, arousal, orgasm). Anxiety and depression, including rumination about the illness, may also impact sexual response. Therefore, chronic illness has the potential to negatively affect the frequency and quality of sexual activity for both partners. This negative impact is more likely among couples with poor relationship quality prior to the illness or couples not accustomed to communicating about sex. Health care professionals have the potential to enhance relationships by introducing the subject of sexuality as a valid

concern. Couples may minimize the negative impact on sexuality by openly discussing the impact of illness or finding different sexual positions to accommodate illness-related pain. In fact, many couples report that sex is a source of comfort and intimacy, as well as an affirmation of gender when other gender roles have been stripped away by illness.

Annmarié Cano and Lisa Miller

See also Caregiver Role; Disabilities, Chronic Illness, and Relationship Functioning; Families, Coping With Cancer; Marriage and Health; Similarity Principle of Attraction; Social Support and Health

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IMAGINARY COMPANIONS

Imaginary companions refers to relationships with nonexistent beings created primarily by children. Three phenomena have been described with respect to this term, two of which constitute imaginary relationships: *invisible companions* and *personified objects*. Invisible companions have no tangible

basis, although they may be based on fictional characters or real people; some are completely invented. Personified objects are objects that the child animates, attributes personality to, and generally treats as alive. Some researchers also consider *pretend identities*, or roles that children adopt for extended periods of time (i.e., months), as the creation of an imaginary companion. This form, however, is a role taken on by the child, and thus may not function as a relationship in the same manner as an invisible companion or a personified object. Relationships researchers are interested in imaginary companions because they provide some of the same social benefits to their creators that real relationships do, such as companionship and validation. They also resemble real relationships, in that children claim a sense of interdependence with their imaginary companions and pretend to interact with them frequently, over months or years.

Imaginary companions come in all shapes and sizes. Invisible companions typically take the form of humans (e.g., babies, children, and, less frequently, adults), animals, or monsters, and personified objects run the gamut from common versions, such as stuffed animals and dolls, to more esoteric objects, such as toy trains or a small can of tomato paste. Children sometimes have whole gangs of invisible friends or a family of animated stuffed animals. Pretend identities may be simple, such as an imaginary child, or fantastical, such as Superman. A few sex differences have emerged in the creation of imaginary companions: Boys may be more likely to create pretend identities and girls to create invisible companions. In addition, whereas girls create male and female companions relatively evenly, most boys' imaginary companions are male.

Imaginary companions are described by children as young as age 2 and as old as age 7 and may exist even later in childhood. Although these companions probably vary substantially in sophistication, using the broadest definition of the phenomenon (all three types), approximately two thirds of young children report creating an imaginary companion at some point in early childhood. Some of these children share information about their imaginary companions with others, particularly parents, but the tendency to do so wanes with age.

In general, children with and without imaginary companions do not differ much, even on variables related to relationships, such as the size or makeup

of the children's social networks, number of friends, or family composition. Children who create imaginary companions are slightly more likely than their peers to be firstborn or only children and to have fewer siblings. Some empirical evidence suggests that children with imaginary companions have a penchant for fantasy more so than children without such companions, and the two groups may also differ on sociability. Contrary to media representations of children with imaginary companions, they tend to be less shy and more sociable than others—if personality differences are found at all.

Although precipitating events, such as moving to a new home or the birth of a sibling, are sometimes cited by parents as causing the appearance or disappearance of an imaginary companion, most companions appear and disappear without an apparent trigger. Once created, the ways in which they are manifest in children's lives may be related to their form. Personified objects are often known to many people in the child's life, including family, teachers, and peers, and often accompany the child everywhere she or he goes. Invisible companions, in contrast, are often known only to family members and associated with home.

In addition to the connection between form and manifestation, whether a companion is invisible or personified may also be related to the kind of relationship the companion provides. Invisible companions, for example, often function as friends for children. In other words, these relationships are typically egalitarian, with the child and the imaginary companion providing companionship and intimacy for each other, as well as help and validation. Relationships with personified objects, in contrast, are often hierarchical in nature. In these relationships, children characteristically provide caregiving and nurturance to the object, and it is treated as less competent and knowledgeable than the child. Interestingly, although pretend identities do not provide relationships in the same way that the other imaginary companions do, their form may also dictate their status relative to the child. These identities, especially when created by boys, tend to be powerful and exciting, exuding competence and capabilities that surpass the child's.

Children create imaginary companions for many reasons, and indeed these reasons probably vary quite a bit depending on the child's age and gender. Still, suggestions have been made in the literature

to explain the functions of imaginary companions. First and foremost, imaginary companions are an exciting form of pretend play. Especially for children who enjoy fantasy and who crave social interaction, an imaginary companion might be the perfect way to always have an available playmate. Second, imaginary companions provide a safe and consequence-free forum for practicing social interactions and understanding social situations. Children sometimes imagine conflict with their pretend friends, and some go so far as to invent imaginary enemies. These creations may be efforts on the child's part to understand and manage the difficulties inherent in social relationships or the potentially unpleasant side of interacting with others. Regardless, the empirical evidence is unequivocal in establishing that the creation of an imaginary companion is neither a sign of psychopathology nor an indication that the child is confused about the difference between fantasy and reality. Children readily admit, and sometimes spontaneously volunteer, that their imaginary companions are not real.

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See also Children's Peer Groups; Egalitarian Relationships; Friendships in Childhood; Need Fulfillment in Relationships; Sex Differences in Relationships

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INCEST

The term *incest* refers to the marriage and/or sexual intercourse between two individuals considered

to be close kin according to local cultural norms. Although incest typically applies to cases when couples are in fact genetic relatives, it can also apply when couples are genetically unrelated, yet are categorized as kin according to local customs. In one sense, then, rules against incest can be seen as a way to regulate who one marries (and has sex with) within a particular culture. Although *incest* is typically a term used to understand norms relating to marriage patterns, the related term *inbreeding* is used to mark the degree of genetic relatedness between mating partners. Both incest and inbreeding are used interchangeably, yet they refer to slightly different concepts, with incest being a topic of greater interest in anthropology and cultural psychology and inbreeding a topic of greater interest in biology and cognitive science. This entry focuses on the aspect of incest that overlaps with inbreeding: the mating of individuals who are genetically related by virtue of sharing a recent common ancestor.

Why Is Incest Bad?

There are sound biological reasons that natural selection would have led to the evolution of mechanisms to reduce the probability of mating with a close genetic relative. Throughout the evolutionary history of our species, the selection pressures posed by harmful genetic mutations and disease-causing organisms would have severely negatively affected the health and viability of offspring of close genetic relatives. All else being equal, individuals who avoided mating with a close genetic relative and instead mated with someone who did not share an immediate common ancestor would have left a greater number of healthier offspring. Importantly, the negative consequences of incest are enhanced the more closely related two individuals are, with the most severe consequences occurring between individuals who have a probability of .5 of sharing particular genes (i.e., brother and sister, mother and son, or father and daughter). The deleterious effects drop off as two partners become less closely related. Interestingly, in most (if not all) societies, incest between nuclear family members is forbidden or simply absent. In the United States, incest laws vary by state, but most have sanctions targeting marriage and sexual

intercourse with a parent, child, sibling, grandparent, grandchild, niece, nephew, uncle, and aunt. Although some states even sanction first-cousin marriage, none sanctions second-cousin marriage.

A variety of studies have documented the negative fitness consequences associated with incest. For instance, in both humans and nonhuman animal species, incest is associated with an increased risk of mortality, mental deficiencies, congenital malformations, and disease. Given these negative consequences, it is likely that evolution engineered mechanisms to prevent individuals from choosing close relatives as sexual partners. But what might such mechanisms look like?

How Do Humans Avoid Incest?

To avoid close genetic relatives as sexual partners, a well-designed mechanism would require (at least) two types of procedures: (1) procedures that categorize individuals according to their probability of relatedness (i.e., procedures for detecting kin), and (2) procedures that use information regarding kinship to regulate sexual attraction. With respect to kin detection, what cues do humans use? Because we cannot see another person's DNA, the best evolution could do is to use cues that were reliably correlated with genetic relatedness in the ancestral past to compute a probability of relatedness. To the extent that different cues identified different categories of kin (e.g., mother, father, sibling, offspring), different detection mechanisms likely exist.

One cue found to mediate the detection of a particular type of relative, siblings, is childhood coresidence duration. The longer one lives with another person starting from birth, the greater the sexual aversion that develops toward that individual later during adulthood. Furthermore, longer periods of childhood coresidence are associated with lower incidents of adult sexual behavior and greater moral opposition to sibling incest. The effect of childhood coresidence on sexual attraction is known as the Westermarck Effect after the 19th-century Finnish social scientist, Edward Westermarck, who first proposed that early childhood association leads to the development of a sexual aversion later during adulthood.

Two well-known natural experiments provide compelling evidence for the Westermarck Effect.

The first is the communal childrearing practices of the Israeli kibbutzim, where unrelated children were put into children's houses starting from a few weeks after birth and raised together under sibling-like conditions. In these communities, individuals raised together in the same children's house rarely married one another despite the absence of any rules forbidding such unions. This pattern suggests that early childhood exposure influences later sexual attraction.

The second natural experiment testing the Westermarck Effect is the case of Tawainese minor marriages. In this form of marriage, a young bride is adopted into her future husband's family as a newborn and raised alongside him until one day, during adulthood, the parents determine it is time for them to marry. Compared with marriages in which the husband and wife met for the first time as adults, in minor marriages, there were lower rates of fertility and greater rates of divorces and extramarital affairs.

These two experiments point to childhood coresidence duration as one cue that the human mind uses to detect kin and mediate incest-avoidance behaviors. As they suggest, individuals do not have to be genetically related to develop a sexual aversion toward one another. This can be seen in coreared adopted and stepsiblings who also develop intense sexual aversions toward one another despite knowing they are not genetic relatives.

But cues other than childhood coresidence might also play a role in incest avoidance. For instance, seeing one's mother caring for (e.g., breastfeeding) a newborn might serve as a potent cue to kinship. This cue would have only been available for older siblings already present in the social environment and would have been reliable regardless of coresidence duration. But younger children, who are not around to see their mother pregnant and caring for a newborn, might rely on coresidence duration or other possible cues such as facial similarity or olfactory recognition.

Future Directions

Certainly there is much to be learned about the processes mediating how humans avoid incest. The prior discussion illustrates that particular social cues might govern kin detection and the

development of sexual aversions. But many questions remain. For instance, what cues do humans use to detect other types of close genetic relatives: Are they the same as those found for siblings or do they differ? What emotions regulate incest avoidance? What contextual factors influence opinions about incest? How can scholarly understanding of incest-avoidance mechanisms inform the field of child abuse and neglect? If kinship cues are required to activate sexual aversions toward close genetic relatives, it is important to identify which cues operate for each type of family member. Circumstances in which the evolved cues indicating relatedness are absent might lead to greater risks of incestuous unions (e.g., as can occur when brothers and sisters are reared separately or when men marry women with children from another marriage). Last, how does our evolved psychology influence legal codes related to incest? The next few decades promise to shed light on this culturally universal yet underexplored behavior.

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See also Abuse and Violence in Relationships; Evolutionary Perspectives on Women's Romantic Interests; Evolutionary Psychology and Human Relationships; Fictive Kinship; Interpersonal Attraction; Kin Relationships; Kin Selection; Mate Preferences

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INDIVIDUATION

Individuation refers generally to the process by which people render themselves as separate and distinct from others. Researchers of human relationships

have studied individuation from a variety of perspectives, three of which appear to be central in the literature. First, individuation can represent an aspect of a child's separation from and waning dependence on his or her parents. Early theorists asserted the importance of individuation in infancy and during adolescence, and recent research suggests that the failure to successfully individuate is associated with a variety of negative psychological outcomes. Second, individuation describes behaviors that distinguish an individual from his or her surroundings. These behaviors can be reflexive, such as when we are outspoken in front of others, or can be directed toward others, such as when we call someone by name in a crowd. Third, the concept of individuation is closely tied to that of deindividuation. Deindividuation is a process, often induced in groups, through which people feel indistinguishable from others. Feeling deindividuated leads people to exhibit different behaviors than they normally would in social situations, including anger, violence, and lowered self-restraint. Although the subject of individuation has been viewed in several different ways, the study of these domains have implications for the understanding of all kinds of human relationships, from families to large groups. This entry describes the concept of individuation in depth as it pertains to these three perspectives.

Individuation in Development

In 1953, Carl Jung proposed individuation as an important part of normal human development. Later, Hungarian physician and psychoanalyst Margaret Mahler drew on Jung's work to develop a sequence of phases, now referred to collectively as the Separation-Individuation Theory, that guides children's psychological development from birth to age 3. The third phase, called the separation-individuation phase, begins at 4 or 5 months of age. The early part of this phase is marked by gradual sensory development, known as hatching, which gives rise to increased alertness and goal-directed awareness. Infants venture farther from their mothers as their mobility increases, and they begin to experience great joy in performing autonomous tasks while still keeping mother within sight. The child begins to share these new discoveries with mother and seeks social interaction with

her and others. Infants first experience stranger anxiety during this stage, indicating internal conflict between curiosity about new sources of stimuli and the need to check back to mother for security. Love and emotional availability of the mother are key at this stage as the concept of separateness becomes more salient for the child. Late in the separation-individuation phase, the child develops a definite sense of individuality, self-boundaries, and gender identity.

Individuation is also an important goal of late adolescence. Peter Blos claims that a second and higher level process of individuation takes place during adolescence. Like Mahler's conception of early individuation, this second phase is characterized by weakening dependency on and disengagement from family, which allows for the possibility of extrafamilial love and relationships within a broader social framework. At the same time, physical maturation demands the acceptance of an adult sex role. The goal of this process, achieved in normal development at the end of adolescence, is to obtain a clear, stable sense of the self. For some adolescents, failure to achieve successful individuation can result in learning disorders, lack of purpose, procrastination, and emotional shallowness. These psychologically unindividuated adolescents may seek to distance themselves physically from their families, which helps them to avoid confronting their failure to achieve this necessary goal. This represents an unhealthy regression toward the early childhood separation-individuation phase that Mahler described.

An age-appropriate level of individuation is also necessary for normal development of a mature, adult identity, which in turn is requisite for an individual to take on normal adult roles and responsibilities. Parents may resist the attempts of their children to individuate and to progressively take on more adult roles and authority. This kind of parental intrusiveness can stymie normal adolescent development and produce conflict, and the resulting developmental delays can in turn produce more intrusiveness and escalate conflict between parents and teens. In its most extreme form, called *enmeshment*, parental intrusiveness causes for the adolescent a blurring of boundaries between self and other and a preoccupation with parents' satisfaction. Outcomes for enmeshed adolescents include low self-esteem and difficulty forming friendships

and romantic partnerships. Problems with separation and individuation are also shown to be risk factors for eating disorders, including anorexia nervosa and bulimia, mediated by poorly developed senses of self-esteem, autonomy, and control.

In addition to relationships within the family, individuation plays an important role in the development of any close relationship. Successful individuation helps to maintain a balance between the individuality and the connectedness of the partners in a dyadic relationship. Individuality represents self-assertion and separateness, both of which enable people to express unique opinions and assume responsibility for them. Connectedness encompasses mutuality and permeability. Mutuality is important for developing empathy and feeling respected for one's own beliefs, whereas permeability, one's openness to the ideas of others, is important for perspective-taking. Thus, individuation is essential for adjustment within families and continues to have effects for close relationships throughout the life course.

Individuating Behaviors in a Social Context

Individuation is also viewed as a social phenomenon exhibited by people throughout the life course. In this sense, it encompasses a set of behaviors that make a person feel distinguished from his or her surroundings. Social psychologists study such behaviors and their implications in social contexts. For example, Christina Maslach examined situational cues that encourage individuating behaviors. Individuating behaviors can be self-directed (e.g., raising one's hand to ask a question, publicly challenging a speaker, dressing unusually) or can be other-imposed/situation-driven (e.g., being identified by name, being invited to express an opinion). People individuate when they anticipate a reward or support from their social group, but tend not to individuate when they anticipate punishment. Individuating behaviors do not always manifest themselves in isolation, but rather may be part of a group's collective effort at individuation, such as the case with groups ranging from Greenpeace and the Veterans of Foreign Wars to more countercultural groups including the Hell's Angels and the "Jesus freaks" of the 1960s and 1970s.

Individuation requires both social awareness and self-monitoring. Individuating behaviors are not always successful, as is the case when other group members follow suit. To determine how to differentiate oneself from the norm, one must be able to perceive both oneself and the social environment accurately and compare the two. Once the norm has been accurately perceived, individuation also requires deviance from it. This would suggest that nonconformity, willingness to violate authority, and even exhibitionism may also be related to individuation. This connection could bring with it implications for socially mediated behaviors, such as aggression and altruism.

Research conducted with North American and European samples has shown that individuation in social situations can yield positive social outcomes, such as increased social impact and leadership. However, the evidence suggests that the relationship between individuation and leadership is culturally bound. The primary goals of socialization in individualistic cultures (e.g., the United States) are independence and autonomy, whereas the preservation of harmony and "fitting in" are the primary socialization goals of collectivistic cultures (e.g., East Asian countries). A popular saying in the United States illustrates this phenomenon: "The squeaky wheel gets the grease." In Japan, rather, an analogous saying goes, "The nail that stands out gets pounded down."

The same individuating behaviors that reap benefits for people in individualistic cultures sometimes bring about negative consequences for those in collectivistic cultures. One key difference between these two results lies in whether the behavior is seen to reflect leadership qualities or as seeking attention for self-promotion. Certain individuating behaviors have different meanings in collectivistic cultures than they do in individualistic cultures. In the United States, for example, individuating behaviors, such as performing on stage in front of a large audience or giving one's unsolicited opinion on a controversial issue, are interpreted as signs of leadership. In China, however, some behaviors are interpreted as indicators of leadership (e.g., performing on stage), whereas others are interpreted negatively as attention-seeking (e.g., giving an unsolicited opinion).

What can we learn from cross-cultural studies about individuation? Contrary to popular views in

the West, it is not always outstanding to be standing out! It is important to be sensitive to cultural differences in perceptions of individuating behaviors. What would be perceived by someone from an individualistic culture as displaying leadership could be interpreted by someone from a collectivistic culture as attention-seeking. For example, many courses taught in American schools and universities require students to actively and spontaneously participate in class discussions by volunteering one's own opinions. This sort of policy may be biased against students whose culture tells them that individuating oneself in this way is socially undesirable.

The Flip Side of Individuation: Deindividuating Behaviors

Leon Festinger, with colleagues Albert Pepitone and Theodore Newcomb, published the first article on the subject of deindividuation in 1952. The authors used the term *deindividuation* to describe a state in which individuals behave differently in groups, and particularly in crowds, than they do when they are alone. When groups afford individuals some degree of anonymity, they tend to be less restrained and inhibited, and they allow themselves to indulge in behaviors in which they would not otherwise indulge. For example, people are more likely to speak openly about their feelings of anger when their identity is anonymous. Further, people are more satisfied with groups that offer a reduction in restraint, suggesting that such groups satisfy needs normally inhibited by those socially imposed restraints.

Philip Zimbardo highlighted an important distinction between the concepts of individuation and deindividuation. He claimed that individuation comes about merely by making choices, by exercising free will. These choices create a social contract through which the decision makers are held responsible for the consequences of their choices. In so doing, the decision makers become distinct from, and in some cases set themselves up in opposition to, those in their social groups who deindividuate by following along with the group's actions.

Although exercising free will may entail individuation, succumbing to the power of the situation can give rise to deindividuation. Zimbardo's

1971 Stanford Prison Experiment provides a startling example of how a given situation can lead normal, psychologically healthy individuals to deindividuate and engage in unusual behaviors. The experiment required volunteers to play the randomly assigned roles of either prisoners or guards in a make-believe prison for two weeks on the Stanford University campus. Both prisoners and guards were given uniforms to deindividuate them. Prisoners wore matching smocks, hats, and flip-flops and were identified only by number. Guards wore matching uniforms, whistles, and dark sunglasses. Subjected to this situation, both prisoners and guards soon became violent toward each other. During the first few days, prisoners rioted, guards began tormenting the prisoners by spraying them with fire extinguishers, and prisoners chided each other for complaining. Participants began to show signs of severe emotional distress, and within 6 days, the experiment was called off. The deindividuating effects of the situation were so powerful that Zimbardo had to remind some prisoners of their true identities.

Zimbardo also sought to find evidence of deindividuation that would distinguish it from related patterns of behavior driven merely by phenomena such as contagion, aggression, and disinhibition. To do this, Zimbardo conducted a follow-up study to Stanley Milgram's earlier experiments on obedience, this time adding the variable of deindividuation. As a group, female students who were all wearing hoods in order to deindividuate them were willing to deliver twice the intensity of electric shock to the ostensible "victims" as women in groups who were wearing name tags and no hoods. From this and other experiments, Zimbardo concluded that any situation that deindividuates people and provides any sort of permission for aggression can enable otherwise moral, rational people to commit acts that they would never expect of themselves.

More recently, Zimbardo and others have applied the concepts of individuation and deindividuation to a vast range of examples of human maltreatment, including historical acts of the Ku Klux Klan and, more recently, the abuse of prisoners at the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq. In the military, both the requisite wearing of uniforms by soldiers and the intentional depersonalization of the enemy are both acts of deindividuation designed for specific results.

Combining stressful, fear-inspiring situations with these purposeful traditions of deindividuation can produce tragic results.

However, the effects of deindividuation are not restricted to extreme cases. Other-imposed or situation-dependent deindividuation can set the stage for trick-or-treaters to cause mischief on Halloween, Mardi Gras revelers to behave wildly, and Internet chatroom users to be dishonest and vulgar in their “chats.” In all of these cases, everyday and extreme, normal people engage in personality-atypical behaviors without noticing the power of the situation.

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See also Aggressive Communication; Attachment Theory; Caregiver Role; Culture and Relationships; Family Relationships in Adolescence; Family Relationships in Childhood; Public Policy and Relationships; Self-Concept and Relationships

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INFANT–CAREGIVER COMMUNICATION

Before infants use words, they engage in rich communication with their caregivers through gestures, vocalizations, emotional expressions, and in other ways. This entry describes the development of infant–caregiver communication during the first 2 years of life, including the baby’s grasp of interactive practices, and how developing communication is influenced by the child’s growing awareness of the adult as a psychological being who communicates and receives communication from the baby.

Sally, 3 months old, is strapped into her bouncy seat, and her mother is sitting across from her. Sally coos and smiles at her mother, and her mother responds with a wide-eyed smile and a responsive coo as Sally bounces. Her mother laughs and brings her head closer, saying, “You like that!” Then the telephone rings. Sally’s mom answers and begins to talk. Sally makes another squeal, but her mom says, “Shh. Shh.” and pats Sally’s belly, then moves her hand away and starts writing on a pad of paper. Sally kicks her feet again and smiles at her mom, but gets no response. After a few more attempts, Sally turns away with a sober expression and brings her fist up to her mouth. A few moments later, Sally’s mother hangs up the phone. “Where were we, little one?” she says to Sally, but Sally keeps her head turned away. Her mother starts singing a soft song, and after a few moments Sally turns toward her mom’s voice. Sally smiles and kicks her feet when the song is over. Sally’s mother responds with a smile.

This example of face-to-face interaction is characteristic of 3- to 6-month-old infants and their caregivers. At this early age, infants are in tune with the social world and are practicing the rules of social interaction that include their growing abilities to take turns and engage others in positive interactions through these simple forms of play. Through these interactions, infants also start to develop a psychological awareness of others that will blossom at the end of the first year and throughout the second year. It is partly through the infant’s developing psychological awareness that others are communicative partners and recipients of the infant’s communicative efforts that caregiver–infant communication develops and takes new forms.

The First Six Months: Face-to-Face Interaction

Infants enter the world primed for social interaction. Shortly after birth, infants show preferences for faces over other visual stimuli, for their mothers' faces over other faces, and for their mothers' voices. In addition, newborns are already engaging the social world by expressing needs through crying and other affective cues. Despite this, the sensory world of the infant is characterized by a lack of visual acuity and perceptual organization. Add a lack of mobility, rapidly changing behavioral states, and long hours spent sleeping each day, and it is not surprising that infants are not capable of engaging others in coordinated interactions until weeks of physical and sensory development take place.

As infants enter the third month, they begin to distinguish facial features more clearly and can recognize familiar faces based on these refined perceptions, and they are prone to longer periods of attentive wakefulness. At this age, caregivers and infants begin to engage in coordinated face-to-face play. This type of interaction is characterized by periods when the caregiver and infant interact in close proximity with few outside distractions. Face-to-face interaction provides unique opportunities for infants to learn about turn taking, emotions, emotion regulation, and trust in important adults through the caregiver's responsiveness.

The opening vignette is a characteristic example of face-to-face play. Through such interactions, Sally was learning to take turns during communication, a common characteristic of verbal exchanges, as well as learning about emotions. For example, Sally's positive expressions were followed immediately by her mother's positivity. If Sally had expressed negative affect during their bouncy game, her mother likely would have responded with surprise or she would have ignored Sally's affect to keep the interaction going, sending Sally an implicit (and perhaps unintentional) message that negative affect is not appropriate at that time. Researchers have found these to be prototypical responses of mothers toward their infants' emotions during face-to-face play, evidencing the role of mothers in regulating their infants' emotions at this young age. Researchers have found that infants' emotional expressions become more positive through these repeated interactions in which mothers' affective responses

contingently guide their infants' emotions and engage their babies in emotional reciprocity.

Face-to-face play is often described as an exquisite dance characterized by synchronized coordination between mother and infant. By contrast, careful studies have shown that much of the time, mother–infant face-to-face interaction is characterized by miscoordinated states, when the infant and mother are not making eye contact or positively interacting. As long as this miscoordinated interaction is repaired through each partner's contribution to sensitive reengagement (such as the reengagement between Sally and her mother), infants will learn trust in their caregivers and will also learn that the self is an effective agent in social interaction. Miscoordinated interactions can be caused by external (such as a phone call or an interruption by a sibling) or internal (such as an infant's overarousal or a mother's intrusiveness) occurrences and can last for as little as a few seconds.

Researchers have manipulated mother–infant face-to-face interactions with the "still-face procedure." In the still-face procedure, mothers pose an expressionless, nonresponsive face in the middle of a typical face-to-face interaction. Researchers have been interested in the infant's behaviors during the mother's still face, as well as the mother's and infant's behaviors during the reparation period after the mother resumes typical interaction. Findings from the still-face procedure have shown that infants express decreased positive affect and more negative affect, more self-focused behaviors, and withdrawal behaviors during the unresponsive period. Some infants at first try to positively engage the still-faced partner through smiles and behaviors that previously elicited positive interaction (e.g., reaching, vocalizing, leaning toward the partner), but these behaviors are short-lived when they fail to achieve a response. Upon reparation, infants become more positive, but continue to express subdued affect in comparison with their earlier typical behavior. These findings provide evidence that infants have social expectations from as young as 2 months of age. Like Sally in the vignette, infants expect responsivity from social partners and continue to represent the dysfunctional interaction after it occurs (as evidenced through their continuing expressions of subdued affect), showing that infants are not acting solely on the basis of present stimuli in their immediate perceptual world.

Thus, both infants and caregivers are social agents with social expectations of their partners in interactions during the first 6 months of life. Infants are early aware that interactions are dynamic and require shifts in behavior to alter the behavior of the adult. The caregiver acts in ways that respond to and shape the infant's behavior, and the infant similarly responds to and shapes the caregiver's behavior. Through these reciprocal interactions, infants develop the foundations for a sense of self and other, as well as an awareness of others' emotions and social initiatives and their own self-regulatory behaviors.

The Second Six Months: Communication Across a Distance

As infants near the end of the first year, the onset of locomotion shapes how they interact with others. The face-to-face interactions of early infancy are replaced by faster negotiations involving facial and bodily expressions and verbalizations that must be communicated over a distance. With the onset of mobility, infants must negotiate a constantly changing world with new physical obstacles, perceptual cues, and potential threats to the infant and challenges to the caregiver–child relationship. These advances are accompanied by several changes in infant–caregiver communication and in infants' psychological awareness of others. Specifically, infants begin to guide both the behavior and the knowledge of others through pointing out referents to social partners, and infants begin to use the emotional communications of others to guide their own actions through social referencing.

As infants begin to crawl, they become more independent and agentic, with firm goals guiding their behaviors. Simultaneously, they use emotional information to infer the goals and intentions of others. If an adult positively emotes while looking at an object, the infant infers that the adult likes the object and expects the adult to take it, comment positively about it, or act in other consistent ways. Research on pointing behaviors also evidences infants' understanding of others' mental states. If an adult is unable to find a desired object, 12-month-olds will point out the correct location of the object, showing that they understand that others have specific goals underlying their behavior.

Infants use pointing for a variety of social purposes (as do adults). They may point to provide information for another, known as protodeclarative pointing. Protodeclarative pointing may be used to identify any event of interest to either the adult or the infant. For example, an infant sees a bird in the tree and points at it. His grandmother sees the infant point and says, "Wow, look at that bird!" In essence, this pointing is used to create joint attention around a common object or event of interest. In contrast, protoimperative pointing is used by the infant to gain an object or item. For example, an infant wants the banana but cannot reach it so he points to the banana. His grandmother sees this and retrieves the banana. In essence, the infant uses this pointing to create shared intentionality—in this case, using the adult as a social tool for gaining objects or items. With both types of pointing, infants are actively changing the adult's knowledge and motivation, creating shared goals and intentions between the child and adult.

Research has shown that 12-month-olds point to share attention and an affective or intentional attitude about objects and events. If an adult does not attend to an event of obvious interest, the infant will point to the event for the adult. In addition, 12-month-old infants point out novel objects to adults based on what is novel to the adult rather than to the infant. This behavior requires an understanding that the adult has different perceptions than the self and that expressions of surprise are often directed toward novel objects. Through pointing, therefore, infants actively enter the intentional states of adults as well as engage adults in their own intentional states, creating shared intentionality. It is evident that this is a nonegocentric social capability in 1-year-olds.

Like pointing, social referencing appears in the second half of the first year, but is not measurably robust until approximately 12 months of age. Social referencing describes how, when they are faced with an ambiguous or uncertain situation, infants look to adults' emotional expressions and use these expressions to guide their response. For example, when a stranger approaches, a 12-month-old might look to his mother's reaction before deciding whether to approach the stranger. If the mother expresses concern or fear, the infant would likely avoid the stranger, but if the mother expresses happiness or reassurance, he might instead approach

the stranger. Social referencing thus requires some knowledge of others' attention, emotion, and mental states and the association among them.

Although social referencing does not appear robustly across all types of situations, it is a crucial tool for communication in situations of uncertainty. The same infant might reference the mother in an ambiguous physical situation, such as using an unstable stool to pull to standing. Needless to say, the development of infant mobility is also characterized by increases in caregiver prohibitions on infant behaviors in ways unencountered earlier in infancy and that also heighten infants' sensitivity to distal emotional cues. The new demands on infant–caregiver communication created by the infant's developing capabilities are accompanied by a new awareness of others' mental states and important achievements in creating shared intentionality.

The Second Year: Sharing Others' Intentions and Goals

The second year is characterized by immense changes in the infant's social and emotional capabilities. Communication expands from the non-verbal referencing of objects and events to verbalizing nouns, actions, and emotions by the end of the second year. As in the first year, advances in infant–caregiver communication transform social interaction, and they derive in part from growth in the child's understanding of others' intentions and goals, as well as the developing capacity to create shared intentionality with the adult.

The rudiments of shared intentionality emerge with pointing behaviors during the first year, and they develop into new and more complicated behaviors as infants enter into others' goal states during the first half of the second year. Infants begin to imitate adults' acts with no apparent purpose other than imitation, and they will imitate arbitrary behaviors that they have seen days earlier. More important, infants begin to imitate adults' *intended* actions even if the adult did not succeed in what they intended (e.g., putting a ball in a basket that the adult had tossed but missed). Another indication of growth in shared intentionality is the emergence of helping behavior. By 14 months, infants help others with basic tasks, such as handing

an adult something that was dropped; by 18 months, infants help in a wider variety of tasks, such as opening a cabinet for an adult whose hands are full. Taken together, these behaviors indicate that infants are able to infer others' intentions and enter into another's intentional state, creating shared intentionality around a common goal.

Development in shared intentionality is the means for two further advances in infant–caregiver communication later in the second year. First, pretend play appears in infant–parent interaction close to the second birthday as a shared social activity. Two-year-olds rarely engage in pretend by themselves, but they will share an adult's pretense with smiles and knowing looks, showing that they are entering into the adult's imaginative activity when they stir a bowl with a banana or use the banana as a telephone.

Second, language ability also flourishes during the second year and also as the result of shared intentionality. A toddler's ability to understand and use words derives in large measure from comprehending the intentional state of the adult they overhear using those words. When father says "Look at the cute kitten!" in the presence of a stray cat, an 18-month-old can understand the referential intent of the word *kitten* only by astutely interpreting the adult's gaze direction, emotion, and intentional behavior to deduce that the word refers to the animal before them, rather than to the sidewalk, the grass, or even the kitten's size or color. The toddler's later use of the same word to refer to another kitten when she is with her mother reflects another example of imitation—and another illustration of the capacity for shared intentionality in the second year.

Conclusion

Infants' understanding of the emotions and information contained in others' minds shapes developmental changes in caregiver–infant prelinguistic communication. Over the first few months of development, infant–caregiver communication is characterized by need-based interactions. As infants enter the third month, their longer periods of wakefulness and newfound perceptual abilities allow for coordinated interactions, but they are also marked by periods of miscoordinated communication and

recovery. During these interactions, infants learn communicative tools and important information about others' emotional states. Both infants and caregivers are active agents in these interactions, mutually acting to shape the emotions and behavior of the other. These face-to-face interactions wane as infants become more mobile and require communication across larger spaces regarding more complex situations. Infants use pointing to create joint attention, and they combine pointing and other gestures to create shared intentionality with others around interesting and desired objects and events. In addition, infants use others' emotional expressions to guide their behavior in ambiguous situations, evidencing an understanding that others have important information to convey in their assessments of such a complex world. During the second year of life, infants develop a more sophisticated understanding of others' goals and intentions, allowing for action-based communication around the intentions of others. These provide the avenue for more complex imitation and helping behavior, shared pretense, and the development of language.

Infants are thus capable of much more than we once thought in their ability to understand the emotions and information provided by their caregivers through both direct and indirect communicative acts. These communications provide the foundation for psychological growth as infants approach the development of linguistic communication and develop an even more complex understanding of others.

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See also Mother–Child Relationships in Early Childhood; Parent–Child Relationships; Parenting

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INFATUATION

Infatuation is a state characterized by intense feelings of passion toward a specific individual. The term *infatuation* typically refers to the early stages of romantic love, before the infatuated individual has had a chance to get to know or develop an intimate relationship with the love object. Colloquially, infatuation is frequently associated with youth and suggests an irrational, capricious approach to love. Although some consider infatuation to be a special, perhaps early or intense form of passionate love, researchers often use the term *infatuation* interchangeably with *passion*, *passionate love*, *limerence*, or being *in love*. Therefore, this entry reviews research and theory on infatuation and these associated terms.

Features of Infatuation

When individuals are infatuated with a potential or current romantic partner, they frequently exhibit any or all of an assortment of features. For one, infatuation is often characterized by persistent, intrusive thoughts about the love object. These thoughts may take on a fantasy-like quality, or, alternatively, they can be anxious ruminations that are distracting and distressing to the infatuated

individual. Frequently, the character of these intrusive thoughts will ebb and flow, focusing at one moment on the possibility that one's feelings are reciprocated and the next moment on the possibility that they are not. This volatility contributes to the emotional turbulence experienced by infatuated individuals, who tend toward euphoria when the love object demonstrates romantic interest in them and toward despair when the love object is insufficiently responsive. Infatuated individuals also commonly idealize the love object, worshipping his or her positive qualities while only indifferently acknowledging his or her negative qualities. Finally, infatuated individuals direct their passions toward only one potential partner. Only rarely do individuals experience strong infatuation toward multiple individuals, and, consequently, they yearn for their love object to reciprocate this exclusive desire. Although not all of these features are necessarily present in every infatuation, the more acute the infatuation, the more likely it is that these features will be present and pronounced.

Another important component of infatuation is sexual desire. In most cases, individuals become infatuated with potential romantic partners who are of the sex that they prefer romantically, and sexual fantasies are often present in infatuated individuals' persistent thoughts about their love object. (Exceptions to these rules are also important in understanding the nature of infatuation and are reviewed later.) In one study, participants named people with whom they were currently "in love" and reported that, in 87 percent of the cases, they also experienced sexual desire for these same individuals. However, sexual contact is rarely the central stated goal of an infatuation. Instead, infatuated individuals long for moments of emotional union with the love object; sexual encounters do not necessarily lead to emotional unions, and emotional connections can frequently be achieved through nonsexual means. Also, given that people can feel sexual desire (but not infatuation) for a number of different individuals at the same time, sexual desire alone is insufficient to generate or sustain an infatuation.

Infatuation is more likely to emerge during the early stages of a romantic or potentially romantic relationship. But infatuation is unlikely to last forever: Such intense passion has a tendency to fade

over time in most romantic relationships. There are several reasons for this decline. For one, relationships are initially exciting because people's self-concepts expand to incorporate their romantic partners, but this excitement fades once the self-expansion process runs to completion. In addition, it takes a certain measure of anxiety and uncertainty to maintain the infatuated state, and as time passes, people typically accrue enough evidence to confirm or refute the possibility that a love object desires the self in return. Tumultuous, off-again/on-again relationships that perpetuate confusion about romantic partners' feelings and intentions probably have the best likelihood of sustaining infatuation. (Of course, such relationships probably do a poor job of sustaining interpersonal trust and security!)

Conceptual Frameworks

Many social-psychological theories have explored infatuation and related constructs. One relevant and well-known theory of love is Sternberg's triangular theory. Sternberg proposes that love has three components: passion, intimacy, and decision/commitment. The passion component refers to the experience of arousal and sexual desire; the intimacy component refers to feelings that promote closeness, bonding, and connectedness; and the decision/commitment component refers to the decision to love a particular individual and the commitment to maintain that love. Different types of love emerge from different mixtures of any or all of these components, and each component may be present in varying degrees. Sternberg suggests that infatuation is a kind of love that exists when only the passion component is present. That is, individuals are infatuated when they experience sexual desire and arousal for a particular romantic interest, but they do not feel bonded to and have not yet committed to the romantic interest. That infatuation is derived mainly from passion is consistent with the characterization of infatuation as an immature kind of love that emerges early in a relationship, before any real intimacy or commitment has been achieved.

In contrast to Sternberg's model, other theoretical perspectives suggest that the complete experience of infatuation or passion does not emerge if sexual desire is the only active motivation.

Attachment theorists posit that the typical experience of passionate love results from the activation of both the sexual system and the attachment system. Although sexual desire frequently accompanies infatuation, as noted earlier, passion can emerge without sexual desire. For example, prepubescent children experience infatuations that evidence all of the adult features of passionate love, minus the sexual component. Attachment theorists propose that many features that are characteristic of infatuation, such as the desire for emotional closeness and concerns about reciprocation, stem from the activation of the attachment system. Just as infants wish to be physically and emotionally close to an attachment figure, infatuated romantic partners want to be physically and emotionally close to each other. Some recent empirical findings have suggested that the attachment system is an integral part of the passionate experience; manipulations designed to activate the attachment system (by triggering the experience of attachment anxiety) with respect to a particular romantic interest have the effect of boosting participants' passionate love for that romantic interest. Given the centrality of pair bonding as a mating strategy among humans, it makes evolutionary sense that initial romantic attraction would emerge at the intersection of the sexual system, which governs the reproductive act, and the attachment system, which bonds reproductive partners together for childrearing purposes.

Although attachment theory and the triangular theory have somewhat conflicting perspectives, there are explanations for the existence of infatuation that draw from both theories. In the early stages of romantic relationships, infatuation is pronounced, and romantic partners typically have not yet developed the intimacy and closeness that they later achieve as the relationship matures. At the same time, the *desire* to achieve a state of bondedness and intimacy may emerge early in a relationship. It is this desire for a bond with a particular partner that indicates the activation of the attachment system and is central to the experience of infatuation. If the sexual system (i.e., the passion component of the triangular theory) is activated without this desire for an emotional bond (i.e., desire for the intimacy component of the triangular theory), this will probably emerge as raw sexual attraction, not infatuation or passionate love per se.

Empirical and theoretical work that has explored the association between passion and intimacy also sheds light on the nature of infatuation. Some theorists have suggested that as romantic partners accumulate knowledge about one another, passion emerges as a result of such increases in intimacy. (In mathematical terms, passion is the first derivative of intimacy over time.) A wide array of research findings lends support to this hypothesis. For example, studies conducted by Arthur Aron and his colleagues have demonstrated that romantic partners experience an exhilarating expansion of the self as they become more intimate, and this self-expansion process generates greater feelings of romantic passion. As a second example, one study required opposite-sex strangers to stare into each other's eyes for 2 minutes—an intimacy-promoting activity. After the staring task, these strangers reported greater affection and passionate love for each other than did control participants who stared at each other's hands. Finally, research on individual differences has found that extraverts tend to disclose more (compared with introverts) about themselves and therefore quickly develop intimacy with potential romantic partners. Not surprisingly, then, extraverts also report greater passionate feelings on average. All of these findings support the idea that passion may emerge as intimacy increases.

Taken together, the theoretical perspectives reviewed earlier paint a coherent picture of the time course of infatuation. First, infatuation is most likely to emerge early in a romantic relationship, as intimacy is just beginning to increase. Soon thereafter, attachment theory predicts that infatuated individuals will start to desire more intimacy and want to feel bonded to the love object. In cases where both partners experience these feelings for each other, this will likely lead to a continued increase in intimacy, which in turn generates greater passion. As intimacy starts to reach an upper limit (once romantic partners have gotten to know one another extremely well), then passion is likely to decline.

Role of Arousal

Some of the best empirical work on the experience of infatuation has demonstrated the importance of physiological arousal in stimulating passion.

Berscheid and Walster's two-factor theory of romantic love predicts that passion is generated or intensified when people (1) are aroused physiologically, and (2) believe that another person is the cause of this arousal. The classic "love on a bridge" study is the most vivid demonstration of this point. In this study, male participants crossed either a frightening, narrow bridge or a wide, stable bridge and were greeted by an attractive female experimenter on the other side. Men who had just crossed the scary bridge (compared with men who had crossed the stable bridge) were more likely to call the experimenter in the ensuing days. In other words, as predicted by the Excitation Transfer Theory, the men misattributed the source of their physiological arousal: They believed it was the attractive female experimenter who caused them to feel excited, and they experienced greater attraction to her as a result.

Other experimental research has revealed similar results. For example, participants who were anticipating a shock or who just finished exercising reported greater attraction to an attractive romantic target than did control participants. In fact, the valence of the arousal seems to matter little because both positively (e.g., comedy) and negatively (e.g., horror) arousing material can increase passion for an attractive other. In the course of everyday life, the arousal that one believes to be caused by a potential romantic partner typically really is caused by that partner, and thus the romantic attraction that follows is the result of an appropriate attribution. Nevertheless, these experimental misattribution studies were essential to demonstrate the causal role that arousal plays in the passionate experience.

In summary, infatuation is a common experience in the opening stages of potential romantic relationships, one that frequently proves both exciting and terrifying. Infatuation has an important role in the psychological study of attraction as its features, time course, and theoretical underpinnings reveal much about the nature of human mating.

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See also Arousal and Attraction; Attachment Theory; Attraction, Sexual; Excitation Transfer Theory; Falling in Love; Initiation of Relationships; Interpersonal Attraction; Intimacy; Love, Companionate and Passionate; Misattribution of Arousal; Self-Expansion Model

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INFORMATION SEEKING

Researchers generally agree that individuals have a large appetite for information. Not surprisingly, that appetite is often fed by information about others with whom they have close relationships. This entry begins with a summary of the breadth of relational contexts in which information is sought, discusses predictors of the information-seeking process in close relationships, addresses biases that guide the search for information, discusses consequences of the decision to seek information, and ends with a technological development that is changing the landscape of information seeking in close relationships.

Contexts of Information Seeking in Close Relationships

Gaining knowledge about someone is a necessary component of initiating a relationship with him or

her. At the most basic level, individuals interested in developing a romantic relationship seek to discover whether there is a fit in attitudes and beliefs, and whether the person is available for, and interested in, such a relationship. Although there are many strategies that people use to discover whether someone is attracted to them, it is interesting to note that the most efficient form of information seeking in this case (e.g., “ask her or him if she or he liked me”) is also typically rated the least appropriate. That generally sums up the dilemma inherent to information seeking—be direct, but risk being inappropriate, or be indirect, but risk misunderstanding. Most studies show that individuals typically choose the latter. A whole host of other informational unknowns are tackled in this manner, among them the information exchange that contributes to sexual decisions. One would expect that a central feature of that exchange would be a sexual health discussion between partners. Yet considerable research suggests that such a discussion is relatively rare; if it does occur, it often comes *after* the first sexual encounter. Preliminary information about a partner’s sexual health seems to often come from assumptions about physical appearance or, curiously, from discussions with friends who are believed to know the partner’s past sexual history. This aversion to direct information seeking is also evident in that individuals often rely on “secret tests” of their partner to gain information about his or her level of commitment. For example, studies have shown that people sometimes choose to test their partner by acting in really negative ways (to see with how much they will “put up”) or by asking a friend to flirt with their partner and watching the partner’s reaction to the flirtation. These forms of indirect information seeking wane across a relationship’s life cycle. Yet indirectness remains a popular method of seeking information about a partner and reemerges as the primary method of gaining information during the dissolution and postdissolution phase of relationships, where inquiries about the partner’s motivations and behaviors are either avoided entirely or are tackled gently.

Of course, romantic relationships are not the only close relationships in which considerable information is sought. The parent–child relationship is another that involves its share of information-seeking decisions. Two periods in the life cycle of this relationship are especially prone to such episodes—when

children are in their adolescence and when parents are in or approaching old age. When children go through adolescence and young adulthood, they often engage in independence-seeking behaviors that place their parents in a precarious dilemma: seek information about suspicious behaviors and potentially violate their child’s privacy, or turn a blind eye and hope for the best? Although violating privacy brings with it distrust and the potential for further rebellion, ignoring signs of dangerous activity may end with disastrous consequences for the family. A somewhat similar spike in information-seeking decisions comes near the end of life, but this time it is the adult child who faces the dilemma. Seek information about the parent’s eldercare wishes and needs, or assume that she or he will reveal them when comfortable doing so? Unfortunately, studies suggest that people all too often choose the latter strategy and do not receive the information in time.

Predictors of Information Seeking in Close Relationships

The decision to seek information in close relationships or avoid doing so is a difficult one. As such, it is not surprising that several programs of research have tried to better understand the factors that predict the outcome of that decision. This literature can generally be separated into two approaches: one that focuses on features of the individuals’ personality and one that focuses on features of the situation.

Personality

Several scholars have shown that individuals differ in their desire for information. Suzanne Miller’s work on information seeking in health contexts has been able to separate people as either *monitors* (i.e., information seekers) or *blunters* (i.e., information avoiders) based on their responses to hypothetical scenarios. Similarly, Richard Sorrentino and his colleagues have shown that people differ on their orientation toward uncertainty and, by extension, information seeking in close relationships. Most recently, Bill Ickes and his colleagues have been able to show personality differences in the motivation to acquire relationship-threatening information. Other personality differences have been shown to have a less direct, but still important, association with

information-seeking decisions. For example, individuals' style of attachment, as well as their affinity for risky and novel situations, has been shown to influence the sort of information that individuals seek about their (potential) partner. Specifically, anxiously attached individuals seek information about partners that confirms their fears (i.e., partner shortcomings), and sensation seekers (those with affinity to risky and novel situations) pursue more information about potential partners than do risk-avoidant individuals. There is also evidence that self-esteem, along with the Big Five personality dimensions (Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness to Experience, Competitiveness, and Conscientiousness) all impact information-seeking choices in a variety of ways.

Situation

Other approaches have focused on situationally specific conditions that impact individuals' information behavior in close relationships. Walid Afifi and colleagues' Theory of Motivated Information Management argues that individuals go through a three-phase process in deciding whether to seek information in interpersonal encounters. The first phase involves an assessment about whether their actual and desired levels of uncertainty about an issue match. If not, the theory argues that people first determine the costs and benefits of seeking information about the issue from a particular target (e.g., their romantic partner) and then decide whether they are able to effectively seek information about that issue from that person. A combination of those assessments then leads to a decision to either seek or avoid information. All these assessments are impacted by situational features such as mood, feedback from the target person, or target issue, among others. As a general rule, perceptions that the outcome will be positive and that one is able to effectively seek information leads to direct searches for information. The theory has been successfully applied to information-seeking decisions in both romantic relationships and parent-child pairs.

Information-Seeking Biases in Close Relationships

Although knowing whether someone will seek information is an important step to understanding the information-management process, it does not

deal with the biases that guide individuals' search for information. There is no doubt that individuals rarely, if ever, seek information in an objective manner. Instead, people's needs and motivations guide the sort of information that they gather and the way in which they interpret what they find. The research literature in this domain is vast. One motivational aspect that seems to play a strong role in the sort of information sought and its interpretation is the need for consistency. Decades of research has shown that individuals typically seek information that supports preexisting attitudes and beliefs. In relational contexts, this translates to a selective search for information that supports either preexisting or desired biases toward the person. For example, studies have shown the many ways in which people's positive impressions of their romantic partner allows them to overlook negative traits and glorify positive ones. In a similar vein, the research has revealed that people often look for information that supports preexisting hopes or fears.

Emotion is another biasing factor in the search for information. Individuals' mood strongly influences how much and what sort of information they seek, both generally and in relationships. Specifically, individuals in happy moods tend to seek more information, but focus on abstract-level information that is likely to maintain that mood. In contrast, those in sad moods take on a much more cautious approach to their information search and, within that selective approach, typically look for detailed information. It is also worth noting that emotions often combine with the bias toward consistency to influence the information sought. Moreover, neuroscientific studies have shown that different regions of the brain become activated during information-processing tasks depending on the emotion being experienced. So, not only does mood influence what information is sought, but how it is then processed and interpreted.

Consequences of Information Seeking

The general belief among both researchers and health practitioners is that information seeking is generally beneficial. After all, it seems better to make an informed decision than an uninformed one. But is it? In all likelihood, it is. However,

growing evidence suggests that information seeking sometimes leads to worse outcomes (at least in the short run) than information avoidance. For example, research that has compared health outcomes for monitors and blunders has consistently shown that monitors (i.e., information seekers) do more poorly on health measures than do blunders (i.e., information avoiders)—they report greater depression, visit physicians more often, are more anxious, and improve less rapidly following medical procedures. In a related vein, Sorrentino and colleagues' work on uncertainty orientation has shown that avid information seekers generally report lower relational trust and satisfaction than information avoiders. Finally, information seeking has the potential to lead individuals toward poor decisions. For instance, one study showed that college students were woefully misinformed about whether their sexual partner had a sexually transmitted infection (STI), but were *certain* about the accuracy of their information. Why? Because that certainty was reached through considerable information seeking. The result may be that information seekers are less likely to practice safe sex and be more susceptible to STIs than information avoiders. The latter group may be more cautious in their approach to safe-sex decisions precisely because they do not have the false security gained by those who sought information. This is one area of research that is sorely in need of additional attention.

Impact of Social Networking Sites

The spread of online social networking sites has important implications for information seeking in close relationships. In the past 3 to 4 years, sites such as *Facebook* and *MySpace* have become online hosts to millions of individual profiles across the globe and a rich source of information for those seeking it. Indeed, recent studies have shown that individuals' primary use of these sites is to gather information about people who they have recently met. The effort is made easy by the fact that people often leave their profiles open to the public, with information ranging from contact information to likes and dislikes to photographs, and well beyond. Unfortunately, the scholarship in this area has not kept pace with the speed in which this phenomenon has spread. This new mode of

information seeking in close relationships, however, has significant potential to dramatically change both what information is discovered and the way in which it is done.

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See also Adult Attachment, Individual Differences; Computer-Mediated Communication; Internet and Social Connectedness; Secret Tests of Relationship Status; Uncertainty Reduction Theory

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INGRATIATION

Ingratiation is a form of self-presentation or impression management, with the specific goal of enhancing one's likability. Any behavior that potentially

has the effect of increasing liking for the actor and that is enacted for this reason can be seen as an instance of ingratiation. This does not mean that all likable behaviors are examples of ingratiation; the crucial point is the motive for the behavior. For example, if an employee supports his or her boss in a meeting because the employee agrees with the boss, or if someone helps a friend for truly altruistic reasons, the behavior is not ingratiating. Of course, the boundary is quite fuzzy because people are not always aware of their true motives. They may consciously think they really agree or wish to be genuinely altruistic, whereas their unconscious motives may be ingratiating. Many instances of ingratiation are unconscious, so ingratiation occurs more often than people generally assume. This entry discusses the different strategies that ingratiators use and the motives and goals that ingratiation can serve.

Ingratiation Strategies

Different research paradigms have been used to study how people ingratiate themselves and what the effects are. When looking at the ingratiator's part, the researcher may instruct participants interacting with someone to make the other person like them and then examine how they behave. Looking at the target's end—the person being ingratiated—the researcher can expose participants to an ingratiating actor and examine whether they like this person or are easily influenced by him or her, compared with control conditions (e.g., a noningratiating actor or participants observing the same behavioral episode directed at someone else).

On the part of the actor, studies show that getting people to like oneself (ingratiation) is easier than getting them to think that one is smart and capable (self-promotion, another form of self-presentation). A common ingratiation strategy is to show interest, ask questions, pay attention, and single out the other person to make him or her feel special. A second strategy is to do favors, buy presents, or to help or assist a person. Third, people may show support and loyalty (e.g., support their supervisor during a meeting). A fourth way to be liked is simply to smile and be friendly, cheerful, and positive. Fifth, people can directly express

admiration by flattering people and telling them what they like or admire about them. Sixth, people can create sympathy by talking about things they have in common with someone or expressing agreement in attitudes, values, or interests because similarity produces attraction.

On the part of the target, ingratiation is not always recognized. Uninvolved observers tend to quickly notice when ingratiation occurs, whereas targets of ingratiation are less suspicious. Thus, the behavior is generally quite effective precisely with respect to the person for whom it is intended, the target. So, when a student flatters a teacher or offers assistance, fellow students who see this may immediately suspect the student's motives, but the teacher may simply appreciate the help or the excellent judgment of character and like the student as a result. Similarly, in a dating context, people can get away with quite blatant flattery unless it becomes unequivocally clear that they make the exact same compliments to other potential dating candidates.

One reason that targets may be relatively gullible is that most people aim to have a positive view of themselves (called the self-enhancement motive), and when they are ingratiated, their self-esteem is bolstered. This makes them feel good even if they might not entirely trust the ingratiator's motives. Importantly, there is a difference between cognitive and affective responses to ingratiation. Cognitively, the target may suspect someone's motives, especially if the flattery concerns qualities that the target is not sure she or he has. Affectively, however, it feels good to be the object of interest, compliments, and support. Many people say that they do not care for this, but unconsciously all people like to feel good about themselves, and they feel good most of all when they feel valued by others. This is a central tenet of Mark Leary's Sociometer Theory.

As a consequence, ingratiation can be a powerful tool in social influence. In his seminal book on ingratiation, Edward Jones noted that the goal of ingratiation is typically instrumental: People ingratiate others because they want to influence their behavior in some way (e.g., get a date, borrow money, get a raise, get a good grade). Thus, ingratiation is a strategy for social influence and it is, in fact, used quite a lot by sales people. People buy more from someone who flatters them. For

instance, if a sales person compliments a shopper on his or her figure and excellent taste in clothes, the shopper is more likely to buy the shirt. In part, this happens because people like the person who ingratiate them. Also, being ingratiated enhances their mood, which in turn may affect their behavior in desired ways. Another reason that ingratiation works is the reciprocity principle: If someone does something good for you, you want to do something in return.

So, the effects of ingratiation are generally as intended: The target likes the ingratiator and is more inclined to do favors to the ingratiator. The ingratiator may not be aware of his or her own insincerity and may come away feeling that she or he and the target get along well. Jones called this the *autistic conspiracy*: Both ingratiator and target are not fully aware of the hidden agenda in their interaction (the ingratiator who wants something, the target who is happy to be flattered) and simply feel good because they both attain something desired. Neither person is motivated to look at the interaction more critically.

Motives Underlying Ingratiation

A strong motive for ingratiation, then, is simply that people can affect others' behavior with it. But there are other motives as well. For one, ingratiation is the lubricating oil of social traffic. If a waiter asks about a meal or if a friend has a new hairdo, most people will say something nice even if they don't entirely mean it. Saying exactly what one thinks can make people feel awkward and uncomfortable. A related motive for ingratiation is that people who get along well with others will be liked and responded to favorably, which in turn benefits their self-esteem. In effect, then, ingratiation can be seen as a social skill.

As noted, targets of ingratiation typically like the ingratiator. Observers are in a different position, and they may give quite harsh judgments of ingratiators. The strongest cue for detecting ingratiation is dependence: When a person is likable toward someone with higher status or power, people instantly become suspicious of ulterior motives. At this point, their judgments are not yet quite negative because they cannot be certain: For all they know, the person might simply be likable. But

once they notice that a person behaves less friendly toward those with less power, they immediately identify the person as a brownnoser and judge the person negatively—in fact, just as negatively as someone who is dislikable toward everybody. This is called the “Slime Effect” because it was first reported in the Netherlands, where people are more wary of ingratiation than in the United States and where the common word for ingratiation is *slime*.

Ingratiation and ulterior motives are identified more easily when the ingratiator depends on the target in some way. This can occur in hierarchical relationships in organizations, but in many other settings as well (e.g., when the ingratiator is a single man out to find a date and the target is a beautiful woman, when the ingratiator is a child or adolescent and the target is a parent or teacher, or when the target is a powerful person in a company or in politics). Because such asymmetry in power makes it more likely that friendly behavior by the lower status person is seen as ingratiating, this presents the ingratiator with a dilemma: When it matters most (i.e., when one depends strongly on someone), ingratiation is most likely to backfire because people will easily see through the ingratiator's hidden agenda, so that credibility is strongly reduced. This problem is called the ingratiator's dilemma.

Conversely, it is relatively easy for powerful people to ingratiate lower status persons without being suspected of insincerity, but the incentives for doing so are also smaller because high-status persons usually do not need favors from those with less power. This dependence is likely underestimated by lower status persons because ingratiation is less easily noticed in these cases. Ingratiation by powerful people may actually be more common than is often assumed.

Fortunately for the low-status ingratiator, several psychological mechanisms may come to the rescue. People in powerful positions typically do not see how their subordinates behave toward others, so the slimy subordinate may easily get away with it. Leaders in organizations usually have multiple subordinates to whom they must attend, so they do not keep track of how everyone behaves toward everyone else. Also, leaders are typically high in self-esteem, so excessive flattery may simply confirm what they already know, and they are not likely to question the ingratiator's motives. Moreover, people

generally attach more weight to how a person behaves toward them than toward others, another reason that flattery toward powerful people will usually have the intended effect. As a result, powerful people rarely find out what others really think of them and may end up with a rather inflated and unrealistically favorable image of themselves.

In addition, according to Jones, ingratiation can use several strategies to resolve the ingratiation's dilemma—that is, to make themselves more credible when flattering someone on whom they depend. The first is to build a power bank by starting the flattery long before a favor is needed. By ingratiating oneself for a longer period, one builds up credit, which can later be withdrawn.

A second strategy is to find a setting in which the power imbalance is less salient. For instance, subordinates may take their supervisor out for dinner, thus creating a setting in which it is less obvious who is in charge and who is not.

Third, people sometimes obscure their behavior—for instance, by disagreeing with their supervisor on trivial matters. This way they won't look as if they blindly follow and support their supervisor, and they convey the impression that they are independent.

Finally, it is a good idea to flatter via a third party. For example, one may tell the boss's secretary that one has never had a better supervisor than this one. With a little luck, the secretary will pass the compliment on to the boss, and the flatterer will have a great deal of impact because the flatterer is not suspected of ulterior motives.

The examples used here are prototypical instances of ingratiation, in which the ingratiation is not sincere. It is important to realize that, in everyday life, there is a large fuzzy area between not saying exactly what one thinks and blatantly deceiving people to accomplish one's goals. In everyday social interaction, ingratiation has many advantages. Most people do not know the truth of what others really think of them, and they might be a lot less happy if they did. This creates the window of opportunity in which ingratiation is effective.

Roos Vonk

See also Interpersonal Influence; Reciprocity of Liking; Self-Esteem, Effects on Relationships; Self-Presentation; Similarity Principle of Attraction; Sociometer Theory

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INITIATION OF RELATIONSHIPS

Relationships go through many stages of development, but the first stage is always initiation. Although people (and scientists) do not usually refer to an initiation stage for family relationships, this stage is particularly relevant for voluntary relationships, such as romantic relationships and friendships. People select their friends and lovers, and therefore such relationships need to be initiated in order to exist. This entry summarizes several important aspects of the initiation stage of relationships, including the meaning of relationship initiation; how common relationship initiation is; diverse settings in which relationship initiation may occur; involvement of the social network in relationship initiation; the emotions, beliefs, and behaviors associated with relationship initiation; and the negative side to relationship initiation.

What Does Relationship Initiation Look Like?

Generally, relationship initiation refers to the beginning period of relationship development for voluntary relationships such as romantic relationships and friendships. Some theorists, such as George Levinger and Mark Knapp, have developed stage models of relationship development and argue that the first stage of the relationship includes such phases as first awareness of each other, first superficial contact, and the first communication behaviors, which express that the two are developing a connection or potential for a relationship. The relationship initiation stage is probably more distinct as well as more clearly

recalled later for those whose relationships blossom quickly. For example, consider one hypothetical couple: Abby and Alex meet in a bar, e-mail and phone for a week after this brief meeting, and then begin dating. For them, first awareness, first superficial contact, and first communication of a connection occurred quickly and without too much time between each phase. Another hypothetical couple, Kate and Samuel, were in a class together their freshman year in college and talked occasionally, but then forgot about each other until they frequented the same coffee shop their senior year. It was months of running into each other at the coffee shop and chatting briefly before they realized their attraction for each other; another month passed before one suggested to the other that they should go to dinner. When was their relationship initiated? Months and even years spanned between their first awareness, first superficial contact, and the early communicative behaviors that expressed a desire to begin a relationship. Relationship initiation refers not only to the first time two people meet, but can also refer to the process of the relationship transitioning from one type of relationship (casual friendship) to another type (romantic). Laypeople, as well as experts on relationships, would likely consider the time period in which a pair transitions from casual acquaintances to dating partners as the initiation of the relationship.

In defining relationship initiation, Dan Perlman distinguished between “initiating interactions” and “initiating relationships.” As he notes, “initiating interactions” may lead to a relationship, but in many cases may fail to do so. Many pairs experience attraction for each other and initiate interactions that never develop into a relationship. More research is needed to explore why some initiating interactions lead to a relationship and others do not.

How Common Is Relationship Initiation?

Compared with the time that people spend maintaining and nurturing their existing relationships (including family relationships), the time spent engaged in relationship initiation is relatively brief. Because there is a norm of exclusivity and monogamy associated with romantic relationships, most adults have only one such relationship

at a time. Therefore, people who stay in a romantic relationship for a long period generally do not enter the initiation stage of a romantic relationship again unless their long-term romantic relationship comes to an end, either through dissolution or death of the other. Adolescence and young adulthood, however, is a time of experimentation with short-lived romantic relationships, and therefore relationship initiation behaviors are quite common at that time.

In contrast to the limited number of romantic relationships that may develop over a lifetime, friendships may begin at any time regardless of how many friends one already has. Friendship generally has a less clearly defined initiation stage compared with romantic relationships. Two people may move slowly from nodding acquaintances to casual acquaintances to good friends, and possibly on to best friends. Friendship initiation may be more common when there are life transitions or changes, such as in geographical location, job, or marital status. The number of new friendships that are initiated is also influenced by the desire for and capacity (e.g., resources) to have a large social network. Some people prefer to have many friends and are often expanding their social network (although perhaps at the same time allowing friendships at the periphery of their social network to fade away). Others may prefer only a few close friends.

Socioemotional Selectivity Theory, developed by Laura Carstensen, states that the desire to initiate new friendships varies across the life course. This theory argues that as people approach the end of their life, they become more selective in regard to with whom they spend time. When time is running out, resources (including time) are devoted to intimate others, rather than to developing new relationships. At younger ages, however, when focusing on the future and when new contacts are important, relationship initiation is likely to be much more common.

Where Does Relationship Initiation Occur?

There are a variety of settings in which relationships begin, including bars, classes, work, parties, church, and on the Internet. Although the most common settings for meeting potential partners vary somewhat as a function of age, according to

several studies, the most common locations for meeting romantic partners are parties, classes or work, and settings centered around hobbies or sports. Many years ago, social psychologist Bernard Murstein distinguished among settings in which people meet others by the degree to which they involve different degrees of voluntariness of interaction. A *closed field* (e.g., a small college seminar) is characterized by the presence of a small group of people who are all likely to interact with one another. In contrast, in an *open field* (e.g., a singles bar), there is no structured interaction and therefore more choice about one's interactions. Some have speculated that the factors that lead to attraction and the desire to initiate relationships differ in these two types of settings. For example, physically attractive people are more likely to be noticed in an open-field setting. In closed fields, however, attraction to others can be influenced by less superficial characteristics, such as the person's honesty, integrity, or sense of humor.

Regardless of the particular setting in which two people meet, one of the major predictors of the likelihood of two people initiating a relationship is physical proximity. Physical proximity increases the likelihood that two people will be in the same setting at the same time. Furthermore, within a particular setting (e.g., an apartment, a classroom, a workplace), two people are more likely to initiate interaction the closer in proximity they are. Proximity contributes to the initiation of a relationship for a number of reasons, including the high rewards and low costs associated with interacting with someone who is near (relative to those who are at a distance) and the familiarity that derives from "mere exposure" to the other (such as seeing that person in class repeatedly). Another type of proximity, social proximity, also influences the likelihood of two people initiating a relationship. As noted by Malcolm Parks and other experts of social networks, the closer two people are in a network of relationships (e.g., if they have mutual friends), the greater their likelihood of meeting.

Advances in communication technologies have reduced at least somewhat the importance of physical proximity for initiating interaction with others. Although there has been considerable media attention given to online relationship initiation, recent studies with representative samples

indicate that only a small proportion of committed, romantic relationships began online (3 percent according to one study, 6 percent according to another). Nonetheless, this translates to millions of relationships, and most experts agree that online relationship initiation is here to stay and is likely to become more common.

Although online dating is generally a homogeneous concept to the general public, differences exist among types of Internet relationship initiation. Katelyn McKenna, a pioneer in the study of relationship initiation on the Internet, has distinguished among three types of online relationship initiation: *naturally forming relationships*, *networked relationships*, and *targeted relationships*. Naturally forming relationships occur in those venues in which people congregate online because of an interest or hobby. For example, although the goal for participating in newsgroups and interactive online games is not relational, relationships can form from interaction on these sites. Networked relationships may also be initiated online through social network sites such as *Facebook*, *Friendster*, and *MySpace*. These social network sites provide opportunities to meet others who are linked to one's friends and acquaintances.

Targeted relationships are those that develop from interactions in online dating sites. People go to dating Web sites (e.g., *eHarmony*) for the specific purpose of initiating a romantic relationship with a compatible match. Such sites can facilitate relationship initiation by offering a large pool of potential partners, an easy way to search for compatible others who are interested in starting a relationship, and a legitimate and relatively safe format for initiating communication, such as by sending anonymous preprogrammed messages. Individuals meeting on the Internet often disclose personal information sooner and deeper than they might in face-to-face conversation.

Long before the Internet, there were newspaper personal want ads, video-dating services, singles functions, and professional matchmakers. These services, along with Internet dating sites, have been described as *commercial marriage market intermediaries*. Another recent type of commercial service to assist in relationship initiation is speed-dating. These are events that often occur in bars and involve brief "dates," 3 to 8 minutes long, for participants who attend for the purpose of meeting a date.

Self-Initiation Versus a Little Help From Friends and Family

The first meeting or superficial contact between two people is a big step in the relationship initiation process and is sometimes planned and schemed even if only in the minutes after first awareness of the other. According to research on dating relationships conducted by Charles Berger, people use any of three general techniques to meet another person, particularly in open fields. One way is to introduce oneself to the other. A second technique is to give nonverbal cues and wait for the other to introduce him or herself. Third, one could have a mutual friend make the introduction. Berger found that men were more likely to engage in the first strategy, whereas women were more likely to engage in the other two strategies.

The strategy of friends facilitating the initiation of relationships is common. Many relationships begin through an introduction by a friend or through other types of assistances from the social network. Research conducted with college students and with national, representative, samples of adults indicates that 25 to 50 percent of people meet their current partner through another person. Most often this is a friend, but family members, coworkers, and others also make introductions. Besides assisting in first meetings, friends and family members contribute to the relationship initiation process through supportive behaviors, such as inviting the two to social gatherings and encouraging the relationship. Research indicates that these supportive behaviors from the social network have a positive effect on the likelihood that the relationship develops.

In some cultures, traditionally, parents were instrumental in orchestrating the relationship initiation process through arranged marriages. This still occurs in some areas of the world, such as in subcultures in India.

Emotions, Beliefs, and Behaviors Associated With Relationship Initiation

Regardless of the type of relationship, the setting in which the relationship begins, relationship initiation consists of many specific emotions, behaviors, and beliefs.

Attraction

Attraction is the emotion or catalyst behind relationship initiation in most voluntary relationships. People initiate relationships with others because they are attracted to them. Considerable research beginning in the 1960s examined the factors that lead to attraction. These include proximity, perceived similarity, reciprocity of liking, and the degree to which the other person is physically attractive. In addition, a host of other desirable characteristics—including wealth, status, sense of humor, and warmth/kindness—can lead to attraction primarily by increasing the perceived probability of having rewarding experiences. Although people may be attracted to those who have desirable characteristics, in real life, matching often occurs by the pairing of individuals with equally desirable characteristics.

Behaviors to Demonstrate Interest

In open fields (such as single functions), people can send nonverbal signals to show their interest in developing a relationship, which can have a significant impact on the likelihood that other(s) will return relationship-initiating-type behaviors. Observational studies of men and women flirting in singles bars suggest that successful flirtation involves one person approaching the other. In a unique observational study, Monica Moore recorded the nonverbal acts that women engage in that seemed to result in a man's attention within a few seconds after the behavior. Some of the more common flirting behaviors were the smile, laugh, room-encompassing glance, short darting glance, head nod, primp, lean, and solitary dance. In follow-up research, she found that the average number of flirting acts engaged in by women was much greater in singles bars than in other settings, such as a snack bar or library, suggesting that women strategically use flirting behaviors in settings in which the behaviors may have an effect on attraction. Of course, heterosexual men (and homosexual men and women) are likely to do the same, but the focus of the research has been on women as flirts and men as onlookers.

The first communication in an open setting is often called "the opening line." Three types of opening lines have been identified: *direct* (a direct statement of interest), *innocuous* (a pleasant statement, such as

about the setting), and *cute-flippant* (humor, often with sexual overtones). Although all three types of opening lines may be used in the get-acquainted process, cute-flippant lines (e.g., “Your place or mine?”) are rated as least desirable, especially by women.

Beliefs

There are various beliefs that can influence the relationship-initiation process, for example, by influencing the information to which a person attends and how that information is processed. Some general schemas and beliefs that people bring to a relationship come from the larger culture, including the family, peer group, and the media. Romanticism (or romantic attitudes) is a general focus on relationships that emphasizes love as a basis for entering a relationship. People who have strong romantic beliefs are likely to approach relationship initiation in different ways than those who endorse romantic beliefs to a lesser degree. For example, in a study by Sandra Metts, a belief in love at first sight was associated positively with commitment to one’s partner following first intercourse. In addition, greater romanticism was associated with recalling that one was more in love sooner in the relationship. Another example of a general belief that influences relationship initiation is relational ideals, which are beliefs about what makes a good relationship and an ideal partner. For example, a person may believe humor is important in an ideal partner, and therefore may be drawn to partners who make them laugh. These relational ideals will influence the type of partner sought and how one approaches a potential relationship.

People also develop specific beliefs about the person or the relationship, which can influence the initiation process. First impressions can be based on the other’s appearance, demographic characteristics (e.g., age), and their initial communication. These first impressions can, in turn, influence behavior toward the other, which may create a self-fulfilling prophecy. That is, the other can become more like the person we think they are based on our first impressions.

The Negative Side of Relationship Initiation

If a person desires to enter a new romantic relationship or a friendship, has the requisite social

skills to engage in relationship initiating behaviors, and the other person is also interested and responds with his or her own initiating behaviors, the result can be an exciting and positive event. The successful start to a new relationship is associated with enhanced positive mood and self-esteem. However, the initiation stage of relationships, as is true of all stages of relationships, also has a dark side. Even in the most successful initiation attempts, there are times of awkwardness, embarrassment, and miscommunication.

Beyond the typical awkwardness of two strangers meeting for the first time, interest in developing a relationship is not always mutual. Although the disinterested partner may be flattered, he or she is likely to reject the attempt to initiate the relationship. Rejection, even mild rejection, feels bad and has potentially important emotional consequences. The person being sought may, in some cases, be exposed to unwanted and unrelenting relationship pursuit, such as stalking in extreme cases. The person who does not want the relationship, who is the victim of unwanted relational pursuit, can experience anger, guilt, and perhaps some fear.

Another negative experience of relationship initiation occurs when a person desires to enter a relationship, but fails to do so because of fear of rejection, social anxiety, or a lack of social skills (i.e., not knowing how to communicate with the potential target). People who have an insecure attachment style find it more difficult to initiate and maintain close relationships. Another negative experience is loneliness, which is a discrepancy between the number of relationships one initiates and maintains and the number that is desired.

In summary, the initiation stage is an essential stage of the voluntary relationship. It has been a relatively neglected topic of study in the field of personal relationships. The *how*, *where*, and *when* are equally important as the *who* is when it comes to relationship initiation. The manner and the setting in which an initiation takes place often influences the relationship’s potential to prosper.

Susan Sprecher and Lindsey Guynn

See also Acquaintance Process; Affiliation; Courtship, Models and Processes of; Dating, First Date; First Impressions; Speed Dating

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IN-LAWS, RELATIONSHIPS WITH

When one marries, the new partner becomes an “in-law” to all family members related to his or her spouse. The marriage ceremony creates a family out of relative strangers. No other family relationship has generated so much negative attention. The first mother-in-law joke was recorded in Roman times. In-law relationships, especially those related to the mother-in-law, have led to the creation of “mother-in-law” languages and taboos. Many entering the in-law domain still do so with negative expectations and anxiety about these new family relationships. This entry explores the

nature of in-law relationships, their psychological dynamics, and research findings.

Nature of In-Law Relationships

The term *in-laws* often conjures images of an intergenerational family represented by mothers-in-law, daughters-in-law, fathers-in-law, and sons-in-law. Most commonly, one thinks of the mother-in-law–daughter-in-law or son-in-law relationship when reflecting on in-laws. However, the in-law network also extends to fathers, siblings, cousins, aunts, uncles, and grandparents.

Changes in family life, such as divorce and remarriage, have increased the convolution of these connections. For example, divorce and remarriage increase the number of mothers-in-law or fathers-in-law in a marriage network. The wife of a man whose parents have both divorced and remarried might have two or more mothers-in-law. A remarried woman with children likely retains her relationship with her previous mother-in-law, for a potential total of three or more mothers-in-law.

Although expectations are common, especially ones that suggest intrusiveness and negativity, there are few established norms for in-law roles. The extended family models once prevalent in an agrarian society have vanished in a more mobile, egalitarian society. Women in the workforce, geographic separation, and later ages at marriage have increased the complexity of in-law relations. The increasing independence and cultural diversity of marriage partners leads them to establish isolated nuclear families with fewer face-to-face connections with the extended family network.

Psychological Dimensions

In-law relationships are perhaps the most complicated in the family system. This relationship is a secondary rather than a primary relationship created through the choice of one family member. Due to their intergenerational nature, in-law relations are influenced by differences in developmental stages and generational differences.

In-law relationships are transformed across time by others in the family network. For example, the openness and vulnerability of a daughter-in-law's

relationship with her mother-in-law is often related to the nature of her relationship with her own mother. On the one hand, if she has a close tie with her own mother, she might view a mother-in-law who is different or expresses different values from her own mother as not fitting within her family, despite the fact that she is her husband's mother. On the other hand, a daughter-in-law who has a distant, formal relationship with her mother may appreciate her mother-in-law's hugs and expressions of affection as providing a sense of connection she has missed with her own mother. How the husband describes and expresses his feelings about his mother, both pre- and postmarriage, can influence his wife's perception of her mother-in-law. The birth of a child/grandchild also changes the dynamics because the two women now have a mutual focus they can celebrate together.

Power and control are persistent issues among in-law relations. While remaining asymmetrical, in-law interactions face constant power shifts across time. At the beginning, when the child-in-law-to-be is first introduced, most of the power resides with the parents-in-law. Once the wedding occurs, the power differential shifts to give the child-in-law more power. Once a child is born, the child-in-law, specifically the daughter-in-law, holds the majority of the power. She becomes the gatekeeper controlling access to her parents-in-law's grandchildren.

Although both research and popular culture focus on the mother-in-law–daughter-in-law or son-in-law relationships, the interactions of siblings-in-law and fathers-in-law also play an important role in family functioning. For example, research indicates that, among rural farm families, fathers-in-law can create more strain on young marriages than any other in-law relationship. At times of family or health crises, parents- and children-in-law often receive the support they need to survive the crisis from their in-laws. Female in-laws might provide the emotional support that male kin struggle to adequately provide. A sister-in-law who views her brother's wife as the sister she never had can influence her mother's perception of her brother's wife, positively impacting that relationship's quality. Likewise, a hostile relationship with a father-in-law might contribute to negative perceptions by the mother-in-law of her daughter's husband. The ambiguity experienced by both generations about

what the relationship “should be” increases the fragility of in-law relationships.

The rules for appropriate interactions become more ambiguous as the number of generations increases. The ambivalence often found in adult parent–child relationships is intensified in the parent-in-law–child-in-law relationship. One of the most ambiguous roles in the extended family network is that of the father-in-law. For example, the matriarchal nature of the African-American family contributes to a sense of ambiguity for the father-in-law as to how he should act in his role in the family. Ambivalence can add stress that weakens the kinship network.

Research on In-Law Relations

Due to the multifaceted, dynamic nature of in-law relationships, little research has explored them. Most of the research focuses on women's roles in the extended family and the role of children-in-law in caring for aging parents-in-law. Within the family network, women fulfill the role of kinkeepers. They are expected to maintain the connections, rituals, traditions, and histories for both sides of the family.

Intergenerational exchanges occur across the family life cycle. In the early years of family life, support often originates from the older generation and passes to the younger (i.e., providing child care, financial assistance, and advice). As the parents age, they depend on younger family members to provide the support needed to remain independent. Research suggests that, in the absence of a spouse or daughter, the responsibility for caring for aging parents falls to the son(s). Typically, the son provides instrumental care, like home repair. When personal care is needed, sons depend on their wives to assist with bathing, feeding, and so on. When the primary caregiver is a daughter, her husband, the son-in-law, often assists by providing instrumental care. Thus, the daughter-in-law and son-in-law are central in the caregiving network supporting parents-in-law. The only factor consistently found to be related to children-in-law's willingness to provide assistance is the strength of the emotional tie between the son- or daughter-in-law and the parent-in-law. Yet the complexity of in-law relationships, the in-law's lack of choice in

selecting this family member, and the impact of other individuals on relationship quality combine to make building positive in-law relationships challenging.

In-law relationships are a central core of extended family relationships. The impact of each generation on the other continues throughout the family life cycle. The dynamic nature of these relationships provides the opportunity for the best of relationships or the worst of relationships. The dynamic interaction across multiple generations opens the opportunity for building unique family relationships like no other in the kinship network.

M. Jean Turner

See also *Caregiving Across the Life Span*; *Extended Families*; *Families, Intergenerational Relationships in*; *Kinkeeping*; *Kin Relationships*

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INSIGHT-ORIENTED COUPLE THERAPY

Insight-oriented couple therapy (IOCT) emphasizes the interpretation of recurrent maladaptive relationship patterns from a developmental perspective. IOCT helps partners develop more satisfying ways of interacting by coming to understand and modify enduring dysfunctional patterns of emotional and behavioral responses linked to

unmet needs and unresolved anxieties rooted in prior relationships. This entry describes the historical and theoretical underpinnings of IOCT, the sequence of interventions through which partners gain a new understanding of dysfunctional relationship themes and modify maladaptive interpersonal exchanges, and empirical findings regarding this treatment approach.

Historical and Theoretical Underpinnings

Insight-oriented approaches to couple therapy vary in the extent to which they emphasize the unconscious nature of relational patterns, the developmental period during which these maladaptive patterns are acquired, and the extent to which interpersonal anxieties derive from frustration of innate drives. However, a shared focus of insight-oriented strategies are previous relationship injuries resulting in sustained interpersonal vulnerabilities and related defensive strategies interfering with emotional intimacy, many of which operate beyond partners' conscious awareness. Consequently, insight-oriented approaches to couple therapy emphasize that partners' maladaptive relationship patterns are likely to continue until they are understood in a developmental context. This new understanding serves to reduce partners' exaggerated emotional and behavioral reactivity and permits them to develop alternative, healthier relationship patterns.

Couple interventions emphasizing the interpretation of maladaptive relationship themes derive from diverse theoretical approaches that can be placed on a continuum from traditional psychoanalytic techniques rooted primarily in object relations theory to schema-based interventions derived from more traditional cognitive theory. In its most orthodox formulation, IOCT derives from object relations theory (developed by Melanie Klein, Ronald Fairbairn, and others) and its central tenet that the primary drive in infants is to secure attachment to the mother. From interactions primarily with the mother, infants develop internalized images (or "introjects") of the self, significant others, and transactions connecting these images. From an object relations perspective, maladaptive relationship patterns of adults reflect enduring, unhealthy introjects that give rise to inevitable frustration when these are projected onto

relationships with significant others. In a distressed marriage, partners' dysfunctional mental representations of significant others interact in an unconscious, complementary manner, resulting in repeated disappointments and persistent conflict. Consequently, the goal of psychoanalytically oriented couple therapy is helping partners to modify each other's projections, distinguish these from objective aspects of their own self, and assume ownership of their own projections.

Evolving from object relations theory, attachment theory (developed by John Bowlby) emphasizes the importance of emotional closeness to others as an innate survival function from which infants develop information-processing capabilities and emotional responses intended to foster secure emotional bonds. From an attachment perspective, difficulties in intimate adult relationships stem from underlying insecure or anxious models of attachment. Susan Johnson and Leslie Greenberg developed emotionally focused couple therapy (EFT) from an attachment theory perspective. EFT is different; EFT is how this is known by the field.

Interpersonal role theory (developed by Jack Anchin and Donald Kiesler) regards the persistence of maladaptive interpersonal patterns as resulting from their reinforcement by the responses of significant others. Rather than stressing dysfunctional mental representations, interpersonal theory emphasizes the unconscious assignment of specific roles to oneself and others in which feared relational events are elicited and enacted by the individual in his or her interactions with others.

Schema theory (developed by Mardi Jon Horowitz and expanded by Jeffrey Young) emphasizes relationship schemas extending beyond attachment to the mother (object relations theory) or significant others (attachment theory) to consider more generally how early relationship experiences influence adult intimate relationships. Schema-based approaches to couple therapy overlap with IOCT in their emphasis on interpretation of interpersonal exchanges within the therapy session as a vehicle for change, attention to affect during the processing of schema-related events, and their emphasis on the childhood origins of maladaptive schemas and the emotional reworking of these early experiences.

Drawing on earlier psychodynamic formulations, Douglas Snyder and colleagues described an

insight-oriented approach to couple therapy emphasizing affective reconstruction of previous relationship injuries. In affective reconstruction, developmental origins of interpersonal themes and their expression in a couple's relationship are explored using techniques roughly akin to traditional interpretive strategies promoting insight, but emphasizing interpersonal schemas and relationship dispositions rather than instinctual impulses or drive derivatives. Previous relationships, their affective components, and strategies for emotional gratification and anxiety containment are identified to highlight each partner's consistencies in their interpersonal conflicts and coping styles across relationships. In addition, ways in which previous coping strategies represent distortions or inappropriate solutions for emotional intimacy and satisfaction in the current relationship are articulated.

Treatment Components

Understanding of maladaptive relationship patterns begins with identifying exaggerated emotional responses to current situations—for example, intense hurt or anger in response to modest disapproval from one's partner. Both partners are encouraged to explore early relationship experiences that evoked similar feelings and to consider how these emotional responses may have originally developed as protective coping strategies or tactics for satisfying interpersonal needs.

Initially, previous relationships are explored without explicit linkage to current relational difficulties to reduce anxiety and resistance during this exploration phase. Both partners are encouraged to remain "intently curious" about their own and each other's relational history. Gradually, as the couple continues to explore tensions and unsatisfying patterns in their own relationship, both partners are encouraged to examine ways in which exaggerated emotional responses to current situations have at least partial basis in affective dispositions and related coping styles acquired in earlier relationships. Developing a shared formulation of core relationship themes is vital before linking these themes to current relationship exchanges. Both individuals can be helped to understand that, whereas certain relational coping strategies may

have been adaptive or even essential in previous relationships, the same interpersonal strategies interfere with emotional intimacy and satisfaction in the present relationship.

In IOCT, the therapist's direct access to exchanges between partners affords a unique opportunity for linking enduring relationship themes to current relationship events. Rather than interpreting exaggerated responses that distort exchanges between the partner and the therapist, the focus is on partners' exchanges in the immediate moment. Interpretations emphasize linking each partner's exaggerated affect and maladaptive responses to his or her own relationship history, emphasizing the repetition of relationship patterns and their maintaining factors in the present context. In linking the couple's current struggles to enduring relationship patterns, the therapist encourages attention to the following questions: How does the immediate conflict between partners relate to core relationship themes explored earlier in the therapy? What are each person's feelings toward the other and their desired response? What impact do they wish to have on the other in this moment? How do their perceptions regarding their partner's inner experience relate to their attitudes toward themselves? What fantasies do they have regarding their partner's possible responses? What kinds of responses from their partner would they anticipate being helpful in modifying their core beliefs about their partner, themselves, and this relationship?

In IOCT, cognitive linkage of relational themes from early development to the current context is frequently insufficient for reconstructing or modifying these interpersonal patterns. The affective component of interpretation is seen in the reconstruction of these critical emotional experiences in the immediate context; new understanding by both partners often promotes more empathic responses toward themselves and each other, facilitating more satisfactory resolutions to conflict. Often the individuals must be encouraged to work through previous relationship injuries (e.g., with parents or intimate partners), grieving losses and unmet needs, expressing ambivalence or anger, and acquiring increased differentiation of prior relationships from the present one.

Partners' insight into enduring maladaptive relationship themes makes possible but does not inevitably

lead to changes in their own relationship. In addition to interpretive strategies, IOCT promotes interactions that counteract early maladaptive schemas. Thus, the couple therapist allows partners' maladaptive patterns to be enacted within limits, but then assists both partners in examining exaggerated emotions in their present exchange. Partners' exaggerated responses are framed as acquired coping strategies that interfere with higher relationship values such as intimacy, trust, altruism, and compassion. Interpretations about prior relationship experiences underlying the current unsatisfactory exchange help both partners to depersonalize the noxious effects of the other's behavior, to feel less wounded, and consequently to be less reactive in a reciprocally negative manner.

Both individuals are encouraged to be less anxious and less condemning of their own and their partner's emotions, and they are helped to explore and then express their own feelings in a less aggressive or antagonistic fashion. Throughout this process, each individual plays a vital therapeutic role by learning to offer a secure context that facilitates their partner's affective self-disclosures in a softened, more vulnerable manner. The couple therapist models empathic understanding for both partners and encourages new patterns of responding that enhance relationship intimacy. That is, by facilitating the nonoccurrence of expected traumatic experiences in the couple's relationship, both individuals are able to challenge assumptions and expectations comprising underlying maladaptive schemas. Thus, therapeutic change results from the experiential learning in which both partners encounter relationship outcomes different from those expected or feared. In response, partners' interactions become more adaptive and flexible in matching the objective reality of current conflicts and realizing opportunities for satisfying more of each other's needs.

Supporting Evidence

Douglas Snyder and Robert Wills compared their insight-oriented approach emphasizing affective reconstruction with a traditional behavioral couple therapy emphasizing communication skills training and behavior exchange techniques. Thirty couples were randomly assigned to each of these two treatment conditions, and 20 couples were assigned to

a wait-list control group. At termination after approximately 20 sessions, couples in both treatment modalities showed significant gains in relationship satisfaction compared with the control group; specifically, 73 percent of couples receiving the insight-oriented therapy and 62 percent of couples receiving the behavioral therapy experienced significant improvement, in contrast to only 15 percent of the control couples. In addition, couples in both treatment conditions generally maintained their therapeutic gains at 6 months following termination.

However, Snyder and colleagues followed up couples in their treatment study 4 years later and found striking differences between couples treated with insight-oriented versus traditional behavioral therapy. Four years following treatment, 38 percent of the behavioral couples had experienced divorce, in contrast to only 3 percent of couples treated in the insight-oriented condition. Based on these findings, Snyder and colleagues argued that spouses' negative views toward their partner's behavior are modified to a greater degree and in a more persistent manner once individuals come to understand and resolve emotional conflicts they bring to the marriage from their own family and relationship histories.

New Directions

Recent developments regarding IOCT have emphasized assimilation of this approach within multi-theoretical integrative couple treatments. Snyder has emphasized an integrative approach for treating difficult couples in which exploration of developmental sources of relationship distress using IOCT follows more behavioral and cognitive techniques for strengthening the couple dyad and promoting relevant relationship skills. Snyder and colleagues (Donald Baucom and Kristina Gordon) have also developed an integrative approach to treating couples struggling with extramarital affairs, in which interventions derived from IOCT play a central role in examining factors contributing to a partner's affair.

Douglas K. Snyder

See also Attachment Theory; Couple Therapy; Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy; Psychodynamic Theories of Relationships

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INTEGRATIVE BEHAVIORAL COUPLE THERAPY

Integrative Behavioral Couple Therapy (IBCT), developed by Andrew Christensen and Neil S. Jacobson, is part of what Steve Hayes has called the third wave of behavior therapy. The first wave of behavioral approaches, derived from operant and classical conditioning, sought to create change directly by altering observable antecedent or consequent stimuli such as rewarding desirable behavior. The second wave, coming on the heels of the

cognitive revolution in psychology, emphasized interpretations of behavior in addition to the overt behavior. The third wave emphasizes acceptance, mindful awareness, and direct experience. Rather than trying to control internal negative experiences, third-wave approaches emphasize greater awareness of those experiences, direct exposure to them, and acceptance of them. This entry reviews IBCT and applies its central concepts to interpersonal relationships.

IBCT begins with an evaluation or assessment phase that normally consists of three sessions—a joint session with both partners and an individual session with each partner in which the couple's presenting problems, a brief history of their relationship, and a brief history of each partner's family background are obtained. Following this evaluation period is a feedback session, in which IBCT therapists provide the couple with an overview of their understanding of the couple and recommendations for treatment. The key feature of this feedback is a dyadic conceptualization of the couple's difficulties, emphasizing the key interaction cycles in which the couple gets stuck and the differences between partners and their individual vulnerabilities that fuel this cycle. For example, partners may be locked in a cyclical pattern of demand–withdraw interaction, in which one partner seeks discussion of the relationship while the other avoids those discussions. The “demander” may seek greater closeness in the relationship, fueled in part by a fear of abandonment by the other, whereas the “withdrawer” seeks greater autonomy, fueled in part by a fear of being controlled.

In the research protocol for IBCT, the feedback session is followed by about 20 sessions, typically once a week, of active treatment intervention. These treatment sessions normally involve both members of the couple and are directed at emotionally salient events and issues in the couple's relationships, such as recent examples of their interaction cycle. In the previous example, the therapist and couple might address recent incidents of the demand–withdraw pattern between the couple as they dealt with a situation in which the demander wanted more closeness or the withdrawer was seeking greater independence.

In IBCT, there are three major strategies designed to foster greater awareness and emotional acceptance between partners—*empathic joining*, *unified detachment*, and *tolerance building*—and three

major strategies for fostering deliberate change in partners—*behavioral exchange*, *communication training*, and *problem-solving training*. To promote empathic joining, IBCT therapists try to create a safe environment in which they can elicit partners' unexpressed, or rarely expressed, vulnerable emotional reactions. These reactions may in turn elicit more sympathetic responding by the partner. To promote the joint mindfulness of unified detachment, IBCT therapists have partners step back from their interactions and look at them more objectively, engaging the couple in a joint effort to describe nonjudgmentally the major moves that each partner makes that serve as triggers for the behavior of the other. Partners may have difficulty being empathic with one another or taking a nonjudgmental approach to the other's behavior, but the IBCT therapist maintains a consistent nonjudgmental and empathic approach to both. A variety of strategies are incorporated in tolerance building, such as a discussion of the positive and negative consequences of each partner's characteristics that are upsetting to the other. During behavioral exchange, partners are encouraged to define specific actions each could take that would better the relationship and are encouraged to engage in those behaviors, and the impact is then debriefed. Communication training involves active instruction and practice in speaker skills, such as nonblaming description of problems, and listener skills, such as active listening strategies of paraphrasing and reflection. During problem-solving training, partners are given instruction and practice in defining problems, brainstorming potential solutions, and negotiating agreements. Typically in IBCT, the strategies for promoting emotional acceptance are initiated prior to the strategies for fostering direct change. Often the strategies for promoting emotional acceptance provide the necessary improvement for the couple. As couples near the end of their treatment, sessions may be spaced at greater lengths such as every 2 to 4 weeks to see how couples manage without regular contact with the therapist. A final session involves a review of treatment progress, often centered around the formulation provided in the feedback session.

Three studies have provided evidence for the efficacy of IBCT. A small study showed that a couple group treatment using IBCT was better

than a wait-list control group; another small study showed that, in the short-term, IBCT produced as good or better outcomes than traditional behavioral couple therapy, a well-researched treatment; finally, in the largest clinical trial to date of couple therapy, evidence indicated that IBCT created clinically significant improvement over a 2-year follow-up period in more than two thirds of a sample of seriously and chronically distressed couples. A study of mechanisms of change in treatment showed that IBCT worked by creating change in both the frequency of partners' behaviors, as well as their emotional acceptance of those behaviors (see work by Andrew Christensen, Jennifer G. Wheeler, and Neil S. Jacobson for a review and citations to this research).

Andrew Christensen and Katherine J. Williams

See also Assessment of Couples; Behavioral Couple Therapy; Conflict, Marital; Conflict Patterns; Couple Therapy

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INTERACTION ANALYSIS

The term *interaction analysis* is used in a broad sense to refer to a large body of research and theory concerned with understanding how conversation works. Interaction analysis researchers look for systematic devices of discourse used by communicators as they take part in conversation. Interaction analysis is largely concerned

with verbal communication as opposed to non-verbal communication, although nonverbal communication is not excluded in principle, especially nonphonemic properties of speech, such as speaking tempo, silence, vocal pitch, and intonational contours. Research on interaction analysis pays attention to discursive devices related to turn taking, topic selection, purposes of individuals' utterances, interruptions, structure of conversation, relationship between utterances, alignment between communicators, indirectness, metamesages, social actions, frames, background knowledge, context, identities, face, roles, and the relationship between properties of talk and outcomes. This entry addresses key concepts that arise as we develop an understanding of how social interaction works.

Research on conversation tries to understand how individuals coordinate their behavior, and it examines how people create their relationships with one another by talking. Conversation can be seen as a cooperative and collusive activity that is sensitive to reducing the risks to communicators. By risks what is meant are things like being seen in a poor light, as insulting someone when that is not intended or appearing ungrateful or critical. Most of this relational work is done as communicators talk to one another not about their relationship or who they are, but about other things. Conversation is improvisational theater. Utterances, not sentences, are the units of talk; utterances occur at particular points in time and place, and they are intended for particular recipients. Sentences are grammatical units that occur in writing. Utterances may consist of a sound, "uhuh," word, "yes," phrase, "I will," and sometimes a full grammatical sentence, "He did come home." One popular metaphor that has been used to describe conversation is *game*, with moves, rules, goals, and strategies. Another metaphor is *dance*, with one partner taking the lead while being responsive to his or her partner.

As a broadly applied label, interaction analysis covers a number of overlapping approaches, including conversation analysis (with an emphasis on the structure of conversation; e.g., greeting-greeting or summons-response), pragmatics (the principles and mechanisms that allow us to communicate more than is actually said), ethnomethodology (the appropriateness of linguistic behavior), rules theory (the implicit rules communicators follow), and

discourse analysis (a wide-ranging, interdisciplinary study of how people make sense of what they hear and read).

Interaction Analysis: A Specific Method

In its more specific sense, interaction analysis refers to one particular approach to studying conversation, describing discourse by mapping the frequency of occurrence of units of speech in relation to one another, the regular sequences of events (such as a greeting following a greeting or an answer following a request for clarification), and the functions served by those sequences. It is a quantitative approach as opposed to the qualitative approaches of conversation analysis, pragmatics, ethnomethodology, rules theory, and discourse analysis. It is concerned with the temporal sequencing of messages, not the individuals speaking to one another. Interaction analysis as a specific method or approach to studying conversation will take a set of categories to code the talk. For instance, research might look at the occurrence of ambiguous statements followed by requests for clarification. The research is concerned with identifying structures that consist of statements—requests for clarification—statements (called *interacts*). One such study showed that more interacts correlated with greater ambiguity in proposals made at meetings of university faculty senators. Interaction analysis attempts to capture communication process by making use of Markov chain analysis, a mathematical system for assessing the probability of occurrence of sequential events. How often is a greeting followed by a greeting? How often is a highly ambiguous term followed by a message that seeks clarification? Clearly this is an approach to describing discourse that makes use of frequency of occurrence and what sort of utterance is next to what other sort of utterance, usually by using structured, predetermined observational schemes. To understand just how quantitative interaction analysis fits into the larger picture of studying discourse, it is necessary to consider interaction analysis in its broader sense. The next section reviews the questions that have been raised by researchers, some devices that have been posited, and how researchers go about the study of conversation. The entry returns to the approach of quantitative interaction analysis later.

Transmission Model of Communication

A popular conception of communication or social interaction—although an inadequate one—is to picture two people talking to each other and sending or exchanging information. Attached to this imagery is the purpose of the encounter, to transfer or to share information. According to this model of communication, the speaker sends a message to the receiver. The message is sent along auditory and/or visual channels in verbal and/or nonverbal form. Implicit in such definitions are concepts such as two people, message, channel or medium, intent, information, knowledge, meaning, as well as the idea that the message goes in a straight line from one person to another, it starts at one point and ends up at another point. It follows naturally enough that the accuracy and efficiency of the transfer is a measure of the success of the event. This view does not encourage us to stop and think about what goes on when people communicate with one another, how it works, how meaning is assigned to utterances, and what kinds of meaning may be communicated in an utterance.

Many scholars have emphasized the communication of information or propositional meaning in their study of conversation, especially linguists, philosophers of language, and psycholinguists. They have tended to concentrate on the message or the intentional transmission of propositional information, the facts stated, *transactional meaning*. They have tried to understand how this process works. Attention has been paid to syntax, retrieval of stored information, information processing, pattern recognition, and other measurable variables.

More Than Propositional Information

Other scholars have concentrated on social or relational messages communicated in addition to the factual (propositional) messages communicated. They have attended to what sorts of knowledge, beliefs, intentions, assumptions, norms, and relational history must be taken into account in arriving at the meanings communicated. Imagine that, in my telling you that it is raining, I intend for you to know, in addition to the fact that it is raining, that you are forgetting to take your umbrella, that you are forgetful, and that we probably won't be

playing golf later. Moreover, I may communicate in that same utterance that I am pleased by this state of affairs. I am implying that I have a right to communicate those messages to you. I am assuming that we share knowledge. I am assuming that you will know what I am hinting at and that you will be able to apply that knowledge to understand what I am implying. We can refer to this as *interactional meaning*, or meaning that goes beyond the linguistic meaning of my utterance. In other words, you won't find the full meaning(s) of my utterance in the dictionary (i.e., what the utterance would mean to people in everyday life). Hence, scholars of interactional meaning have needed to discuss social variables, pragmatics of everyday life, norms of society, and social actions not required for understanding transactional meaning. By social actions what is meant is what social purposes are served by speaking, such as promising, criticizing, demanding, and threatening. Another way to make the distinction is to refer to language as an abstract, decontextualized system versus language in use. Interactional meaning is language in use.

The study of humans talking to one another and communicating both propositional meaning *and* relational meaning, following the interactional view, has received attention from a variety of theoretical and methodological traditions, including discourse analysis, conversation analysis, and interaction analysis. Researchers have noted that language not only points to a world outside the speaker, it also points to who the speaker is and who the hearer is. A major insight of interaction analysis is that utterances take on meaning against a background of invisible framing, a body of ideas that are used in making sense out of talk but are not visible to communicators. When a young couple was putting away groceries after the young woman had returned from shopping, the young man said, "We need peanut butter." The utterance served not only to state a need, it served to direct the woman to buy peanut butter the next time she goes shopping because it was understood between the two of them that she does the shopping.

The idea that saying something to another person is primarily to inform him or her begins to lose its force when one thinks of those many times when people say something to one another that really does not offer information or does more

than offer information. Telling the person who does the grocery shopping that "we need peanut butter" does more than inform him or her of a state of affairs. Telling someone how cold it is on a brutally cold day does not offer much information; or on a day when you planned to play golf with your roommate and you find there is a snow storm blowing outside your window, saying "what a nice day for golf" does not offer information in any simple, factual sense.

Findings from interaction analysis have added to our understanding of doctor-patient interviews; job interviews; mother-daughter relationships; control tower-pilot exchanges; or the interpersonal effects of gender, social class, ethnicity, culture, and region. For instance, research findings from interaction analysis have shown that just how group members respond to attempts at persuading affects the degree to which a group shifts its attitude in one direction. Supportive reactions to minority arguments in a group were found to result in the group shifting less toward a more extreme final decision. This helps to explain how group dynamics work and suggests how to influence a healthy climate within a group discussion.

Research on conversation has uncovered what men talk about and what women talk about (topics); how messages best provide comforting; how talk both reflects and makes use of "who we are," our identity; how turn taking is managed and what variables affect the perception of being interrupted; how messages are effective in compliance-gaining; and how conflict is managed. One study of job interviews found that successful candidates handled turn taking by giving longer answers to questions than unsuccessful candidates and sometimes taking the role of a storyteller. Research on gender and social interaction shows how varying styles of interacting can produce varied interpretations of social actions. Deborah Tannen has done extensive research on friendship and marital relationships, with special attention to gender styles, regional differences, and relational connections. Studies have found that speakers adjust their accent and rate of speech and their pausing patterns in relation to their conversational partner. This sort of accommodation is found in sales and political speeches. Sometimes the opposite to accommodation occurs when we wish to distance ourselves from our hearer. Some researchers have argued that the

expression of solidarity and power in talk is tied to how we think about these two dimensions—use of frameworks—and thus how we interpret what is said. Many variables influence how people talk to each other and how they understand exchanges. Satisfaction with doctor consultations was found to be more highly correlated with the degree to which doctors asked questions seeking patients' opinions, leaving opportunity for patients to say what they wish to say, as opposed to closed-ended questions, ones seeking information.

Philosophers J. L. Austin and John Searle developed the idea that utterances can communicate social action meaning, which they organized under speech act theory.

According to speech act theory, utterances have, in addition to linguistic meaning or transactional meaning, social action meaning. Under the right circumstances, say at lunch break with a friend, to utter "my sandwich is huge, I couldn't possibly eat it all" could easily serve to indirectly offer some of the speaker's sandwich to his or her friend. The act of offering was referred to as a speech act, and the act was a social action, not just an utterance with linguistic or literal meaning—it did something social. It had meaning as a social action.

From the perspective of conversation analysis, speech acts can be organized into adjacency pairs, where a first pair part is closely related to a second pair part. For instance, a request for information is followed by giving information, an offer is followed by an acceptance or rejection, and a greeting is followed by a greeting. Of course, deciding on just what speech act has been produced is always a question. Was the utterance an insult or a compliment, a claim about the state of the world or a criticism, or a request for information or a reminder that you did not do what you had promised? Just how we make this judgment is by interpreting what an utterance might mean given the relational history between the communicators, frameworks for interpreting, which are based on gender, region, social class and other variables, the immediate conversation, and, most generally, our knowledge of the world.

Complicating speech act theory is the larger context in which utterances are spoken. If the recipient of an utterance is to interpret just what speech act was produced and that interpretation takes into account intentions of the speaker, then

a larger context than the utterance would play a role in the interpretation. Yet speech act theory does not have anything to say about such a larger context. Telling your friend, "Your glass is empty," may serve as an offer, a criticism, or a description. In short, utterances are subject to interpretation.

Quantitative Interaction Analysis

Most approaches to studying conversation tape record and transcribe the talk. Most of the research is nonexperimental and usually does not use interviews. Philosophers and linguists have tended to use hypothetical utterances and constrain their analyses to abstract principles of language. The research done in conversation analysis, discourse analysis, ethnomethodology, and pragmatics has collected naturally occurring, spontaneous speech. Quantitative interaction analysis has more often been used with experimental design or quasi-experimental design. Joseph Capella, well known for his work on quantitative interaction analysis, argued against the limitations of qualitative analyses, pointing to what he called proof by example (i.e., finding examples or excerpts within the data that exemplify various organizing principles).

In contrast to proof by example, Capella argues for proof by data obtained with objective methods of sampling and conclusions reached with statistical testing. Capella argued that proof by example is subject to many alternative explanations in establishing regularity. It is also subject to selection bias on the part of the researcher. In other words, the bias of even the most well-intentioned researcher may influence the results. Accordingly, the quantitative approach buys the researcher some degree of objectivity.

Pulling It All Together

Studies of social interaction under the broader view have suggested that simply looking at sequential order of units omits variables that influence meaning and structure. Hence, interaction analysis researchers have had to find ways to incorporate factors such as who is speaking, the duration of the units, and the latency of pauses. Although mathematical accommodations may be made to integrate additional factors, one is still left wanting to understand what

resides behind such parsimonious equations describing the event (i.e., why did these values occur in this conversation?). The explanatory power of mechanisms that produce regularities in talk push the descriptive Markovian models. For instance, Harvey Sacks, Emanuel Schegloff, and Gail Jefferson suggested the transition-relevance place (TRP) as a *potential* point in the talk where turn change can occur. Such mechanisms are powerful and help to explain structure in conversation. The TRP functions as a highly variable unit that operates on a semantic base. Participants project to the endpoint of a semantic unit, which could be a nonverbal sound, word, clause, or longer. Just which TRP serves to change turns may depend on social and psychological variables, relationship, knowledge, motivation, and more. To map only the actual point of turn change is to miss the potential points of change and the power of the TRP to explain turn change. In other words, potential points of change are not captured by quantitative interaction analysis. Likewise, often what is not said carries more meaning than what is said.

Finally, it should be said that qualitative and quantitative analyses of conversation complement one another. Qualitative analysis of interaction suggests a rich underworld of explanation for what goes on in conversation. Quantitative interaction analysis codifies actual observational categories of speech in relation to one another. If the meaning of a communication event could be captured with just the surface structure, then there would be little need to look further, but that is unlikely.

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See also Coding Systems for Observing Interaction; Communication Processes, Verbal; Discourse Analysis; Dyadic Data Analysis; Social Identity Theory; Understanding

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INTERDEPENDENCE THEORY

Interdependence Theory is one of the few extant theories to provide a comprehensive analysis of interpersonal phenomena. The theory analyzes *interdependence structure*, describing the character of the interpersonal world by identifying crucial properties of interactions and relationships. The theory also analyzes *interdependence processes*, explaining how structure influences emotion, cognition, motivation, and behavior. Harold Kelley and John Thibaut developed interdependence theory over the course of four decades, beginning in the 1950s. Its initial formulation was contemporaneous with early social exchange and game theories, with which it shares some postulates. This entry reviews key concepts and principles of the theory.

Interdependence Structure

Interdependence Theory presents a formal analysis of the abstract properties of social situations. Rather than examining concrete social elements such as “professor threatens student” or “woman argues with man,” the theory identifies abstract

elements such as “dependence is nonmutual” or “partners’ interests conflict.” Hence, the theory allows scientists to understand situations that might differ in their superficial character, but that share crucial abstract properties. These abstract features of a situation constitute its “interpersonal reality”—a reality that causes people to think, feel, and behave in predictable ways.

The basic unit of interpersonal experience is an *interaction*: Each of two or more people can enact any of two or more behaviors. As a result of their choices, each person experiences good versus poor *outcomes*—consequences that are more versus less satisfying or pleasurable. The outcome of an interaction is satisfying to the extent that it gratifies (vs. frustrates) the individual’s important needs, such as companionship, belongingness, and exploration.

Interdependence Theory analyzes the ways in which people affect their own and each other’s outcomes, describing social situations in terms of six structural dimensions (see below). Most situations are defined by two or more dimensions, such that the key dimensions of interdependence are the building blocks of structure. Specific structural patterns are meaningful in that they activate specific sorts of goals and motives, influence cognition and emotion, and thereby shape behavior. As such, situations also determine what people can learn about and communicate to one another. The concept of *affordance* describes the implications of a specific situation for specific types of cognition, emotion, and motivation, identifying that which a situation makes possible or may activate in interaction partners.

Dimensions of Interdependence Structure

Level of dependence describes the degree to which an individual’s outcomes are influenced by the partner’s actions. John is more dependent when Mary—through her actions—can cause John to experience good versus poor outcomes. He is independent when her actions do not affect his well-being. Dependence is the converse of partner power—when John is dependent on Mary, Mary holds power over John. Although dependence causes people to persist in relationships, it also makes people vulnerable and exposes them to possible exploitation. Therefore, dependence affords people’s

thoughts and motives about trusting and depending on others versus remaining independent of others.

Mutuality of dependence describes the degree to which partners are equally dependent. Mutual dependence exists when Mary is as dependent on John as he is on her. Unilateral dependence exists when Mary is more dependent on John than John is on her, such that John holds greater power than Mary. Mutual dependence constitutes balance of power and tends to yield more stable and secure interaction. Situations with unilateral dependence entail risk, in that unilaterally powerful partners may behave as they wish without concern for others’ well-being—unilaterally dependent partners are vulnerable to possible exploitation or abandonment. Thus, situations with unilateral dependence afford thoughts and motives about vulnerability (for the more dependent partner) and responsibility (for the less dependent partner) and give the less dependent partner the opportunity to behave in a generous or heroic manner.

Basis of dependence describes the manner in which partners influence one another’s outcomes. Dependence may rest on partner control, where John’s outcomes are governed by Mary’s unilateral actions, versus joint control, where John’s outcomes are governed by their joint actions. Partner control is absolute and externally controlled, in that John’s outcomes are entirely governed by Mary’s behavior; such situations tend to promote exchange-based interaction (trading favors) and are governed by morality norms. Joint control is contingent, in that John’s outcomes rest on coordination with Mary (if he can predict her actions, he can modify his behavior and achieve good outcomes); such situations tend to promote simple coordination and are governed by norms of “good sense.” Thus, the basis of dependence affords the expression of dominance and assertiveness (vs. submissiveness or passivity; e.g., suggesting a pattern of fair exchange, taking the lead in coordinating action).

Covariation of interests describes the degree to which partners’ outcomes correspond—whether events that benefit John are similarly beneficial for Mary. Covariation ranges from correspondent situations (what is good for John is also good for Mary) through mixed-motive situations to

situations with conflicting interests (“zero sum”; what is good for John is bad for Mary). Interaction is simple when interests correspond—John can simply pursue his interests, knowing that doing so will also yield good outcomes for Mary. Interaction is simple when interests conflict—one person must lose if the other is to gain, so each person tries to “come out on top.” Mixed-motive situations are more complex, pitting impulses to benefit the other against temptation to exploit, thereby affording the expression of cooperation and trust (vs. competition or mistrust).

Temporal structure describes the fact that interactions are dynamic and evolve over time. Interaction must be understood not only in terms of the immediate outcomes produced by partners’ choices, but also in terms of the future behaviors and outcomes that are made available versus eliminated as a result of interaction. For example, John and Mary may make an extended series of investments to develop a committed relationship. For example, by behaving in a particular manner today, they may proceed down a path where only poor outcomes are available for one or both partners. Temporally extended situations afford the expression of dependability versus unreliability and loyalty versus disloyalty.

Availability of information is the sixth dimension. John and Mary may possess complete versus incomplete information about their own or the other’s outcomes for various combinations of behavior (“How does Mary feel about marriage?”), the partner’s motives (“Will Mary use her power benevolently?”), or future interaction possibilities (“If we do this now, where will it take us?”). Information is especially critical in novel or risky situations and in interactions with unfamiliar partners. Inadequate information gives rise to ambiguity and misunderstanding, thereby challenging interaction. Thus, incomplete information affords the expression of optimism versus pessimism, as well as tolerance for ambiguity versus the need for certainty.

Interdependence Processes

Human cognition is inherently interpersonal—humans are well prepared to recognize key properties of interdependence situations. Indeed,

interactions are shaped not only by interdependence structure, but also by partners’ needs, thoughts, and motives in relation to one another in the context of the situation in which the interaction takes place. Thus, it is important to understand how situation structure affords specific sorts of affect, cognition, and motivation.

Transformation. To describe the interface between interdependence structure and process, interdependence theory distinguishes between: (a) the *given situation*, or behavioral preferences based on the reality of self-interest as represented in situation structure; and (b) the *effective situation*, or preferences based on broader psychological considerations. *Transformation* is the motivational process whereby people depart from situation-based self-interest, instead reacting on the basis of broader considerations, such as long-term goals, the well-being of a partner, or stable traits or motives. The transformation process may rest on systematic thought or automatic habits. It is through this process that an individual’s unique “self” is revealed. For example, if Mary decides to take care of John when he is ill rather than going out with her friends, she reveals her concern for him. Because Mary departs from that which is dictated by the given situation (her desire to go out with her friends), her unique traits and motives become visible (i.e., her compassion, feeling of responsibility for John’s well-being).

Attribution process and self-presentation. People engage in *attribution processes* to understand the implications of their partners’ behavior in specific situations. During the attribution process, people seek to explain prior behavior and predict future behavior via an analysis of the meaning of behavior in light of specific patterns of interdependence structure (“Is John concerned about my needs?”). In like manner, through *self-presentation* people attempt to communicate the implications of their own actions via deviations from the dictates of self-interest (“See, you can trust me”). Of course, people cannot communicate or discern all motives in all situations, in that specific motives are relevant to specific types of situation. For example, in situations with perfectly corresponding interests, John cannot display trustworthiness—if he behaves in ways that benefit Mary, he is likewise benefited, such that it is impossible

to determine whether he is driven by self-interest or prosocial motives.

Adaptation. Where do the motives that guide the transformation process come from? In a novel situation, John may treat the situation as a unique problem, carefully examining his options; alternatively, he may react impulsively. In either event, he acquires experience: If his reaction yields poor outcomes, he may behave differently in future, parallel situations; if his reaction yields good outcomes, he is more likely to react similarly in future, parallel situations. *Adaptation* describes the processes whereby repeated experience in situations with similar structure give rise to stable transformation tendencies that on average yield good outcomes. Stable adaptations may reside within persons, relationships, or groups (see below).

Interpersonal dispositions are actor-specific inclinations to respond to specific situations in a specific manner across numerous partners. Over the course of development, people undergo different experiences with kin and peers. As a result, people acquire dispositions to perceive situations in specific ways, anticipate specific motives from others, and transform situations in predictable ways. In short, the “self” is the sum of one’s adaptations to previous interdependence problems. For example, if John benefited from good caregiving as a child, he is likely to feel more comfortable with dependence, which may cause him to behave in a more trusting manner in situations involving high dependence and conflicting interests.

Relationship-specific motives are inclinations to respond to situations in a specific manner with specific partners. For example, Mary’s trust reflects her confidence in John’s benevolence. Mary develops trust when John enacts a prosocial behavior, departing from his self-interest to promote her welfare. His actions communicate responsiveness to her needs, thereby enhancing Mary’s trust in his motives, causing her to feel less fearful in situations involving conflicting interests, encouraging prosocial transformation, and thereby enhancing the probability of reciprocal benevolence. This form of trust is relationship-specific and exists above and beyond generalized tendencies people possess based on their longstanding dispositions.

Social norms are rule-based, socially transmitted inclinations to respond to particular situations in a specific manner. For example, societies develop rules regarding the expression of anger; such rules help groups avoid the chaos that would ensue if people were to freely express hostility. Likewise, dyads may also develop relationship-specific norms that promote harmonious day-to-day interaction (e.g., agreements about the fair division of household chores).

Conclusion

Interdependence Theory provides unique and necessary tools for analyzing *interpersonal* phenomena. Whereas most psychological theories focus on the individual, suggesting that people behave as they do because of their unique traits or cognitions, in interdependence theory, the relationships *between* people are as important as the people. Thus, the theory represents an elegant, functional model of the nature and implications of interdependence. It is a truly *social* psychological theory.

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See also Comparison Levels; Conflict Resolution; Dependence; Motivation and Relationships; Power, Predictors of; Rewards and Costs in Relationships; Social Exchange Theory; Transformation of Motivation

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INTERGENERATIONAL FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

Ties between the generations have been of great interest throughout recorded history, as demonstrated by

the central role of these relationships in popular works of fiction as varied as Shakespeare's plays in the 16th century and Bernhard Schlink's novel *Homecoming* and the television series *Everybody Loves Raymond* in the 21st century. Not surprisingly, both clinicians and scholars have devoted substantial effort to describing and explaining relations among family members in different generations. This high level of professional and popular attention is consistent with the importance that individuals place on their family relationships. Indeed, given high rates of divorce and geographic mobility in contemporary society, relationships between parents and children are likely to be the most stable and long-term ties that people experience. Further, research has shown that both parents' and children's well-being is affected by the quality of their relationship and by the problems they each experience. Thus, there is ample evidence to demonstrate the centrality of this intergenerational tie.

This entry begins by describing historical and demographic trends in intergenerational relationships, followed by discussion of the factors that characterize parent-child relationships that are the most satisfying and stable. The entry then turns to two issues of concern to aging families: caregiving to frail parents and elder maltreatment. Finally, the entry describes trends in grandparent-grandchild relations, a tie that has become increasingly complex in recent decades due to increased life expectancy and increasing rates of difficulties in the lives of many adult children.

Historical and Demographic Trends

Several trends over the last century have affected intergenerational relationships. The trend that has had the greatest impact is the dramatically lengthened life span; for a child born in 1900, life expectancy was 48 years; by 2005, it had increased to nearly 78 years. Perhaps even more important, for individuals who are now about 50 years of age, the life expectancy for women is 33 additional years and for men it is 29 years. Thus, family members now spend more time occupying intergenerational family roles as adult children, parents, and grandparents than did any earlier cohorts.

The second major demographic change is a decline in parent-adult child coresidence. Coresidence with adult children when parents entered their later years was common in earlier historical

periods; however, there was a dramatic decline in this pattern across the 20th century in the United States. Nevertheless, many parents and adult children still coreside, although more recently coresidence typically involves the adult child living in the parents' home rather than the reverse. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, in 2006, 22 percent of householders 65 and older had an adult child living with them, whereas only 3 percent of householders ages 25 to 54 had an older family member coresiding.

The third important change involves women's increased participation in the labor force, reducing the time and energy devoted to "kinkeeping." In fact, married women's labor force participation has increased from 30 to 60 percent since 1970 alone. Although one might expect that this demographic change would lead to women doing markedly less caregiving, in most cases, women instead expand their responsibilities to meet their older parents' need for assistance.

Finally, the paths that current middle-age Americans (referred to as the "baby boomers") have followed differ from earlier cohorts in ways that affect kin relations. Compared with earlier cohorts, baby boomers have been more likely to remain unmarried, have lower birth rates, and become divorced, each of which tends to weaken intergenerational ties, particularly for men.

Although these sociodemographic transitions have changed the face of family life in the past several decades, research has shown that none has reduced the importance of the parent-child relationship in adulthood. Both high levels of contact and mutually supportive exchanges are reported by parents and their adult children despite the presence of conflict and ambivalence common to intimate interpersonal relations. Further, at the end of parents' lives, adult children often provide care and support, particularly when a parent is widowed.

Closeness and Contact Between Parents and Adult Children

In the 1950s and 1960s, scholars expressed concern that intergenerational contact and support were increasingly threatened by industrialized societies. However, research has demonstrated these concerns were unfounded. Most parents and

adult children have relatively frequent and regular contact with parents despite that adult children are more likely to live farther away from their families of origin than were previous cohorts. Further, studies of the quality of relations between the generations find consistent evidence that the emotional ties between parents and adult children remain strong, particularly between women in the family. Recent investigations have revealed that conflict and ambivalence are more common characteristics of intergenerational relations than previously thought; nevertheless, the most prominent pattern of parent–adult child relations continues to be positive and supportive.

Exchange of Support, Parental Dependency, and Family Caregiving

Most families are characterized by mutual exchange between the generations, typically following a pattern reflecting the life course stages of parents and adult children. When offspring are young adults, support tends to flow from parent to child in the form of assistance in establishing independent lives. As children leave young adulthood, support still generally flows from parent to child, but usually diminishes somewhat. It is typically only in the late stages of the parents' life that the direction of support flows more heavily from child to parent.

Most assistance provided to parents is routine and produces little strain; however, as parents age and experience declines in health and income, adult children are increasingly likely to assume the role of family caregiver. This represents a major life-course transition for adult children that typically has far-reaching consequences for the caregiver's physical, mental, and social well-being. This is particularly the case if the parent has developed Alzheimer's disease or some other form of irreversible dementia.

Studies have focused primarily on the difficulties that adult children experience when they begin caring for older parents. This line of research has shown that parents' increased dependence on their adult children often reduces positive feelings between the generations while increasing children's difficulty managing the competing roles of spouse, parent, and worker. Not surprisingly, caregiving is often associated with increases in adult children's physical and emotional stress.

However, the effects of caregiving are not uniformly bleak. First, studies have found that many caregivers identify positive consequences of caregiving, such as feelings of gratification derived from helping someone they love and fulfilling expectations of filial responsibility. Second, several circumstances affect the consequences of caregiving on adult children. For example, caregiving is associated with fewer negative and more positive outcomes when the parent and child have a history of closeness and support and when there is little conflict among siblings regarding parent care. Further, among married adult daughters, those whose husbands are supportive of the daughters' caregiving efforts experience more positive outcomes. Recent studies have shown that parents have specific expectations and preferences regarding which of their children take primary responsibility for caregiving. Future research may reveal that caregiving outcomes are better for both parents and children when those preferences and expectations are met. Understanding the factors that improve the quality of the caregiving experience may also be an important key to reducing the risk of elder maltreatment because individuals most likely to need assistance—those with physical and psychological impairments—are at a higher risk of becoming victims of such maltreatment than are more healthy persons.

Determinants of the Quality of Parent–Child Relationships

Understanding the quality of parent–adult child relations has been of great interest to scholars and clinicians. The most consistent finding in studies of intergenerational relations is the primacy of the bond between mothers and daughters, which is stronger than that of any other gender combination in the family. Children's transitions into adult social statuses also typically improve relations between the generations. For example, the parent–child tie becomes more harmonious as adolescents move into adulthood, and it continues to strengthen as both children and parents move across the life course. Further, there is generally increased closeness when children begin to share a large number of adult statuses with their parents, such as employment, marriage, and parenthood. However, the trend toward greater closeness when children attain

adult status is not always straightforward because some adult transitions (such as becoming a parent) also increase competition for scarce time and energy, leaving fewer resources for intergenerational relationships. Nevertheless, children's transitions into adult status increase the similarity of values and interests between parents and children, which enhance closeness and reduce conflict.

Recent studies have shown that parents often differentiate among their adult children in terms of emotional closeness, preferences for support, and provision of support to the younger generation. The factors just discussed are the best predictors of which children are most likely to be favored—daughters and children who are more similar to the parents in terms of values and social structural positions. In addition, parents favor children who live nearby.

Major problems in adult children's lives have been shown to have detrimental effects on parent-child relationships. For example, parents are likely to experience poorer relationships with children who have mental, physical, substance abuse, or stress-related problems. Such problems have stronger effects on parent-child conflict and ambivalence than parents' feelings of emotional closeness toward their children. Not surprisingly, problems for which children are perceived as not responsible, such as illness, have fewer negative effects than those for which they are perceived as responsible, such as substance abuse or trouble with the law. Regardless of whether the problem is voluntary, children's difficulties have been found to affect their parents' physical and psychological well-being.

Adult children's problems also increase the risk of elder maltreatment. In fact, children's problems are a better predictor of elder maltreatment than parents' dependency. Abusive adult children are likely to be financially dependent, live with their parent(s), have problems related to alcohol and drugs, and have some indication of socioemotional maladjustment.

Diversity and Older Parent-Adult Child Relations

Studies have revealed both similarities and differences in intergenerational relationships among racial and ethnic groups. Both parents and children of all racial and ethnic groups appear to place

substantial importance on both the emotional and instrumental aspects of intergenerational relations, reporting high levels of closeness, as well as regular contact and a history of exchange. However, research has revealed notable racial and ethnic variations in these relationships. African Americans and Hispanics appear to have stronger ideals regarding filial obligations than do their White Anglo counterparts, and they are more likely to exchange support. Further, older African Americans and Hispanics are more likely to live with their adult children. Both African-American parents and adult children report higher levels of closeness and lower levels of conflict than do Whites; however, such differences are not found between Whites and Hispanics. Comparisons reveal greater filial responsibility, exchange of support, and intergenerational coresidence among Asian Americans than Anglos, but substantial diversity among Asian subgroups regarding intergenerational support. Rapidly expanding diversity in the United States makes it increasingly important to understand patterns and consequences of racial and ethnic variations in older parent-adult child relations.

Grandparents and Grandchildren

In recent years, popular and scholarly interest in relationships between grandchildren and grandparents has grown. This can, in part, be attributed to the historical and demographic changes outlined earlier, each of which has influenced the role of grandparenting as well as parenting. First, due to increasing life expectancy, most parents of adult children will occupy the role of grandparent for nearly one third of their lives. Second, the effects of high rates of divorce extend to ties between grandparents and grandchildren. Adult children's divorces often reduce contact and closeness between grandparents and grandchildren—particularly on the father's side of the family. Third, although intergenerational coresidence has declined overall across the past century, such residential arrangements remain common in Black and Hispanic families, thus providing higher levels of grandchild-grandparent contact in these groups than that found in White families.

Grandparents often play a major role in raising their grandchildren. In coresidential families in which parents are present, grandparents are less

burdened by parenting stress, and can serve primarily as a source of support; however, when grandparents serve as sole guardians of grandchildren, they are more likely to experience decreased well-being—particularly greater depression and lower life satisfaction.

Predictors of the quality of grandparent–grandchild relations are well documented. Closeness and contact are greater when the generations live near each other and when grandparents are better educated, healthy, have fewer grandchildren, and are married. Families living in rural areas also have stronger intergenerational links. Other relations in the family also affect the quality of the grandparent–grandchild tie. For example, grandparents are likely to be more supportive and attentive to grandchildren if they had positive childhood experiences with their own grandparents. Also, grandparent–grandchild ties depend heavily on relationships with the parent generation. If there is high affectional solidarity and support between the grandparents and parents, the relationships between grandparents and grandchildren will also tend to be strong.

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See also Caregiving Across the Life Span; Elder Abuse and Neglect; Grandparent–Grandchild Relationship; Kinkeeping; Mother–Child Relationship in Adolescence and Adulthood; Multigenerational Households; Parent–Child Relationships

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Professionals have labeled this phenomenon “the cycle of violence” or “the intergenerational transmission of violence,” and it is the most heavily researched phenomenon within family maltreatment. Is there merit to these assumptions? If so, how strong is the effect? This entry reviews what has been learned, focusing on conceptualization of the phenomenon, extent of transmission, and possible mechanisms by which transmission may occur.

Conceptualization

One might think that intergenerational transmission of abuse would be a relatively straightforward concept; however, this is not the case. Children can be direct victims of maltreatment, they can be exposed to interparental violence, or both. As adults, they can maltreat their own children, they can perpetrate or be victimized by partner violence, or both. Maltreatment can be further subdivided into physical, emotional, sexual, and/or neglect subtypes.

In research, the definitions of maltreatment vary widely. Many studies follow children who were substantiated by local Child Protective Services (CPS) as being maltreated. However, state statutes vary widely, as do local CPS’ de facto standards for what is substantiated as maltreatment. In studies that rely on self- or parent reports of maltreatment, researchers frequently rely on reports of behaviors (e.g., being struck by a parent) without requiring impact on the victim (e.g., bruises) or extreme danger, as CPS investigations would. Furthermore, victims often experience more than one subtype of abuse (e.g., both physical and emotional), and child and partner maltreatment often co-occur in the same homes. With such variety in what can be and has been examined, interpretation and comparison of abuse research findings is often difficult. This entry is as specific as space will allow; interested readers will find more detailed information in the supplementary readings.

INTERGENERATIONAL TRANSMISSION OF ABUSE

Most people believe that most or all abusive adults must have been exposed to abuse as children.

Extent of Transmission

What effect does the presence of violence or abuse in a childhood home (i.e., “family of origin” [FOO]) have on the probability that a particular type of abuse will be present in the adult homes of

former victims? The scientific research literature is summarized later, broken down by type of abuse (i.e., physical, emotional, sexual, or neglect). Overall, the effects found have been statistically significant, but only small to medium in size. There is evidence that risk of transmission may increase (a) with frequency or severity of abuse, and/or (b) when exposure to multiple types of abuse has occurred.

Physical Abuse

The vast majority of research on the intergenerational transmission of abuse has been conducted regarding physical abuse. There are two primary lines of inquiry: transmission of child physical abuse and transmission of intimate partner violence (IPV).

Child physical abuse. Most studies of the transmission of physical violence toward children have focused on mothers', rather than fathers', FOO histories. Parents who were physically punished as children—particularly during adolescence—are at higher risk of perpetrating both minor and severe violence toward their own children; for mothers, the effect is stronger if it was their own mothers who abused them. Witnessing IPV during childhood also increases risk of child physical abuse perpetration in adulthood.

IPV. Research has shown that children who are physically, sexually, or emotionally abused—or witness either parent being physically or emotionally aggressive toward someone else—are at increased risk of perpetrating and/or experiencing IPV as adults. Although the risk of both perpetration and victimization is amplified for all children who grow up in violent homes, boys appear to be at more greatly increased risk than girls for becoming IPV perpetrators, whereas girls are at more greatly increased risk than boys of becoming IPV victims.

Emotional Abuse

Little research has been done on the transmission of emotional abuse; the few studies that do exist are difficult to interpret and compare because (a) definitions of emotional abuse vary dramatically, and (b) emotional abuse is usually

not considered in isolation, but combined with other types of abuse. It does appear that experiencing or witnessing physical or emotional violence on the part of either parent places a child at increased risk of perpetrating and/or experiencing emotional violence in later romantic relationships, although the effects found so far have been small.

Sexual Abuse

Gauging the extent of intergenerational transmission of sexual abuse is difficult because most child sexual abuse studies do not distinguish between extra- and intrafamilial perpetrators. The vast majority of rapes and sexual abuse incidents are perpetrated by males; however, there is some evidence that a history of childhood sexual victimization may increase the risk of child sexual abuse perpetration for both men and women. In fact, parents who were sexually abused as children are at greatly increased risk of having a sexually abused child even if they themselves are not the perpetrators.

Neglect

Child neglect is by far the most common form of child maltreatment in the United States, but has received relatively little research attention, particularly in terms of intergenerational transmission. This is likely due to difficulty and wide variability in operationalizing neglect. There is some evidence that parents neglected as children may be at increased risk of neglecting their own children, but the transmission effect, if it indeed exists, appears to be weak.

Possible Mechanisms of Transmission

Studies have begun to illuminate how the cycle of family violence may operate. Some of the mechanisms of transmission that have received the most research support include modeling, poor parenting, and transmission of risk.

Modeling

Modeling, or observational learning, is considered to be a primary cause of the intergenerational transmission of abuse. Behavioral modeling generally refers to the tendency for someone who notices the success of others' behavior to imitate it, hoping for a

similar outcome. If the imitated behavior does indeed obtain the desired result, the probability that the behavior will be repeated increases (i.e., operant conditioning). Thus, children see that violence against themselves or loved ones works in getting something that the perpetrator wants. When they later want something themselves, they imitate what they have observed and use violence to obtain it; thus, victimized children learn to victimize others.

Poor Parenting

Not surprisingly, parents who abuse each other and/or their children also tend to be poor parents who have less-than-diligent monitoring habits and utilize ineffective discipline strategies that are overly harsh and coercive. Moreover, children of ineffective parents are at increased risk for a host of negative outcomes, including failure in school, work, and interpersonal relationships; anxiety, depression, and personality problems; association with deviant peers; substance abuse and conduct problems; and problems with anger control and interpersonal violence. The increased risk occurs even if parents cannot be termed abusive; thus, it appears likely that poor parenting is the driving factor, rather than abuse as such.

Transmission of Other Factors That Increase Risk

It should also be noted that troubled children tend to form romantic relationships with each other (i.e., assortative mating); any children born to such a couple are likely to receive a “double dose” of risk. Risk factors for abuse that may be passed on from one or both parents may be biological, cognitive, emotional, or environmental. For example:

- Genetic factors that predispose one generation toward violence may be passed on to the next.
- Abusive parents tend to attribute their children’s undesirable behavior to negative personality traits and hostile intent, and children whose parents make such attributions about them tend to make such attributions about others.
- Children of parents who habitually and rapidly escalate when they get angry tend to develop similarly poor emotion-regulation skills.
- Children who grow up in poverty-stricken, high-crime neighborhoods tend to remain in them as adults.

In part because risk factors for abuse can be passed on from generation to generation, abuse can even be transmitted in a seemingly indirect way. For example, children (particularly girls) whose mothers have a history of childhood sexual victimization are three or more times more likely than other children to be sexually victimized themselves, although it is virtually never the former victim (i.e., the mother) who perpetrates the abuse. This is most likely because former sexual abuse victims have higher rates of several maternal characteristics that are known to place children at increased risk of being sexually abused—for example, mental illness, substance abuse, and becoming romantically involved with violent men.

Conclusions

Despite definitional and methodological inconsistencies within the literature, there is support for the hypothesis that intergenerational transmission of family maltreatment does occur. However, contrary to popular belief, the effects of childhood exposure are nowhere near universal. For children of former child abuse victims, the best estimates available predict about a one in three probability of exposure to abuse. Sobering as this forecast is, it should be noted that there is also hope, in that the majority of children of former victims will seemingly grow up without being abused, neglected, or in a relationship characterized by intimate partner violence. Unfortunately, relatively little research has been conducted into possible reasons, causes, or mechanisms for nontransmission of abuse. Quite often, it appears, the apple does indeed travel far from the tree, but the field does not yet know why most seeds of family violence, planted during childhood, never sprout.

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See also Abuse and Violence in Relationships; Child Abuse and Neglect; Families, Intergenerational Relationships in; Intergenerational Family Relationships; Intergenerational Transmission of Divorce; Parent–Child Relationships; Parenting; Relational Aggression

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INTERGENERATIONAL TRANSMISSION OF DIVORCE

The intergenerational transmission of divorce (alternately, the divorce cycle) refers to the propensity for people to end their own marriages as a result of growing up in a divorced family. Social scientists first suggested that divorce might run in families in the 1930s. Since then, more than 25 studies have confirmed that the adult children of divorce dissolve their own marriages with disproportionate frequency. This entry provides a brief overview of the intergenerational transmission of divorce.

For the social scientist, divorce provides a fabulous independent variable: It has strong and generally negative effects on almost every aspect of people's economic, social, and psychological lives. Compared with their married counterparts, divorcees generally are poorer, more depressed, and less physically healthy. Marital disruption has similarly wide-ranging negative effects on offspring. Compared with youth in intact families, the children of divorce do worse in school, are more likely to be substance abusers, are less happy, and as adults have worse jobs and less money. Few social scientists question these findings. There is even evidence that, all else being equal, people from divorced families do not live as long as people who grew up with two biological parents.

Parental divorce has implications for almost every aspect of children's behavior in romantic relationships. Teenagers from divorced families date more, have sex earlier, and, if women, are disproportionately likely to get pregnant out of wedlock. Teenage girls from divorced families even have their periods earlier than do their counterparts from intact families. People from divorced families also think about intimate relationships differently. Compared with their peers from intact families, the adult children of divorce view marriage less favorably and divorce less unfavorably.

Parental Divorce and Offspring Marital Behavior

Given the differences between people from divorced and intact families, it should come as little surprise that the children of divorce have distinctive marital behavior. This behavior is important for understanding why divorce rates are higher for people from nonintact families.

For many years, social scientists were divided as to whether parental divorce made marriage more or less likely among adult offspring. The answer is both. The children of divorce have disproportionately high marriage rates through age 20. However, if they remain single past that point, they are about one third less likely to ever get married, compared with their peers from intact families.

How can this pattern be explained? The children of divorce sometimes wed in order to escape unpleasant home lives; this is particularly true for

youth living in stepfamilies. As previously noted, parental divorce increases the incidence of teen sexual activity and, for women, nonmarital births. Early sex and pregnancy may in turn lead to early marriage. Past age 20, there are several reasons that the children of divorce have lower marriage rates than do their counterparts from intact families. First, marriage may simply seem unappealing to some people who grew up in divorced families. Perhaps fearful of repeating their parents' experience, living with a partner out of wedlock may seem preferable; indeed, the children of divorce have high rates of nonmarital cohabitation and are more inclined to view cohabitation favorably. Half of the disparity in marriage rates between people from divorced and intact families can in fact be explained by the former's propensity to cohabit. Second, past age 20, the children of divorce may avoid marriage for the same reasons they have high divorce rates. As is shown, people who grew up in divorced families often have trouble in their own marriages because they evince problematic interpersonal behaviors. Assuming these behaviors are present prior to marriage, they may interfere with the formation of lasting relationships.

Parental divorce also influences how people go about picking spouses. In particular, people from divorced families often marry other people from divorced families. This proclivity, which has been called *family structure homogamy*, goes a long way toward explaining why the children of divorce have high divorce rates. How can family structure homogamy be explained? Parental divorce provides a broad common ground of painful and poignant experiences. As children grow up, these experiences may become ingrained, making it harder to relate to people who feel differently about intimate relationships. A prospective mate from a divorced family has had a wealth of similar experiences. He or she may be able to empathize with the anguish, anxiety, and anger of parental divorce, whereas someone from an intact family might not be able to do so.

Explaining Divorce Transmission

Although the divorce cycle has been studied for many years, it is only in the last two decades that multivariate analysis has enabled scholars to

pinpoint the reasons that parental divorce increases the likelihood of dissolving one's own marriage. The first task was to rule out the confounding influences of race, education, marriage timing, and other demographic differences between people from married and divorced families. For instance, African Americans have traditionally had higher divorce rates than Whites. It is also known that parental divorce reduces offspring educational attainment and increases the odds of a teenage marriage. Race, low educational attainment, and youthful marriage are all noteworthy predictors of divorce. Perhaps these differences, not the effects of parental divorce per se, are responsible for the intergenerational transmission of marital instability. These factors all make a difference, but collectively they can account for at most one third of the divorce cycle.

With one caveat, the rest is directly attributable to the experience of parental divorce. Thanks in large part to the research of Paul Amato, two psychological mechanisms for divorce transmission have been identified. The first is problematic interpersonal skills. Adult children of divorce often engage in behaviors that are not conducive to maintaining a lasting interpersonal relationship. A long list of these behaviors has been proposed; examples include anger, jealousy, submissiveness, poor conflict resolution skills, and distrustfulness. Statistically controlling for these and other behaviors can account for the relationship between growing up in a nonintact family and the likelihood of dissolving one's own marriage. Note that this finding precludes many traditional explanations for the intergenerational transmission of divorce, including role modeling—parental divorce instills offspring with prodivorce attitudes that ultimately engender divorce transmission—and the notion that the divorce cycle is entirely attributable to the social and demographic correlates of marital instability.

The second explanation for the intergenerational transmission of divorce concerns marital commitment. Social science has repeatedly shown that parental conflict is bad for offspring; the more conflict, the worse children do across a variety of social and psychological outcomes. However, parental conflict does appear to have one benefit for offspring. Divorce transmission is weaker for offspring who endured high-conflict parental divorces. Conversely, adults from divorced families

have the highest divorce rates when their parents' marriages ended after virtually no acrimony. Parental conflict teaches children to remain in their own marriages no matter what happens. When parents divorce after virtually no conflict, children may not learn the persistence that a successful marriage ultimately requires.

The exception to these explanations for the divorce cycle is the role played by genetics. In research based on twins, researchers have shown that a portion of the intergenerational transmission of divorce can be attributed to genetics rather than behavior. The reasoning is this: Some people are innately difficult, and their problematic interpersonal behaviors are conferred genetically as well as socially. Recipients of this "difficult gene" often have trouble in their own marriages; thus, their troubles may have a purely biological component. The scholars who conducted this research concluded that genetics only play a partial role in explaining divorce. Genetics cannot account for why the divorce rate skyrocketed between 1965 and 1985, or why the divorce cycle has weakened over time, as discussed next.

How Strong Is the Divorce Cycle?

The strength of the divorce cycle varies according to the historical period the divorce data were collected in, how parental divorce is measured, and whether the analysis controls for social and demographic differences between respondents. Irrespective of these factors, parental divorce increases the likelihood that adult offspring will dissolve their own marriages by at least 40 percent. Under some conditions, the children of divorce are three times as likely to get divorced as are their peers from intact families.

The most important predictor of divorce transmission is the extent of a couple's exposure to parental divorce. Each spouse's experience with parental divorce contributes separately and additively to the probability that their own marriage will dissolve. Thus, marriages between people from intact families have the lowest divorce rates, unions containing one child of divorce are in the middle, and marriages between people from divorced families have the highest chances of dissolution. Furthermore, the odds of divorce transmission are

the same whether it is the husband or the wife who hails from a divorced family. People from divorced families exhibit behaviors not conducive to maintaining happy marriages; family structure homogeneity compounds these problems by uniting two people who are ill disposed to marital success.

Multiple family disruptions while growing up incrementally increase the likelihood of dissolving one's own marriage. People whose divorced parents remarry are more likely to dissolve their own marriages than are their peers experiencing parental divorce but not remarriage; multiple parental divorces produce even higher divorce rates in offspring. Also, people experiencing multiple family structure transitions while growing up are more likely to dissolve multiple marriages as adults; the divorce cycle holds for second and third marriages as well as initial unions. People often repeat the patterns of marital behavior they learned growing up.

Trends in Divorce Transmission

Divorce in America has changed substantially over the past 50 years. Concomitant with increases in the divorce rate has been a sea change in how people view ending a marriage. In 1952, voters were more concerned about Democratic presidential nominee Adlai Stevenson's divorce than they were about the threat of domestic communism. Less than 30 years later, Ronald Reagan's divorce was the nonevent of his successful presidential campaign in 1980. This comparison of two presidential hopefuls shows how divorce went from stigma to commonplace in a relatively short period of time.

The result has been a dramatic change in the divorce cycle. Survey respondents who grew up in divorced (but not remarried) families that were polled in 1973 were 126 percent more likely to have dissolved their own marriages than were otherwise comparable individuals from intact families. By 1994, the disparity had declined to 45 percent. Thus, the intergenerational transmission of divorce weakened over the same years that the divorce rate in America increased. At least in this one respect, divorce no longer appears to hurt offspring as much as it once did. There has been no change in the divorce cycle for offspring experiencing both parental divorce and remarriage.

The declining marriage rate for people from divorced families has played a small role in the weakening divorce cycle, but a larger part is directly attributable to the changing message (Note missing letter) children receive when their parents get divorced. Recall that the divorce cycle can be attributed to the reduced commitment to marriage that results from growing up in a divorced family. The message that children received about commitment was doubtless much stronger in the days when almost nobody got divorced because it stood out more starkly against the experiences of one's peers (few of whom likely came from divorced families). Under these conditions, children learned that it might be preferable not to stay in a marriage that had turned sour. These lessons were doubtless reinforced by the stigma and shame of life in a single-parent family. In contrast, no matter how painful it is at the time, a modern divorce does not stand out against the experiences of one's peers and therefore does not send nearly as strong a message to children. This is the most likely reason that the divorce cycle weakened during the latter third of the 20th century. Declining stigma may have also affected rates of divorce transmission.

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See also Divorce, Children and; Divorce, Prevalence and Trends; Marital Stability, Prediction of; Marriage, Transition to; Mate Selection

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attract or is it the case that birds of a feather flock together? In recent decades, many theories have been developed about what attracts people to one another, when, and why. Although much remains unknown about the dynamics of attraction, some critical factors have been identified. This entry distinguishes factors involved in attraction on the Internet in different kinds of online venues and as compared with face-to-face social settings. It examines the causes and correlates, explores the consequences of attraction for potential and ongoing romantic and platonic virtually formed relationships, and examines the technology and social changes that affect attraction online.

Attraction, Lack of Attraction, and Physical Appearance

In face-to-face interactions, physical appearance has been found to be perhaps the most influential factor in initial attraction. Physical appearance plays an essential role in the attraction process and creates the primary initial “gate” that determines who an individual will approach when in a crowded room of strangers, the friends who will be made, and especially the people who will be approached in hopes of developing a romantic relationship.

Without being aware that they are doing so, people habitually and automatically categorize others by physical features such as ethnicity, style of dressing, and level of physical attractiveness. Research has shown that, based on only seeing a photograph of an individual, there is extremely high consensus about the judgments most people tend to make about the person, across a wide variety of personality measurements, based only on physical appearance. Based solely on facial features, people draw strong conclusions about the other person's levels of intelligence, kindness, sense of humor, motivation, ability to succeed, and other personality traits. The adage “What is beautiful is good” applies to the judgments that people tend to make about others because people tend to assume that those who are more physically attractive also have more positive personality characteristics and are more interesting and attractive in other ways.

Research has shown that first impressions also tend to be lasting impressions and bear on attraction to others over time. First impressions tend to

INTERNET, ATTRACTION ON

What is the basis of attraction? In not very scientific terms, attraction—whether on the Internet or in person—remains largely a mystery. Do opposites

become enduring because people selectively focus on information that confirms rather than disconfirms their initial judgment as they interact with the other person or meet him or her again at a later time. Furthermore, the expectations others form based on their first impression may actually elicit confirmatory behavior from the other person.

Features that are readily perceived, such as physical appearance (attractiveness), an apparent stigma (e.g., obesity), or apparent shyness, thus often serve as gates in face-to-face interactions. These gates often open to admit those who are physically attractive and outgoing, but also often bar the way when the person is less physically attractive or less socially skilled. Attraction on the Internet can have different bases, however. Katelyn McKenna conducted a study that examined determinants of attraction in face-to-face interactions and in Internet interactions by comparing randomly paired participants who interacted face to face to those who interacted via text-only chat on the Internet. The study found that when people interacted on the Internet, in the absence of physical appearance, the quality of the interaction, especially the feelings of similarity, intimacy, and closeness attained, determined liking and attraction. In the face-to-face meetings, however, the quality of the conversation or the similarity of views, interests, and values did not matter to judgments of liking at all, suggesting that physical appearance dominates liking and overwhelms other interpersonally important factors for attraction. Not surprisingly, when participants were asked to freely describe the characteristics of their interaction partner, online partners focused on personality traits, whereas those who met face to face focused largely on physical characteristics, using descriptors such as *tall*, *blonde*, and *well dressed*.

When interactions take place with new online acquaintances in venues where physical appearance is not apparent, such as common interest groups, instant messages (IMs), chat rooms, or the comment sections of blogs, the way an individual looks does not become a barrier to potential relationships. Participants in such venues typically only exchange photographs or get together in person once they have already developed an interest in one another based on their text-based interactions. When a relationship is formed in this way, the level of physical attractiveness does not carry as much

weight when the individuals do finally meet in person. Physical attractiveness, at that point, plays a less influential role in attraction than it would had the participants known immediately what the other looked like when they first became acquainted. Research has also found that the emphasis on physical aspects of self and other is much less when individuals engage in romantic cyberflirting in chat rooms than when flirting in person. Instead, the opinions expressed, and the information about the self that is revealed, form the basis of attraction in such online venues, rather than more superficial features, such as appearance, that drive attraction in face-to-face interactions.

When physical appearance is immediately in evidence on the Internet (such as in dating sites, social networking sites like *MySpace*, and blogs), then the same biases that operate when people meet in person also operate online. As in face-to-face social settings, in online dating venues, when it comes to initial attraction, similarity plays only a minor role compared with the powerful role of physical appearance. Participants in online dating sites use the physical appearance of potential partners as the first criteria and only examine the profiles of those who pass the physical appearance test to discover the potential partner's interests, values, and goals. Indeed, Monica Whitty and Adrian Carr conducted a study that found that more than 85 percent of dating site users would not even consider examining profiles that did not contain a photograph. Other studies have shown that, even after discovering more about the person from the available profile, it is the attraction to the photo that is the deciding motivator to contact or bypass the person. Andrew Fiore and Judith Donath used the number of messages expressing interest that online daters received as a measure of attractiveness and found that men who were older and more educated received the greatest number of responses. For women, however, it was the attractiveness of the photograph along with self-descriptions that did not describe their body type as being "heavy" that received the most responses, regardless of the other information provided in their profiles.

Similarity and Attraction

The Internet has exponentially expanded the potential for individuals to meet others with

important similarities. Common interest groups of every description can be easily found on the Internet where individuals can meet others who share their hobbies, political and religious beliefs, lifestyle preferences, and specific combinations of all these. The Internet can be particularly useful for locating others who share specialized interests (such as an interest in medieval history), who are experiencing similar health or emotional difficulties, or who share aspects of identity that are socially sanctioned and thus are often not readily identifiable in one's physical community. In a longitudinal study of participants taking part in common interest groups online, McKenna found that the relationships, including the romantic relationships formed among members of those groups, were more stable and durable over a 2-year period of time than comparable relationships formed through traditional means. Studies using the same 2-year timeframe, as well as relationships at the same developmental stage at the start of the study (couples who had been "in love" for 3–6 months), have found that the most commonly given reason for the dissolution of romantic relationships formed in traditional settings is that the couples discovered that they did not, after all, share the same interests and values. In contrast, those who met their partner through a common interest group online noted the common interests and values they shared as an important component in the continuation and closeness of their relationship.

Mutual Self-Disclosure and Attraction

It has been well established that people tend to more readily engage in acts of self-disclosure on the Internet than they do in person. Both on the Internet and in person, situation-appropriate self-disclosure fosters feelings of liking and attraction between people. There is a strong tendency for individuals to like and feel attracted to those to whom they self-disclose, to like those who disclose to them, and to disclose more to those they like. Self-disclosure is important to the development of intimacy because it entails being able to express and have accepted one's true personality and inner feelings.

Self-disclosure also has implications for maintaining levels of attraction. In promising relationships in which the partners do not get beyond

superficial levels of self-disclosure, the parties tend to lose the attraction they feel toward one another relatively quickly. When a strong foundation of mutual self-disclosure has been laid, the parties tend to continue to feel deep levels of attraction for one another and to be motivated to maintain the relationship. The tendency to disclose more about oneself, and sooner, to others on the Internet has been linked with feelings of attraction developing more quickly between the parties than typically occurs when new acquaintanceships begin in person. Even with long-standing relationships with family and friends, the heightened self-disclosure that frequently occurs between them through e-mail and IMs has been shown to increase feelings of closeness and to deepen the relationships.

Technological and Social Changes Affecting Attraction on the Internet

When the Internet was in its infancy, the information available and the interactions between individuals were completely textual in nature. Interpersonal attraction at that time was wholly founded on the power of words: through the ideas and thoughts expressed, self-disclosures and aspects of the self that were revealed, and similarities discovered between the writers. It was perceived as being risky to provide identifying information about oneself in any sort of public forum, and thus the majority of users cloaked themselves in anonymity by using nicknames in their interactions online. This anonymity allowed users to be bolder in their self-disclosures than they would be were they identifiable.

Despite that society viewed Internet-initiated relationships with skepticism and, to some extent, disapproval, friendships and romantic relationships between users flourished in this text-only medium. Because of fears surrounding meeting someone only known through the anonymous environment of the Internet and because of forging a relationship entirely through written form, users typically corresponded for an average of 3 months prior to taking the step of meeting one another in person. Internet-initiated relationships became increasingly common and thus increasingly accepted in society.

Technological advances changed the Internet from a text-only media to one that commonly

includes pictures and prerecorded videos, voice chat, and live video feeds. Each of these technological advances has affected attraction processes on the Internet. When pictures and video are initially available, then attraction on the Internet is based on the same determinants of attraction as occurs outside of the Internet.

The technological advances have kept step with the social acceptance of the Internet as a venue for forging and maintaining relationships. Social acceptance and the accompanying reduction in fears surrounding the Internet have decreased the tendency for users to interact anonymously. As users become increasingly identifiable, there is a corresponding chilling effect on the self-disclosures they make with others through the Internet. Social acceptance has also encouraged Internet users to meet one another much more quickly than they did in the past. Dating-site participants exchange an average of only two e-mails before arranging a meeting, for instance. When time and effort have been invested in a relationship (along with an exchange of intimate disclosures), people tend to be more motivated to maintain a positive opinion of the other and to wish to continue that relationship even if, upon meeting, the other's physical and personality attributes are less than expected or optimally desired. Research suggests that the more quickly a new or potential relationship is moved offline, the less chance it stands of the attraction between the parties continuing or the relationship developing further. As the Internet increasingly mirrors communication in the physical world, so too will the patterns and bases of attraction on the Internet.

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See also Communication, Instant Messaging and Other New Media; Computer Matching Services; Computer-Mediated Communication; Internet Dating; Interpersonal Attraction; Technology and Relationships

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INTERNET AND SOCIAL CONNECTEDNESS

When Internet-based communication technologies, such as e-mail and chat, became available to the general public in the 1990s, it was widely assumed in both academic and popular literature that these technologies would reduce people's social connectedness. Social connectedness refers to the relationships that people have with others in their environment (e.g., friends, family members, and neighbors). This reduction hypothesis rested on three assumptions: (1) the Internet motivates people to form superficial online relationships with strangers, which are less beneficial than existing, offline relationships; (2) time spent with online strangers occurs at the expense of time spent with existing friends and relationships; and (3) strong, close offline relationships are replaced by weak, distant online relationships, so that the overall quality of people's relationships is reduced.

The reduction hypothesis received considerable empirical support at the early stages of Internet adoption. Several studies conducted in the second

half of the 1990s demonstrated that Internet use significantly reduced people's social connectedness. However, the size of these negative effects was usually small. In such Internet effects studies, social connectedness was operationalized as, for example, the size of people's local network; the time they spent with family members, friends, and neighbors; their perceived social support; or the perceived quality of their relationships with family members and friends.

However, although these reduction effects were demonstrated consistently in the second half of the 1990s, at least two changes in the use of the Internet may render such effects less plausible at the current stage of Internet adoption. First, at the early stages of the Internet, it was hardly possible to maintain one's existing social network on the Internet because the greater part of this network was not yet online. At the time, online contacts were inherently separated from offline contacts. Currently, however, the majority of people in Western countries have access to the Internet. At such high Internet access rates, a reduction effect is less plausible because people have more opportunity to maintain their existing relationships through the Internet than at the early stages of the Internet.

Second, in the past few years, several communication technologies (e.g., IMing and social networking sites) have been developed that encourage users to communicate with existing contacts. Earlier Internet-based communication technologies, such as Multi-User Dungeons (MUDs) and public chat rooms, were primarily used for communication between strangers around certain topics or activities. However, more recent technologies distinguish themselves from previous ones by people's predominant communication with existing relationships.

Against this backdrop, reductive effects of the Internet on people's social connectedness have become less likely. It is no surprise, therefore, that the majority of studies that appeared in the new millennium have found positive effects of different types of online communication on social connectedness. To explain these positive results, scholars have put forward the *stimulation* hypothesis. This hypothesis attributes the positive effects of online communication on social connectedness to enhanced intimate self-disclosure. It is assumed that the reduced auditory and visual cues in online

communication serve as facilitators of intimate online self-disclosure. This Internet-enhanced self-disclosure seems to occur during communication with existing friends, as well as with newly formed relationships. In fact, the stimulation hypothesis is based on three assumptions. First, the Internet's reduced auditory and visual cues encourage people to disclose their inner feelings more easily than in real-life interactions. Second, intimate self-disclosure is an important predictor of reciprocal liking, caring, trust, and, thereby, of the quality of relationships. Third, this Internet-enhanced intimate self-disclosure stimulates relationship formation and maintenance.

Several studies have indeed shown that online communication stimulates intimate online self-disclosure. These studies have also demonstrated that this intimate online self-disclosure promotes online friendship formation, as well as the quality of existing relationships. As a result, the stimulation hypothesis can currently be considered a valid description of the impact of Internet communication on people's social connectedness.

Shortcomings and Future Research

Existing research on the relation between Internet use and social connectedness suffers from several shortcomings. First, in several Internet effects studies, Internet use has often been treated as a one-dimensional concept. These studies only employed a measure of daily or weekly time spent on the Internet and did not distinguish among different types of Internet use, let alone among different types of Internet communication. However, it is widely understood in the media effects literature that different types of media use may result in different outcomes. If the Internet is to influence social connectedness, it will be through its potential to alter the nature of communication when being online. Consequently, not Internet use per se, but specific types of Internet *communication* should be the focus when investigating Internet effects on social connectedness. Some types of online communication technologies (i.e., IMing and e-mail)—in fact those that are predominantly used to maintain one's social network—seem to increase social connectedness. However, communication technologies that are predominantly used

to communicate with strangers (e.g., chat in a public chat room) or more solitary forms of Internet use may have no or even negative effects on social connectedness. Future research should differentiate between types of Internet use and formulate effects hypotheses that are related to the functions that these particular technologies have for their users.

A second shortcoming of earlier research is that most studies have investigated direct linear relationships between Internet use and social connectedness. There is hardly any research that has studied the mechanisms that underlie the relationship between Internet use and social connectedness. In other words, little research has hypothesized about possible variables that may explain a stimulating effect of Internet communication on social connectedness. As discussed previously, there is growing evidence that intimate online self-disclosure may account for a positive relationship between online communication and social connectedness. However, it is possible that other communication or psychological processes, such as uncertainty management, breadth of interaction, and perceived similarity, shape or account for potential social effects of the Internet. Future research should identify and hypothesize on potential mechanisms that underlie the effects of Internet use. We need to know not only that Internet use affects social connectedness, but also more precisely how this influence works.

A final shortcoming of existing research refers to the fact that most conclusions about the effects of online communication on the quality of friendships are based on correlational studies. These studies cannot give a decisive answer about the direction of the relationship between online communication and social connectedness. It may be that Internet use indeed increases social connectedness. However, research has not decisively refuted the causally reversed hypothesis that people who are socially more connected more often turn to the Internet. Future research needs to invest in designs that allow more rigorous causal explanations. Only if we address this issue can we assess the role of Internet use for people's social connectedness in an encompassing fashion.

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See also Communication, Instant Messaging, and Other New Media; Computer-Mediated Communication; Internet, Attraction on; Technology and Relationships

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INTERNET DATING

The term *online dating* is a slight misnomer because this term actually refers to the formal process of matchmaking via the Internet. Online sites have been set up where individuals locate a potential partner and then the dating process takes place offline. This entry examines the process of online dating and the reasons that people elect to use this matchmaking method. In addition, it considers the best types of presentations of self on these sites and the future of online dating.

During the early days of the Internet, given the restricted technology capabilities and bandwidth, online dating sites looked more like newspaper personal ads. Individuals would read a profile and contact people on the site to learn more about them and to gauge whether the other person was also interested. Men were much more likely to subscribe to these sites than women, and companies allowed women onto these sites for free to ensure men had an adequate selection. Compared with the early days of the Internet, today the amount of information and detail people can add to their profile is obviously less restrictive due to increased bandwidth. Most sites attract about equal numbers of

men and women. Online dating sites across the globe continue to increase in popularity.

Given the number of people seeking others online for love and sex, it is little wonder that companies have tried to formalize this process, as well as to make money from people who are prepared to seek out romance on the Internet. These sites are typically set up to have their users construct a personal ad for themselves. Clients can, and generally do, show at least one photograph of themselves and can also add video and voice to their profiles. Online daters can rate themselves or check boxes indicating attributes such as their age, gender, location, job, and physique (e.g., a choice ranging from slim to overweight). In addition, clients are usually given an opportunity to add to and expand on this information. For example, they may elaborate on their hobbies and musical interests or the type of person they are attempting to attract.

Some sites do the matching for the client. For example, some online dating sites ask the client to fill out descriptive details and a personality scale. The site then applies a formula to match like-minded individuals and presents their clients with options from which to select. In contrast, other sites provide a more flexible approach, whereby clients can opt to fill out such tests and be presented with profiles of clients deduced to be suitable matches, or instead the client can wade through the sea of possibilities and select for themselves (i.e., a profile-searching approach).

Once a potential match is identified on the site, individuals make contact. This might be via a subtle flirtatious note or via a more detailed e-mail. Individuals might elect to get to know one another via e-mail or an instant message (IM) program. If all goes well, then a face-to-face meeting is organized. Typically this meeting is organized within a couple of weeks of initial contact via the site.

In addition to the general online dating sites such as eHarmony, True.com, Match.com, and so forth, there are also more specialized online dating sites that gather like-minded individuals together. For example, there are sites designed specifically for Christians, Jews, Vegans, Goths, or spiritual people.

Motivations for Using the Sites

Research has reported social and personality reasons for choosing online dating as a way to find a match:

- Given that career and time pressures are increasing, people are looking for more efficient ways of meeting others for intimate relationships;
- Single people are more mobile due to demands of the job market, so it is more difficult for them to meet people face to face for dating;
- Workplace romance is on the decline due to growing sensitivity about sexual harassment—hence, alternative dating approaches are needed; and
- Shy people and people over the age of 35 (compared with non-shy people and those under the age of 35) are more likely to have tried online dating and consider using it in the future.

Successful Presentation Strategies

Researchers have begun to consider, at least qualitatively, the types of profiles individuals are more attracted to and are more likely to lead to successful budding relationships. Many people lie or exaggerate aspects about themselves in their profiles (e.g., some men lie about their height, whereas women lie more about their body shape). These people are usually judged as untrustworthy and do not usually get a second date. The Balance Between Attractive and Real Self theory argues that a more successful profile is one that presents a balance between an attractive presentation of self and a “real” depiction of self (i.e., a presentation that individuals can match up to during the first face-to-face date).

Future of Online Dating

Online dating sites are here to stay; however, their structure and form will change as the technology becomes more sophisticated and companies find ways to deal with some of the problems that online daters encounter with using these sites. For example, the sites’ and clients’ trustworthiness need to be strengthened. Perhaps also adding more playful applications, such as those used in social networking sites, will make the online dating experience more playful and flirtatious.

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See also Commercial Channels for Mate Seeking; Computer Matching Services; Internet, Attraction on; Mate Selection

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INTERPERSONAL ATTRACTION

Interpersonal attraction is the broad process by which we come to prefer some potential relationship partners to others. It involves all of the influences in the initial stages of a relationship that lead us to notice particular people, consider them appealing, prioritize our interest in them, and to wish to approach them. Attraction to others is obviously influenced by their personal characteristics; some people are appealing to almost anyone they meet. However, attraction also depends on the aims and goals of the perceiver and the idiosyncratic pairing of the two people involved. It also emerges from impersonal influences that—because they are frequently overlooked—can be surprisingly potent. That is where this entry’s survey of various determinants of attraction begins.

Impersonal Influences

Attraction depends in part on one’s current desire to affiliate with others, and potential partners who would ordinarily be desirable may seem less appealing when one wishes to be alone. Alternatively, *any* partner is sometimes better than no partner at all, and we may occasionally pursue the company of others who would not be highly sought after in better circumstances.

Adverse conditions that induce confusion or fear make the presence of others more comforting, whereas embarrassing circumstances have the opposite effect—and any of us may encounter such conditions from time to time.

In fact, any event that gets a rise out of us may influence our attraction to others. Anything that “turns us on”—that is, that causes physical activation and arousal—seems to intensify our evaluative reactions to the people we encounter. When our hearts are racing and we are breathing hard, whether as a result of robust laughter, strong trepidation, or simply strenuous exercise, we find lovely people to be more desirable than they seem when we are at rest. Unattractive people seem more *undesirable* when we are aroused, as well. Thus, diverse experiences that have nothing to do with a particular partner can influence our attraction to him or her.

One of the most striking examples of impersonal influences on attraction, however, is the role of physical proximity in encouraging new relationships. Obviously, in order to be attracted to others, we have to meet them, and that is more likely to happen if they are often nearby. Various Web sites may provide ways of making contact with others in remote locations, but—everything else being equal—we tend to like those who live and work near us more than those who are larger distances away. This pattern is so striking that when college students are assigned seats in their classrooms, they are much more likely to become friends with the people who end up sitting near them than with others sitting just a few feet farther away.

There appear to be two major reasons that proximity is important: *familiarity* and *convenience*. The more often we encounter others, the more familiar they become, and that usually leads us to like them better. If they are pleasant people, familiarity does *not* breed contempt; people we recognize trigger fonder feelings than strangers do. Partners who are close at hand are also more convenient than are those who are far away, offering richer rewards that are more easily obtained. Long-distance relationships are typically less rewarding than they would be closer to home, so absence does *not* ordinarily make the heart grow fonder.

Finally, the number of potential partners we have available to us also influences our attraction to them. People become less picky when partners

become scarce. Thus, when closing time approaches, bar patrons who are still looking for a date come to consider the other people remaining in the bar to be more attractive than they seemed to be when the night was young. (This does not occur when people are not seeking a partner, so such attraction is multifaceted, depending both on the goals of the patrons and the situation they face.)

Others' Personal Characteristics

Still, no matter the circumstances, some people are more attractive than others. Everybody likes warmth, loyalty, kindness, and trustworthiness in a potential partner—including women, who prefer men who are both assertive *and* tender to those who are stonily macho—but personality traits like these are less evident than is one's appearance. When interaction begins, looks count. Many people hold the stereotype that *what is beautiful is good*: They assume that people who are physically attractive also possess desirable personalities. People also sometimes confuse beauty with talent: Good-looking professors get better teaching evaluations, and physically attractive employees receive higher salaries than less attractive people do.

Judgments of physical beauty carry special weight because we all tend to agree on who's hot and who's not. There is some idiosyncrasy in judgments of beauty—for instance, some of us prefer blondes to brunettes, whereas others do not—but beauty is “in the eye of the beholder” only to a limited extent. Instead, there is remarkable consensus around the world about the facial and physical features that make someone attractive. Appealing faces tend to be *symmetrical*, with the left and right sides of the face being mirror images of one another—so, the cheeks are the same width, the eyes the same size, and so on. Gorgeous faces also have *average* proportions that do not much differ in any dimension from human norms. This does not mean that they are ordinary or mundane. To the contrary, they are beautiful because there is nothing about them that is odd or exaggerated; their noses and chins are neither too big nor too small, their lips neither too full nor too thin. Remarkably, we seem to be born liking such lovely faces: Babies exhibit visual preferences for the same faces that adults consider to be attractive.

There is also notable agreement around the world regarding the shapes of attractive bodies. Women are most attractive when they are of average weight and have curvy figures in which their waists are noticeably narrower than their hips. A waist-to-hip ratio (WHR) of 0.7, in which the circumference of a woman's waist is only 70 percent of that of her hips and buttocks, is ideal. In fact, *Playboy* Playmates and Miss America beauty pageant contestants are now thinner, on average, than they used to be, but their typical WHRs—which hover around .67—have not changed over the last 50 years.

Men are more attractive with WHRs around 0.9. These patterns are noteworthy because the distribution of fat in the body is influenced by sex hormones, and an appropriate WHR is associated with better health in both sexes. Women with curvy shapes also get pregnant more easily than stocky women do. Thus, both sexes are attracted to the physical shapes in the other sex that suggest one is healthy and fit.

Indeed, all of these standards of beauty—symmetrical faces with average dimensions and bodies of the proper shape—are associated with healthy well-being (and the absence of harmful mutations). The cross-cultural appeal of these features leads some theorists to assert that our desires for them are evolved inclinations; they have become universal preferences because the early humans who pursued them obtained healthier mates and thereby reproduced more successfully than did those with other tastes.

Norms of fashion do vary from culture to culture. In particular, heavier weights tend to be attractive when a culture is going through hard times, but thinner bodies are more desirable when a culture is prosperous. Nevertheless, the same facial and bodily features are attractive around the world, and it is possible that these fundamental preferences are not just norms that are learned in each culture. Despite some idiosyncrasy here and there, we may have all inherited the same basic tastes.

In any case, when they are pursuing new romances, both men and women say that they want partners who have good earning prospects and who are physically attractive, warm, personable, and loyal. In practice, however, one of these characteristics clearly matters more than the rest. When they are choosing among several potential partners—as in a “speed-dating” situation, in which they have

brief conversations with 10 to 20 different possible dates—both men and women are influenced more by physical attractiveness than by anything else. If they stay together, people usually value dependability and agreeableness in their partners to a greater extent as time goes by. At first meeting, however, it is looks that count.

Aims and Goals of the Perceiver

Men and women generally seek the same attributes in a potential partner, but when they are seeking a lover for an enduring romance, their preferences differ in two particulars: looks and money. Men value physical attractiveness more than women do; they consider a moderate level of good looks to be indispensable in a mate. Women want handsome partners, too, but they first insist that their mates have acceptable prospects and incomes. Most women will be less interested in a potential husband who is handsome but poor than in one who is only moderately good looking but well to do. Men care less about a potential mate's money.

This pattern is also found around the world, and some theorists suggest that it, too, fits an evolutionary perspective. Our female forebears may have reproduced more successfully if they sought mates who could provide resources to shelter and protect their fragile children than if they were heedless of such concerns. In contrast, our male ancestors may have had more children if they pursued young, physically attractive—and therefore fertile—mates. Men's greater interest in looks and women's greater interest in resources in potential mates may thus be evolved motivations that have more to do with human nature than with our cultural heritage. (Not all relationship scientists agree with this conclusion, but it has been widely influential, stimulating a great deal of research.)

What we want in a partner also depends on whether we are seeking a lasting commitment or a short-term fling. When men want a one-night stand or a brief affair, they eagerly pursue promiscuous partners who will allow them such liaisons. However, they want potential wives to be more monogamous. When women seek a short-term fling, they prefer charismatic, masculine, physically attractive men who—because they are less likely to settle down—are less desirable as husbands.

Remarkably, women's specific tastes also fluctuate with their menstrual cycles. Women become fertile for the few days just before they ovulate each month, and during that period, their inclinations shift. Compared to the friendly, baby-faced features they typically like during the rest of the month, they prefer more masculine faces; they also become more partial to the cocky arrogance of dominant men, deeper voices, and the scents of men with more symmetrical bodies. They also dress to impress, choosing more provocative clothing, and are more flirtatious. If they already have long-term partners, they are also more likely to have affairs. None of this is necessarily intentional; indeed, most women have no idea when they are about to ovulate. Nevertheless, it is clear that many women who usually prefer kind, committed, nice men may find charismatic, untrustworthy “bad boys” to be strangely alluring when they are fertile each month.

Pair Influences

Other important influences on attraction emerge from processes that make some people more attractive to particular perceivers than to others. For one thing, the old saying that “birds of a feather flock together” is true; we do tend to like those who have similar personalities and who share our backgrounds, interests, attitudes, and values. The more similar to us others are, the more we tend to like them.

This pattern is plain in established friendships and romances; for example, in general, spouses who have a lot in common are happier with each other than are spouses who are less similar. However, there are various subtleties in the way similarity operates in beginning relationships that may mislead people into sometimes thinking, wrongly, that “opposites attract.” When we are attracted to others for any reason (such as their good looks), we tend to assume that we have much in common with them; thus, not only does similarity lead to attraction, but attraction leads to (assumed) similarity. People often think that they are more similar to the others they meet than they really are. Then discovering the truth can take time. The partners' assumed similarity may keep them together for a while until they recognize their differences—and during that

period it may superficially seem to outside observers that opposites attract. Moreover, the longer the partners stay together, sharing formative experiences, the more similar they may actually become. So, similarity is more attractive than opposition is, but opposites may take time to detect, and they may gradually fade if a couple stays together for some other reason.

We also generally like those who like us in return. Rejection is painful, but acceptance is pleasing, so—everything else being equal—we are attracted to others who reciprocate our interest. In fact, most people preferentially pursue potential partners from whom they expect a welcome, and they do not approach others whose acceptance is improbable. As a result, we tend to pair off with others of similar levels of *mate value* or global desirability as romantic partners.

This is a phenomenon called *matching*, and it seems to occur because people typically want the most desirable partners who will have them in return. Following such a rule, we may all want gorgeous mates, but (unless there are other potent attractions at work) only those of us who are also physically attractive will get them. In practice, beautiful people do tend to pair off with others of similar beauty, moderately attractive people end up with partners like them, and so on. Matching can be a broad process that includes other assets such as wealth, power, and fame, so that rich people with ordinary looks sometimes acquire “trophy” partners much more becoming than they. However, for most of us, the major attribute with which we find our match is physical attractiveness.

The Fundamental Basis of Attraction

Collectively, the various topics we have covered in this entry may have their effects on attraction in several different ways. For instance, finding that someone shares our attitudes and values may be reassuring, making the world seem a more coherent and predictable place. Similar partners may simply be more fun, happily encouraging us to do the things we like to do. A number of specific mechanisms are possible. At bottom, however, attraction seems to boil down to a matter of rewards and costs: We are attracted to those whose companionship promises to be rewarding to us.

We may not always be conscious of just what it is about someone that we find appealing, and we may not notice when our tastes shift over time. We may also make mistakes, thinking that something about a potential partner will be gratifying when in fact it will not; in quite a few relationships, a characteristic of a new partner that initially seems attractive proves, with time, familiarity, and experience, to be one of the most annoying and frustrating things about him or her. Researchers call such characteristics *fatal attractions*, and their prevalence demonstrates that attraction is sometimes complex and perplexing. Nevertheless, from the moment they begin (as well as thereafter), relationships hinge on what is, and what we think will be, rewarding to us.

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See also Affiliation; Arousal and Attraction; Fatal Attraction; Matching Hypothesis; Mate Preferences; Physical Attractiveness, Defining Characteristics; Physical Attractiveness Stereotype; Proximity and Attraction; Similarity Principle of Attraction; Waist-to-Hip Ratio and Attraction

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INTERPERSONAL DEPENDENCY

Interpersonal dependency—the tendency to rely on other people for nurturance, guidance, protection, and support even in situations where autonomous functioning is possible—is one of the more widely studied personality traits in the field of human relationships. Individual differences in interpersonal dependency not only predict important features of social behavior (e.g., help-seeking, conformity, compliance, and suggestibility), but also have implications for illness risk, health service use, compliance with medical and psychotherapeutic regimens, and success in adjusting to the physical and emotional challenges of aging. Because dependent people are typically insecure and clingy, and have difficulty reaching decisions without a great deal of advice and reassurance from others, high levels of interpersonal dependency can have a significant negative impact on friendships, romantic relationships, and work relationships.

This entry discusses the role of interpersonal dependency in human relationships. As the ensuing review shows, this trait is more complex than psychologists initially thought. Consistent with the beliefs of many mental health professionals, dependent adults often exhibit acquiescent, compliant behavior in social situations. However, contrary to expectations, studies suggest that in certain contexts dependent people may actually behave quite actively—even downright aggressively. Moreover,

although high levels of interpersonal dependency are associated with social and psychological impairment in a variety of contexts, in certain settings, high levels of dependency may actually enhance adjustment and functioning.

Conceptualizing Dependency

The first influential theoretical model of interpersonal dependency came from Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory, wherein a dependent personality orientation was conceptualized as the product of "oral fixation"—continued preoccupation during adulthood with the events and developmental challenges of the infantile, oral stage. Thus, classical psychoanalytic theory postulated that the orally fixated (or *oral dependent*) person would: (a) continue to rely on others for nurturance, protection, and support; and (b) exhibit behaviors in adulthood that mirror those of the oral stage (e.g., preoccupation with activities of the mouth, reliance on food and eating as a strategy for coping with anxiety).

Over the years, empirical support for Freud's classical psychoanalytic model of dependency was mixed, and gradually this perspective was supplanted by an *object relations model*, wherein dependency is conceptualized as resulting from the internalization of a mental image (sometimes called a *mental representation* or *schema*) of the self as weak and ineffectual. Retrospective and prospective studies of parent-child interactions confirm that overprotective and authoritarian parenting, alone or in combination, are associated with the development of a dependent personality in part because of the impact these two parenting styles have on the child's sense of self. Overprotective parenting teaches children that they are fragile and weak, and that they must look outward to others for protection from a harsh and threatening environment. Authoritarian (i.e., rigid, inflexible) parenting teaches children that the way to get by in life is to accede passively to others' demands and expectations. Both lead to the construction of a "helpless self-concept," which is the core element of a dependent personality style.

During the 1960s and 1970s, behavioral and social learning models called psychologists' attention to the role that learning—including observational

learning—may play in the etiology and dynamics of dependency. As social learning theorists noted, intermittent reinforcement of dependency-related behavior will propagate this behavior over time and across situation, and modeling—including symbolic modeling—can facilitate this learning/reinforcement process. Building on these initial social learning models, later researchers showed that traditional gender role socialization practices may help account for the higher levels of overt dependent behavior exhibited by women relative to men insofar as dependent responding is discouraged more strongly in boys than in girls in most Western societies. In both women and men, high levels of femininity are associated with elevated levels of self-reported interpersonal dependency, whereas high levels of masculinity are linked with low scores on a broad array of self-report dependency measures.

Analyses of cultural variations in dependency supported the hypothesis that gender role norms help shape the expression of underlying dependency needs and further indicated that traditionally *sociocentric cultures* (e.g., India, Japan) tend to be more tolerant of dependency in adults than are more *individualistic cultures* (e.g., America, Great Britain), wherein dependency is associated with immaturity, frailty, and dysfunction. Not surprisingly, adults raised in sociocentric societies report higher levels of interpersonal dependency than do adults raised in more individualistic societies. When traditionally sociocentric cultures begin to adopt Western norms and values, members of those cultures show a decrease in self-report dependency scores.

Today researchers conceptualize dependency in terms of four primary components: (1) *cognitive* (i.e., a perception of oneself as powerless and ineffectual coupled with the belief that others are comparatively powerful and potent), (2) *motivational* (i.e., a strong desire to obtain and maintain relationships with potential protectors and caregivers), (3) *affective* (i.e., fear of abandonment, fear of negative evaluation by figures of authority), and (4) *behavioral* (i.e., use of relationship-facilitating self-presentation strategies to strengthen ties to others and preclude abandonment and rejection). The cognitive component of dependency—the “helpless self-concept” discussed earlier—is the linchpin of a dependent personality orientation and the psychological mechanism from which all

other manifestations of dependency originate via a predictable sequence of steps. First, a perception of oneself as powerless and ineffectual helps create the motivational component of dependency: If one views oneself as weak and ineffectual, then one’s desire to curry favor with potential caregivers and protectors will increase. These dependency-related motivations in turn give rise to dependency-related behaviors (e.g., ingratiation and supplication) designed to strengthen ties to others, especially potential nurturers and caregivers. These dependency-related motivations also give rise to affective responses (e.g., fear of abandonment and fear of negative evaluation), which reflect the dependent person’s core beliefs and anxiety regarding the possibility that they might have to fend for themselves without the protection of a powerful other.

Dependency as a Social Construct: From Passivity to Activity, From Deficit to Strength

Early psychiatric diagnosticians such as Emil Kraepelin and Kurt Schneider were among the first to discuss the link between dependency and passivity, but the notion that high levels of dependency are associated with a compliant, acquiescent stance in interpersonal interactions was popularized primarily by psychoanalytic theorists such as Karl Abraham and Karen Horney, who wrote extensively on this topic during the 1920s and 1930s. Given this historical context, it is not surprising that, throughout much of the 20th century, social research emphasized the passive aspects of dependency, documenting links among dependency and suggestibility, conformity, help-seeking, interpersonal yielding, and compliance with the perceived expectations of others.

In recent years, researchers have become increasingly interested in identifying contextual cues that help shape dependency-related behavior, and studies confirm that observed variability in dependency-related responding is largely a function of the dependent person’s perceptions of interpersonal risks and opportunities. Typically (and quite understandably), dependent people tend to focus their efforts on currying favor with the person best able to offer protection and support over the long term. Thus, they will work harder to please a professor than a peer and, when forced to choose between

the two, may actually attempt to undermine the peer to impress the professor (e.g., competing aggressively, denigrating the peer's competence and commitment). Dependent college students put forth greater effort than do nondependent students when offered an opportunity to meet with a professor whom they believe can offer future help and support. However, when told that the professor will soon be leaving the university (and therefore will not be available in the future), dependent-nondependent differences in behavior disappear.

These and other findings confirm that dependency-related responding is proactive, goal-driven, and guided by beliefs and expectations regarding the self, other people, and self-other interactions. Although the behavior of dependent persons varies considerably from situation to situation, the dependent person's underlying cognitions (a perception of oneself as powerless and ineffectual) and motives (a desire to obtain and maintain relationships with potential protectors and caregivers) remain constant.

Other examples of goal-driven "active dependency" emerge in the medical and academic arenas. For example, studies indicate that dependent women show shorter latencies than nondependent women in seeking medical help following detection of a serious medical symptom (e.g., a possible lump in the breast) in part because dependent women are more comfortable than nondependent women seeking help from physicians. Dependent patients also adhere more conscientiously than nondependent patients to medical and psychotherapeutic treatment regimens. Other investigations indicate that dependent college students are more willing than nondependent students to seek advice from professors and advisors when they are having difficulty with class material; as a result, dependent college students have significantly higher grade-point averages than nondependent college students with similar demographic backgrounds and comparable Scholastic Aptitude Test scores. All these examples not only represent active dependency-related behavior, but also represent instances of *adaptive dependency* (sometimes called *healthy dependency*)—dependency-related responding that enhances health, academic achievement, and social adjustment.

These findings should not be taken to suggest that all active manifestations of dependency lead to positive outcomes. On the contrary, dependent

elementary school students who make frequent contact with the teacher are perceived by classmates as being clingy and demanding, and these students tend to score low on peer ratings of sociometric status and high on self-report measures of loneliness. Other studies suggest that dependency-related insecurity can lead to difficulties in romantic relationships and increased conflict with college roommates. Dependent psychiatric patients tend to have a higher number of "pseudo-emergencies" than nondependent patients with similar diagnostic profiles and to overuse medical and consultative services when hospitalized, a pattern also displayed by dependent nursing home residents.

In addition—and perhaps most surprisingly—studies consistently show that highly dependent men are at significantly increased risk for perpetrating domestic partner abuse in part because these men are extremely fearful of being abandoned by their partner. As a result, they become hypervigilant, overperceiving abandonment risk and becoming jealous of even casual contacts between their partner and other men. When more appropriate and adaptive social influence strategies (e.g., ingratiation, flattery) are ineffective in drawing the partner closer and persuading her to sever ties with potential rivals, some dependent men may, as a last resort, become emotionally and physically abusive.

Conclusion

In certain ways, the evolution of research on interpersonal dependency has paralleled the broader changes taking place in the study of human relationships during the past 80 years. What was once conceptualized as a personality pattern that manifested itself consistently across contexts and settings has come to be seen in a more nuanced way as a set of beliefs and behavioral predispositions that may be expressed differently depending on the opportunities and constraints characterizing different situations. What was once conceptualized primarily in terms of expressed behavior has come to be understood in terms of the complex interplay of underlying cognitive, motivational, and affective processes. Like many personality traits that were initially conceptualized as reflecting flaws or deficits in functioning, interpersonal

dependency has come to be seen as a personality style that can impair adjustment in certain ways, but enhance it in others.

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See also Emotion in Relationships; Interdependence Theory; Investment Model; Personality Traits, Effects on Relationships; Self-Concept and Relationships

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INTERPERSONAL INFLUENCE

Interpersonal influence (also known as social influence) has occurred whenever the actions of one or more individuals influence the behavior or beliefs of one or more other individuals. Relationships thrive or decay according to how well the participants agree with one another about important decisions. Some agreements just luckily happen, but many of them are the result of the participants influencing one another. Knowing the

principles described next will make one a better practitioner of influence and also more aware of how one is being influenced. This entry discusses the two major forms of interpersonal influence, followed by an examination of tactics used by compliance professions, such as salespeople.

Informational and Normative Influence

Imagine a long line of people walking down a road toward a crossroad where they must go either left or right. You are standing on a hill watching as every single person goes to the left. You can see no reason for this because the road to the left does not look any more promising than the road to the right. You would probably assume that all these people had information that you didn't have—perhaps a concert is to take place on the road to the left. If you joined the line of people, you would probably also go to the left, making you the target of an instance of interpersonal influence known as *informational social influence*. In this type of social influence, you assume that the behaviors, beliefs, and opinions of others are based on some sort of correct information, and so you go along unless you have information to the contrary or some reason to doubt the motives of the other people. This type of influence is pervasive and is necessary for survival. To not take cues from others would be to ignore much of the information that is available about the world. When you seek the views of experts, such as movie critics or religious leaders, you are also seeking informational social influence, as you are when asking the advice of a trusted friend.

Sometimes, however, there is a conflict between what other people do or believe and what we see as correct or appropriate for ourselves. In the example of the crossroad, you may discover that the group playing the concert is one you don't like very much, and you start to turn right to look for a restaurant rather than go to the concert. Your friends, however, urge you to join them at the concert, implying that they may not value you as a friend as much if you don't go with them. If you go along with them to maintain the friendship, you have been the target of *normative social influence*, or conforming to the expectations of others in

order to be socially accepted. As the late Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, Sam Rayburn, used to tell new members of the House, you have to “go along to get along.”

Influence Tactics of Compliance Professionals

Robert Cialdini, a social psychologist, immersed himself for nearly 3 years in the world of compliance professionals, such as salespeople, fundraisers, and advertisers to discover what they were taught to do to influence people. He found that the majority of tactics fall into six categories, each governed by a psychological principle. Each of these principles—reciprocation, consistency and commitment, social proof, liking, authority, and scarcity—is discussed in the following sections.

Reciprocation

We are taught from childhood that we should give something back to people who give us something. This rule of reciprocation is important for society because it allows us to help people who need it and to expect that they will help us when we need it. However, the rule also permits deliberate interpersonal influence. For example, if a husband wants his wife to do something for him, he can give her a small gift or a compliment, or he can perform some task that is normally her responsibility. Before she has forgotten his benevolence, he can ask her whether she would mind cooking dinner for his poker group. The favor makes it more likely that she will acquiesce.

Reciprocation can also apply to concessions. If a wife refuses to cook dinner for her husband’s poker group, he can gracefully accept this refusal. This is his concession, and now she owes him one. When the husband asks whether she will serve drinks and appetizers, she is more likely to concede to this request. Not only did she “owe” him a concession, but the serving of drinks and appetizers is a small effort compared with serving dinner. Salespeople will often offer their most expensive model first to make the other models seem less expensive.

Consistency and Commitment

People want to be consistent from one time to another and from one situation to another. Thus,

if a person agrees to a small request to pick up a friend’s mother from the airport, that person is subsequently more likely to agree to a larger request to provide housing for the mother for a month. Agreeing to the small request has caused the person to change her self-image to that of a person who takes care of the mothers of friends. This is known as the “foot-in-the-door technique” (after which the door can be opened all the way). The initial commitment will have a greater effect if it is public, effortful, and freely chosen. If it is public, a person needs to prove to the world that he is consistent; if it is effortful, a person needs to justify that effort by believing that being nice to mothers is important; if it is freely chosen, a person must have been committed all along to motherhood.

Salespeople sometimes use a technique called “throwing a low-ball,” in which they agree to sell a product such as a car for an excellent low price. After forms are signed and financing is arranged, someone discovers that a mistake has been made and that the cost is actually several hundred dollars more than agreed. The buyer has become sufficiently committed to buying the car that he usually will pay the extra money to complete the purchase.

Social Proof

This is the same as the informational social influence discussed earlier—the tendency to see a behavior in a particular situation as the best behavior if we see other people performing it. People turn left at the crossroad because they assume that other people turning left know what they are doing. This is most likely to occur when these other people are similar and when the situation is ambiguous. A particularly interesting example of this is bystander intervention in emergencies. Suppose that you are turning left at the crossroad when someone in front of you suddenly slumps to the side of the road. It isn’t clear whether the person is resting, slightly ill, or seriously in trouble. Because it is ambiguous, you look to the other people to determine the appropriate course of action, just as they are looking at you for cues about what to do. If nobody moves to help the person, a belief grows that the person doesn’t need help, and thus no one helps. If you were alone on the road and saw the

person slump down, you would probably at least ask him whether he needed help. The presence of other people has actually made it less likely that anyone will help.

Liking

People are more likely to be influenced by others they know and like, and there are several factors that help determine liking for another person. People like those who are physically attractive. They imbue attractive people with all sorts of positive traits, from intelligence to morality, that make them seem trustworthy, and in addition they want to please attractive people. People like those who are similar to them in any possible way, whether it is having the same birthday, voting for the same political party, or rooting for the same sports team. People like those who compliment them or say they like them. People like others more as they become more familiar perhaps just because they ride the same bus. People like those with whom they have to cooperate with to get a job done. Of course people also like others for their particular personal qualities, such as having a good sense of humor, a questing mind, or a kind disposition.

Regardless of the basis of liking, individuals are more likely to go along with others they like (in order to get along), and they are more likely to trust these liked others' view of the world. In short, those who are liked can exert both more normative and more informational social influence.

Authority

In one of the most dramatic experiments in psychology, conducted by Stanley Milgram, participants were told that they were the teachers in a learning experiment and that they had to deliver what they were told were increasingly painful electrical shocks to the learner whenever he made a mistake. As the shocks grew more and more dangerous, the learner (actually a confederate) screamed with apparent pain, complained of a heart condition, and finally stopped responding altogether. If the "teacher" protested and tried to stop delivering the shock, he was told by the experimenter in a white lab coat that he had no choice; he had to continue administering the shocks. Astonishingly, many of the teachers continued to

administer shocks on command even after the learner had apparently passed out or had a heart attack. Actually there was nothing to stop the teacher from simply walking away, except the great power that apparent authority has on us. There are many real-life examples of destructive obedience to authority. Nurses will sometimes give what they know to be a dangerous dose of a drug if so ordered by a doctor, soldiers will kill innocent women and children, and individuals will even kill themselves when ordered to by a charismatic cult leader.

Yet society values obedience. Obedience keeps society running smoothly, with drivers staying within the speed limit, not taking the belongings of others, and doing all the other orderly things that society expects people to do. Children are praised for being obedient, but seldom are praised for disobeying destructive authority, creating a dangerous tendency not to question authority at all.

Scarcity

This principle is that opportunities seem more valuable when they are less available. To persuade shoppers to buy now, retailers will limit the apparent number of units available for sale or limit the amount of time a sale will go on. People will pay vast amounts of money for objects that are rare. Jack Brehm's theory of psychological reactance states that when people's free choice to do something is threatened, they react against this by trying to exercise their choice or increasing their desire for the threatened object. For example, Romeo and Juliet's love was doomed and therefore more intense because of the feud between their families. Riots and civil disturbances often occur when a group's position is improving but suffers a momentary reversal; the improvement makes the reversal more painful because of the loss of freedom. The singer Mickey Gilley wrote that "all the girls get prettier at closing time" because time is running out and freedom to make a connection is threatened. When a book or movie is censored, demand rises because the freedom to read the book or see the movie is being threatened. An interesting exercise for the reader would be to think of an influence situation in which all of these six compliance tactics could be used in combination. Is there an order in which they would work best?

Ladd Wheeler

See also Information Seeking; Liking; Listening; Negotiation; Persuasion

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INTERPERSONAL PROCESS MODEL OF INTIMACY

The Interpersonal process model of intimacy, initially proposed by Harry Reis and Phillip Shaver, describes the transactional process by which intimacy between two individuals is developed and maintained over the course of interactions. The interpretation, assimilation, and expectation of repeated intimate interactions give rise to more global judgments about the relationship, such as satisfaction, commitment, and trust. The model conceptualizes intimacy as a personal, subjective (and often momentary) sense of connectedness that is the outcome of a dynamic, interpersonal process. This entry first provides a description of the specific components of the Interpersonal process model of intimacy, describes factors that may interact with the various components, and then briefly discusses the benefits of thinking of intimacy in this way.

Components of the Interpersonal Process Model

Self-disclosure, partner responsiveness, and perceived partner responsiveness are the key elements that foster the development of intimacy. According to this model, the intimacy process is typically initiated with *self-disclosure*, whereby one partner, “the discloser,” shares personal information

that reveals core aspects of the self to their partner, “the listener.” This information can be verbal or nonverbal and affective/evaluative (e.g., “When we spend time together, I feel more and more connected to you”) or more factual (e.g., “My longest lasting relationship was 2 years”) in nature. Research suggests that disclosures of emotional information lead to greater feelings of intimacy than disclosures of factual information. This could be because emotional information serves to communicate specific needs and vulnerabilities to one’s partner, and by revealing this information, those needs and vulnerabilities are more likely to be perceived, acknowledged, and/or met. The process of self-disclosure is an integral part of the intimacy process because it provides an opportunity for one’s partner to respond and convey caring and understanding.

The second part of the model, in which the listener responds to the self-disclosure, is termed *partner responsiveness*. Once the discloser has revealed personal information, the listener then addresses the communications of the discloser. For the intimacy process to continue, the listener must emit behaviors and expressions that convey acceptance, understanding, validation, and caring toward his or her partner. Partner responses are most effective in contributing to intimacy when they are sincere and immediate and show a genuine understanding of and respect for the discloser’s needs. These partner behaviors and expressions are attempts at responsiveness.

An important element in the development of intimacy depends on the discloser’s perception of responsiveness from their partner. In the ideal case, the discloser will interpret his or her partner as responsive and feel that his or her needs have been met. Judgments about the degree of understanding, validation, and care in a partner’s response constitute the discloser’s view of *perceived partner responsiveness*. It is possible that, although the listener may intend to be responsive, the discloser may not feel like the partner was responsive to him or her. The discloser’s interpretation of their partner’s response is therefore a critical component in the development of intimacy. Occasionally the reverse—the listener’s response is not intended to be responsive, yet is perceived as such—may be true as well, although this is less common. The perception of partner responsiveness acts as a

mediating variable by which self-disclosure and partner responsiveness influence intimacy. Perceived partner responsiveness is theorized to be a central component both among interpersonal relational processes (e.g., trust, love, commitment) and intrapersonal processes (e.g., self-esteem, personal goal pursuit).

Individual and Contextual Factors

Each step of the Interpersonal process model is affected by a variety of individual and contextual factors. For example, individual differences, such as personality traits, goals, needs, and fears, may influence the degree to which one chooses to self-disclose, as well as how much and what type of information an individual chooses to share. Similarly, partner responsiveness has been shown to be influenced by extraversion, as well as the degree of motivation in developing intimacy with one's partner. In addition, the extent to which one construes one's partner's response as appropriately meeting one's needs and reflecting the disclosed information will vary from person to person. Individuals high in rejection sensitivity anxiously expect and readily perceive rejection from their partners, leading them to perceive unresponsiveness from their partners in interactions where a more objective observer may detect responsiveness. The attachment style of the discloser will also affect whether the listener's response is interpreted as responsive to his or her needs. For example, individuals with an insecure attachment style, particularly those high in anxiety and avoidance, have been found to interpret responses from their partner as more negative than would be judged by objective observers.

There are selected gender differences in intimacy across types of personal relationships. Some studies show that, although men and women tend to agree that conversations including personal self-disclosure lead to intimacy in same-sex friendships, men enact these behaviors less often than women. Other studies have found that gender differences do exist in the way intimacy is thought of by men and women in romantic relationships. When describing intimate experiences, men more often report sex or physical contact as a key feature of intimacy. Women tend not to refer to sex in describing their

intimate experiences, and, in fact, some report the absence of sex as contributing to an intimate interaction. The magnitude of identified gender differences tend to be small to moderate, suggesting that there may be more overlap than difference between men and women when it comes to intimacy and its related component processes.

There are also cultural variations in defining and operationalizing intimacy based on differences in constructions of self and social realities. The interpersonal process model of intimacy, which primarily assumes a Western cultural context for intimacy, emphasizes the self and describes the key ingredient of intimacy development as an individual being understood, validated, and cared for by his or her partner. Other cultures that focus less on independent, individual identities and more on interdependent, communal identities may consider relationship- or group-fulfilling obligations to be linked to intimacy, rather than perceived partner responsiveness. For example, partners in West African communities emphasize fulfilling mutual familial obligations and deemphasize individual romantic intimacy. However, the divide between individualistic and communal societies in relational intimacy is not always clear cut; in some individualistic cultures, individualism may not be conducive to building intimacy in romantic relationships. Russian entrepreneurs, who were characterized as individualistic, reported sex and love as being taboo topics of discussion even within the context of romantic relationships.

The Interpersonal process model provides several benefits for understanding intimacy in personal relationships. Rather than conceptualizing intimacy as a unitary construct, the Interpersonal process model breaks down the various components that lead to intimacy. This is particularly useful because it allows for intimacy to be examined as a process and not simply as an outcome. Understanding the process that leads to the development of intimacy enables researchers to view this interpersonal experience as it unfolds over time. The process model also allows intimacy to be distinguished from related but different constructs, such as satisfaction and love. By examining the individual components of intimacy development, not only can the field gain a better understanding of the process, but, by breaking it down, researchers and clinicians are also better

able to locate problems or collapses in the process and attend to them. Although there are other ways of conceptualizing intimacy, the Interpersonal process model offers a unique window into the underlying process by which relationship partners feel connected.

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See also Closeness; Intimacy; Intimacy, Individual Differences Related to; Responsiveness; Self-Disclosure

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INTERPERSONAL PSYCHOTHERAPY

Interpersonal psychotherapy (IPT) is a time-limited, structured psychotherapy originally developed by Gerald Klerman and colleagues in the 1970s for the treatment of depression. IPT aims to reduce patients' psychological distress and symptoms by improving their interpersonal functioning. This entry provides an overview of IPT, a description of the treatment structure, and a review of the clinical populations that appear to benefit from interpersonally focused treatment.

IPT's Fundamental Premise

IPT is based on a biopsychosocial model of psychiatric illness. The biopsychosocial model identifies converging biological, psychological, and social factors that over time have contributed to the patient's current functioning and distress. Although IPT acknowledges the influence of the biological and psychological domains, the primary focus of IPT is on identifying the patient's current interpersonal difficulties. The basic premise underlying IPT is that there is a bidirectional association between an individual's interpersonal functioning and his or her psychological well-being. For example, when individuals become depressed, they may have feelings of low self-worth and may isolate themselves from others. This social withdrawal, in turn, can have negative effects on their mood. The IPT therapist helps patients to break out of this cycle by reconnecting with others and effectively communicating their interpersonal needs.

IPT Treatment Structure

IPT consists, on average, of 12 to 16 weekly 1-hour sessions. Typically, IPT is conducted in outpatient settings with individuals. However, IPT may also be conducted with couples and groups. The primary objectives of IPT sessions are to improve patients' interpersonal functioning and alleviate their symptoms. The treatment consists of various phases, including an *assessment phase* (that determines whether IPT is appropriate for the patient), an *initial phase* (that focuses on identifying the patient's interpersonal landscape and primary problem area), a *working phase* (that employs therapeutic strategies directly related to the identified problem area), and a *concluding phase* (in which the patient's treatment progress is reviewed and plans are made for coping with future problems that may arise). At the conclusion of treatment, the patient and therapist discuss whether a *maintenance phase* of IPT would be beneficial.

Assessment Phase

In the *assessment phase*, the therapist conducts a thorough diagnostic interview, identifies the patient's current interpersonal relationships, and

explores the degree to which the patient perceives a connection between his or her interpersonal functioning and psychological problems. The assessment phase concludes when the therapist and patient agree to proceed with a specified course of IPT.

Initial Phase

The initial phase of IPT usually occurs during the first three sessions. In this phase, the therapist gathers specific information about the patient's interpersonal landscape by conducting an Interpersonal Inventory. The Interpersonal Inventory includes a detailed review of the patient's key relationships and the strengths and shortcomings of those relationships from the patient's perspective. Using this information, the patient and therapist determine which of the patient's current interpersonal problems appear to be most relevant to the patient's current psychological problems.

The Four IPT Problem Areas

IPT encourages the selection of one treatment target from among four interpersonal problem areas: role transition, interpersonal conflict, loss/grief, and interpersonal sensitivity. When *role transition* is selected, the therapist helps the patient to identify the changing social role, such as parenthood or retirement; acknowledges the distress that can accompany the transition, and problem solves strategies to increase the patient's likelihood of success in adopting the new role. When the therapeutic focus is on *interpersonal conflicts*, the therapist uses IPT techniques, such as role-play and communication analysis, to facilitate the patient's understanding of how his or her communication patterns may contribute to his or her relationship difficulties. Once maladaptive patterns have been identified, the therapist helps the patient to resolve his or her interpersonal disputes by clearly expressing his or her interpersonal needs to others and responding productively to significant others' unmet needs in return. *Loss and grief* are also salient problem areas. Identifying and addressing losses in treatment reduce the likelihood that they will serve as triggers for a psychiatric relapse. Finally, some patients suffer from *interpersonal sensitivity*, or chronic problems relating to others, that can hinder

their interpersonal functioning and lay the foundation for pervasive relationship difficulties. When interpersonal sensitivity is selected, the therapist's main objectives are to modify the patient's dysfunctional expectations about relationships, establish and maintain close relationships with others, and develop a network of support that can adequately address the patient's interpersonal needs.

Working Phase

The selected IPT problem area focuses the treatment during the working phase. In the working phase (Sessions 4–12), the therapist and patient work collaboratively to improve the patient's ability to communicate his or her needs to others, modify distorted relationship expectations, and build or better utilize social supports.

Concluding Phase

During the *concluding or termination phase* of IPT (Sessions 13–16), the focus is on preventing relapse of the patient's psychiatric symptoms by maintaining positive interpersonal relationships. In these final sessions, the therapist reinforces the skills acquired during treatment and discusses a relapse plan that highlights how interpersonal crises and insufficient social support can trigger relapse.

Maintenance Phase

When a *maintenance phase* is indicated, the patient and therapist contract for an additional series of IPT sessions that focus on the patient's original problem area or that identify a new interpersonal problem that the patient wants to address in therapy.

Applications

IPT is a well-established treatment for depression with a strong body of evidence spanning decades of research. Findings from controlled clinical trials suggest that IPT is an effective treatment for individuals with major depression, postpartum depression, dysthymia, and bulimia. Perhaps one of IPT's most notable strengths has been its adaptability across a wide range of ages (from adolescence to

later life) and psychiatric disorders. In recent years, IPT has been modified to treat bipolar disorder, social anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder. Although additional research is required to establish IPT's efficacy with these diverse disorders, findings to date have been promising. In contrast, preliminary investigations indicate that IPT may not be as effective as traditional substance abuse treatment for patients with cocaine or opiate dependence. Further studies are needed to establish for whom and in what settings IPT is most appropriate.

Stephanie A. Gamble and Nancy L. Talbot

See also Conflict Patterns; Depression and Relationships; Interpersonal Sensitivity; Mood and Relationships

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INTERPERSONAL SENSITIVITY

Interpersonal sensitivity (IS) can refer to both how well one "reads" other people and how appropriately one responds. Thus, it might be said that it is interpersonally sensitive to both recognize when one's spouse is sad and respond sympathetically. This entry, however, limits the definition to the "reading" aspect—in other words, accuracy in processing or decoding another's behavior or appearance. IS has been studied for many years in a variety of different ways. This entry describes different kinds of IS, how IS is measured, and how IS correlates with other variables, especially those that are relevant to interpersonal relationships.

Definition and Measurement of IS

In daily life, people constantly notice the behavior and appearance of others. Behaviors may be

verbal or nonverbal. Nonverbal behaviors include facial expressions, direction of gaze, head shaking and nodding, body movements and postures, hand and arm gestures, vocal qualities (such as pitch or rhythm), and interpersonal distance, among others. Appearance can refer to physiognomic features, such as facial features or body shape, or to details of dress, hair, jewelry, and so forth. As examples of this kind of accuracy, one might notice that one's spouse is not speaking much at breakfast, one might recognize an acquaintance at a distance from the way he walks, or one might remember that a particular friend likes to wear hoop earrings. This kind of IS is typically measured by having the test taker interact with someone or watch a videotape of people interacting and then testing the accuracy (without forewarning) of what he or she recalls about the others' behaviors or appearance.

Of course, people also draw conclusions based on what they have noticed, and they do this countless times per day, often without much conscious awareness. Is this car salesman telling the truth? Does my mother really like her Christmas gift? Is that stranger going to attack me? Is that cute person across the room interested in me? Inferences based on the cues a person perceives might or might not be correct. Most research on IS is concerned with accuracy in recognizing emotions or other affective states, accuracy in judging personality, and accuracy in distinguishing truth from deception. Accuracy for judging many other kinds of content has been, or could be, measured as well, including status and dominance, intelligence, mental and physical health, age, geographic origin, ethnicity, and sexual orientation.

Accuracy of interpersonal judgment is measured by researchers in a variety of ways, but all methods have in common that they require a criterion against which judgments can be scored as right or wrong. Thus, for example, on a test of judging the extraversion of a set of persons (targets) shown on videotape, the researcher must have a good measure of the targets' actual extraversion. IS tests vary in how many target persons are shown, how many different kinds of content are represented, and what cue channels are included. As an example, such a test might present six targets, each expressing four different emotions using facial expressions, for a total of 24 test items. On some IS tests

perceivers judge a full audiovisual stimulus, whereas on others they judge single channels such as face only or voice only. IS test stimuli are typically short, ranging from less than a second to a few minutes in duration. Sometimes accuracy can be high, even when exposure to the stimulus is brief, although this depends on what is being judged. Accuracy levels depend on many factors and are notably low for judging deceptiveness and high for judging prototypical facial expressions of emotion (e.g., happy, sad, fearful).

Most IS research is based on administering tests using recorded stimuli such as described earlier, but some research is based on judgments made during or right after a live interaction. In one such method, known as the empathic accuracy paradigm, a person watches a video replay of one's interaction with a partner and makes inferences about the partner's thoughts and feelings, which are scored against the partner's self-described thoughts and feelings. Partners may be previously unacquainted or acquainted. Some research has examined accuracy of husbands' and wives' perceptions of each other while deliberately trying to convey different emotions. However, this research paradigm is often complicated by the fact that a person's decoding ability is often confounded with his or her partner's encoding (expression) ability. Going back to the spouse scenario, if you notice that your spouse is sad when he or she comes home from work, it could be for one of three possible reasons: (1) you have high IS and accurately picked up on your spouse's nonverbal cues even if they were subtle; (2) your spouse's cues were obvious and easy to interpret, so credit for your accuracy goes to the expression, not to your skill in decoding; or (3) some combination of skilled encoding and decoding. For this reason, most IS tests are standardized to solely focus on the decoding portion of IS.

Although in daily life people often exercise their IS with others whom they already know, in the testing literature, perceivers are typically unfamiliar with the targets, and therefore the research literature is mainly concerned with accuracy of drawing first impressions of strangers. However, to the extent that IS is a skill possessed by an individual, it is likely that skill in judging strangers is related to skill in judging people with whom one has a relationship. Some research suggests that

IS may be slightly enhanced by greater familiarity with the person being judged.

Psychosocial Correlates of IS

Researchers have generally considered IS to be a valuable skill and have hypothesized that the ability to make accurate inferences about other people based on minimal information is advantageous. What does research tell us about other traits and attributes that are correlated with IS? The following summary is based on meta-analyses as well as individual studies.

Personality Correlates

Research shows IS to be positively associated with a number of personality traits, some of which have clear implications for interpersonal relationships—empathy, affiliation, extraversion, dominance, conscientiousness, openness, tolerance for ambiguity, need to belong, and internal locus of control. IS is negatively related to the personality traits of neuroticism, shyness, depression, and an insecure attachment style. Individuals high in IS are also less likely to be prejudiced against minority groups. The high-IS individual thus possesses personality characteristics suggestive of healthy intra- and interpersonal functioning.

Social Competencies

IS is also connected to various social competencies that would assumedly lead individuals to develop and maintain healthy relationships with others. IS seems to be apparent to others in one's environment because individuals higher in IS are rated by acquaintances as more interpersonally sensitive. Higher IS also is associated with a better ability to judge the IS of a friend. Higher self- and acquaintance ratings of social and emotional competence are also positively related to IS, and IS predicts competence in workplace and clinical settings.

Relationship-Specific Correlates

There has also been research that specifically examines the relation between IS and relationship quality. Individuals higher in IS report having

higher relationship well-being, more positive relations with their roommate(s), better marital adjustment (especially among men), and an overall more positive rating of the quality and quantity of their same- and other-sex relationships. In all likelihood, failures of IS contribute to problems between relationship partners.

Gender, Knowledge, and Motivation

Many studies have found that women are better at judging the meanings of interpersonal cues than men are, especially when the test measures accuracy in recognizing emotions and other affective cues. Women are also better at remembering another person's appearance and nonverbal behavior, and they possess more explicit knowledge about the meanings of nonverbal cues, as measured with a paper-and-pencil test. These findings have implications for relationships, although further research is needed to understand the impact of these sex differences on communication processes and relationship outcomes. The sex differences in IS, and one's level of IS in general, could be related to both motivation (how hard one tries when taking an IS test) and knowledge (how much one knows about the meanings of cues). It is not yet clear what the relative contributions of these factors are.

Ambiguities About Causation

The literature reviewed previously confirms the hypothesis that IS is associated with valuable aspects of personality and social functioning. However, because the research is based on correlations, it is not clear what theoretical account should be made. So, for example, the finding that high-IS people tend to choose more people-oriented careers could mean that IS leads a person to choose such a career or that experience in such a career improves a person's IS, or both. Furthermore, a third variable that is correlated with both variables could account for such a correlation. For example, if extraverted people score higher on IS and also choose more people-oriented careers, then controlling for it might eliminate the association between IS and career choice. Such a demonstration would not, however, settle questions about causation; it would merely add insight into possible processes.

The possibility that experiences influence the development of IS is suggested by studies showing higher IS in individuals who have a prelinguistic toddler (compared with matched individuals without such a toddler) are athletes or dancers, have prior musical training, come from less emotionally expressive families, and have traveled abroad more. A longitudinal study by Holly Hodgins and Richard Koestner suggests that optimal development of IS may depend on a combination of both the temperament of an individual as well as the situation, or environment, to which the person is exposed.

The possibility that a person's level of IS may produce consequences in addition to being a consequence of earlier experiences is suggested by research showing that individuals higher in IS receive higher salary raises due to salesmanship, receive higher evaluations by superiors in several different occupations, learn nonsense words faster from a partner, achieve more advantageous negotiation outcomes, earn higher satisfaction ratings from patients (among physicians), and experience better adjustment to U.S. culture (among foreign students).

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See also Accuracy in Communication; Communication, Gender Differences in; Communication Skills; Deception and Lying; Dyssemia; Empathic Accuracy and Inaccuracy

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INTERRACIAL AND INTERETHNIC RELATIONSHIPS

An interethnic relationship is a relationship in which the partners differ in their presumed biological and/or cultural heritage. An interracial relationship is a relationship in which the partners differ specifically in their presumed biological heritage. Thus, an interracial relationship is one type of interethnic relationship. Other types of interethnic relationships include, but are not necessarily limited to, interreligious and international relationships.

Like many other topics within the field of personal relationships, the topic of interethnic relationships has been researched most heavily within the United States. Given the problematic nature of race relations throughout the history of the United States, it may not be surprising that interracial relationships have received far more coverage in the field of personal relationships than have interreligious or international relationships. This disparity of coverage is all the more evident when one considers that, among all interethnic marriages in the United States, interracial marriages are least frequent.

Among the general public in America, romantic interethnic relationships tend to be stigmatized to a greater extent than do platonic interethnic relationships. In turn, romantic interracial relationships tend to be stigmatized to a greater extent than do romantic interreligious relationships or romantic international relationships. At one time in their histories, three quarters of all American states enacted laws banning interracial marriage. It was not until 1967, in *Loving v. Virginia*, that the U.S. Supreme Court struck down all remaining state anti miscegenation or anti-“race-mixing” laws as unconstitutional.

From 1970 to 2000, the percentage of interracial marriages in the United States rose from 1 to 5 percent. Despite the increase in the proportion of interracial marriages, the fact remains that, as a whole, individuals overwhelmingly marry within their racial groups. The only major racial group among whom a majority of persons intermarry is Native Americans (among both sexes, more than 55 percent of Native Americans intermarry).

Popular and academic discussions of interracial marriage often focus on African American–European American intermarriage, especially African American male–European American female intermarriage. However, the most common type of interracial marriage is European American–Asian American (and especially European American male–Asian American female) intermarriage. In fact, European American–Asian American intermarriages outnumber African American–European American marriages by nearly a 2:1 ratio (14 percent vs. 8 percent). The prevalence of European American–Asian American marriages over African American–European American marriages has been consistent since the 1970s.

Despite the attention that scholars and laypersons alike have given to African American male–European American female marriages, African American female–European American male marriages outnumbered African American male–European American female marriages until the 1960s. Prior to the civil rights movement, anti-miscegenation laws tended to be enforced more rigorously against African American male–European American female unions than against African American female–European American male unions, especially in the South. It was not until the 1970s that African American male–European American female marriages outnumbered African American female–European American male marriages.

The best-known studies of interracial marriage in the United States are (a) a study of approximately 40 African American–European American couples in Chicago by Ernest Porterfield during the 1970s, and (b) a study of approximately 20 African American–European American couples in Minneapolis by Paul Rosenblatt, Terri Karis, and Richard Powell during the 1990s. Results of both studies contradicted the once-dominant view, expressed by Robert Merton in the 1940s, that exchanges involving different types of social status

accounts for patterns of African American–European American marriage (e.g., affluent African-American men are in a position to exchange their high-achieved status with European American women’s high ascribed status). Instead, results of the Porterfield and Rosenblatt et al. studies indicates that exchanges involving the same type of love (i.e., romantic love) account for patterns of African American–European American intermarriage.

The studies by Porterfield and by Rosenblatt et al. were primarily qualitative and involved relatively small samples, whereas a subsequent study by Stanley Gaines and his colleagues during the 1990s was primarily quantitative and involved a relatively large sample of approximately 100 couples (roughly half of which involved African American–European American pairs) from the United States and beyond. Three quarters of the Gaines et al. sample consisted of interracial cohabiting (and primarily married) couples. Results of the Gaines et al. research suggested that exchanges involving love, as well as exchanges involving esteem, promote the maintenance of interracial relationships. Moreover, results of the Gaines et al. research contradict popular and academic stereotypes concerning relationship dynamics among interracial couples (e.g., interracial couples are stereotyped as involving a one-way flow of esteem from wives to husbands).

Despite the stereotype-challenging results reported by Porterfield, by Rosenblatt et al., and by Gaines et al. regarding relatively happy interracial couples, a glance at divorce statistics (i.e., 50 percent divorce rate for couples in general vs. 67 percent divorce rate for interracial couples in particular) indicates that interracial couples face special struggles in trying to maintain their relationships. With regard to African American–European American marriages, parents of European American wives are especially likely to ostracize the wives, husbands, and offspring alike. This hostility from family members often occurs in addition to hostility from friends, acquaintances, and strangers. In some instances, interracially married spouses have only each other as support persons; and if spouses fail to support each other, then the marriages may be left in a precarious position.

One confound regarding the link between interracial marriage and increased likelihood of divorce is that interracial marriages are more likely to be

second marriages than are intraracial marriages. Regardless of racial pairing, second marriages are more likely to end in divorce than are first marriages. It is not clear whether interracial marriages would remain at higher risk for divorce if spouses’ number of previous marriages were taken into account.

Lost in the discourse regarding divorce statistics is the fact that many interracial marriages persist over time; the field of personal relationships could benefit from more systematic study of the factors that distinguish successful from unsuccessful interracial marriages. Published studies of interracial marriages have not tended to follow couples across time; longitudinal research is needed for relationship scholars to understand how interracial couples can defy the odds and maintain stable and satisfying marriages. The number of relationships studies on interracial marriages has not kept pace with the incidence of interracial marriages.

Just as the question “Would you want your daughter to marry one?” (typically limited to African American male–European American female relationships) implicitly suggests that parents of European American women should not encourage their daughters to marry African-American men, so too does the question “But what about the children?” implicitly suggests that interracially married spouses should not have children of their own. Unfortunately, the few studies that have examined relationship processes between interracially married spouses rarely, if ever, have examined relationship processes between the spouses and their offspring. Mixed-race children have long been stereotyped as biologically, socially, and psychologically ill adapted. However, virtually no evidence exists to support those stereotypes, and virtually nothing is known about the ways that parents can or do help mixed-race offspring cope with the often hostile society in which they live.

Throughout the present entry, the term *race* has been used uncritically. However, early in the 20th century, anthropologists had begun to question the utility of race as a social-scientific construct. By the end of the 20th century, psychologists similarly had begun to question the utility of race. For example, in a series of papers during the 1990s, Halford Fairchild and his colleagues called for an end to the use of the term *race* in psychology. Although the details of the controversy over the

utility of race are beyond the scope of the present entry, it is nonetheless worth noting that scholars' and laypersons' casual use of the term *race* has not helped (and, one might argue, has inhibited) academic and popular understanding of the dynamics regarding interracial relationships. Biological differences in spouses' skin color, hair color, and/or facial features, in and of themselves, do not explain the difficulties that interracial couples experience in trying to survive in the post-Civil Rights Era United States.

More research is needed regarding interracial relationships outside the United States. For example, even in the post-Civil Rights Era, the United States has posted some of the lowest interracial marriage rates among Western nations. It is not clear whether interracial marriages are more likely to survive in those Western nations whose histories of race relations have been less problematic than in the United States.

Also, more research is needed regarding interethnic relationships in general, within as well as outside the United States. For example, within the United States, Kozue Shibazaki and Kelly Brennan found that individuals who were in interethnic (and not necessarily interracial) dating relationships scored lower on self-esteem and ethnic identity than did individuals who were in intraethnic relationships; yet individuals in interethnic relationships scored as high on relationship expectations and relationship satisfaction as did individuals in intraethnic relationships. In a separate study within the United States, Regan Gurung and Tenor Duong found that individuals who were in interethnic (and, again, not necessarily interracial) dating relationships scored as high on self-esteem, ethnic identity, relationship expectations, and relationship satisfaction as did individuals in intraethnic relationships. The dissimilar results with regard to certain personality variables, in contrast to the similar results with regard to certain relationship variables, warrant further examination.

Finally, more research is needed on the prevalence of dating, as distinct from marital, interethnic relationships. Data from the 2000 U.S. Census reveal that approximately 10 percent of all unmarried cohabiting couples are interracial. Given that interracial couples constitute a higher proportion of unmarried cohabiting couples than of married

couples, one might reasonably assume that interracial couples constitute a still higher proportion of dating couples than of married couples. However, definitive statistics regarding the prevalence of interracial and other interethnic dating relationships are not readily available.

In conclusion, as interracial and other interethnic relationships continue to grow at a faster rate than do intraethnic and other intraracial relationships (at least in the United States), the quantity and quality of research on interethnic relationships ideally will grow as well. The theoretical fragmentation and, in some instances, lack of theory that characterizes research on interethnic relationships might contribute to the marginalized status of interethnic relationships within the larger field of personal relationships. Clearly, the ethnic diversity that is part and parcel of research on interethnic relationships is valuable in its own right. By the same token, a coherent theoretical foundation is likely to enhance the value of research on interethnic relationships.

Stanley O. Gaines, Jr.

See also Affection and Affectionate Behavior; Divorce, Prevalence and Trends; Marriage, Historical and Cross-Cultural Trends; Mate Selection; Prejudice

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INTERRACIAL FRIENDSHIPS IN ADOLESCENCE

Scholars have long viewed contact (or lack thereof) between different groups as an indicator of the social and geographic distance between them. They have also considered contact between different groups to be an important source of influence on attitudes and behavior. *Brown v. Board of Education*, which ended the legal segregation of schools, was based on the assumption that interracial contact is beneficial to the self-esteem and achievement of Black youth. This 1954 Supreme Court decision, and the decline in school and residential segregation that followed it, have motivated a number of studies on the causes and consequences of interracial friendship in adolescence. This entry summarizes the findings of recent studies on this topic and points to important directions for future research.

Adults and adolescents alike tend to befriend same-race others due to opportunities for same-race contact (propinquity) and preferences for contact with those who are similar to them (homophily). Studies typically assess preferences for same-race contact indirectly by examining patterns of interracial friendship after taking into account propinquity. Such an approach requires researchers to have information on the race of individuals who befriend each other, in addition to the racial composition of their social contexts, such as schools and workplaces.

Research focusing on friendships between adolescents of different racial groups has proliferated in the past decade largely due to the advent of the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health). Add Health is an ongoing school-based study that was initiated by affiliates of the Carolina Population Center in the mid-1990s; the project has already interviewed a subset of respondents from its original sampling frame at three different points in time and is currently in the field collecting a fourth wave of data. Many of the Add Health studies on interracial friendship (and interracial romantic relationships) were conducted by Grace Kao and her colleagues with funding from the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development.

Importantly, Add Health administered a questionnaire to the student bodies of more than

100 schools in the United States. Including school rosters, the questionnaire asked students to identify their five best friends of each sex and to distinguish their very best friend. This design allows researchers to identify the characteristics of any friends nominated who attended the same school and also completed the questionnaire. Specifically, they can compare the self-reported race and ethnicity of students in friendship dyads. Surveys like Add Health offer more realistic estimates of interracial friendship than ones that simply ask respondents whether they have any friends of a different race.

Patterns of interracial friendship differ considerably according to race. Using data from Add Health, Ted Mouw and Barbara Entwisle find that 14.9 percent of friendships identified by Whites are interracial, whereas the comparable estimates for Blacks, Hispanics, and Asians are 28.6, 66.5, and 57.7 percent, respectively. These dramatic racial differences are partly a reflection of the relative sizes of different racial groups within schools. Whites, for instance, have fewer opportunities and need for interracial contact than minorities because they typically attend schools in which they are the majority rather than the minority. At the same time, adolescents' actual likelihood of interracial friendship falls considerably below their expected likelihood on the basis of opportunities for contact, regardless of their race.

Many studies of interracial friendship among youth identify all potential friendship dyads in a school and examine the likelihood of actual friendship as a function of their similarity on several characteristics, including race, socioeconomic background, and academic orientation. Taking into account school-level propinquity, these studies demonstrate that the actual likelihood of a friendship among potential dyad pairs is significantly greater if they include students of the same race, even after taking into account similarity on other characteristics. They also suggest that the line dividing Blacks and non-Blacks is especially difficult to cross. Studies that additionally include measures of opportunity structure for friendship formation within a school, such as residential segregation and tracking, also find evidence of same-race bias.

Social science studies in general have relied on a measure of race that divides respondents into mutually exclusive categories on the basis of their racial

and Hispanic identification: White, Black, Hispanic (regardless of race), Asian, and Native American. More recently, studies have moved beyond conventional measures of race, acknowledging the fact that Hispanic is not really a separate racial category, that racial groups are comprised of several different ethnic groups, and that a growing number of individuals identify with more than one racial group. Studies exploring the intersection between race and ethnicity in adolescent friendship find that White Hispanics are more likely to nominate Whites and White Hispanics as friends than Blacks and Black Hispanics and, similarly, that Black Hispanics are more likely to befriend Blacks and Black Hispanics than Whites and White Hispanics.

There is also evidence that Hispanic and Asian adolescents show a preference for same-ethnic peers over different-ethnic (same-race) peers and a preference for different-ethnic (same-race) peers over different-race peers. For instance, a Chinese adolescent has a greater chance of befriending a Chinese peer than a Korean peer, but they have a greater chance of befriending a Korean peer than a White peer. Patterns of friendship for multiracial adolescents differ according to racial background and are quite complex.

A smaller number of studies have examined the dynamics of interracial friendships in adolescence. These studies suggest that, in comparison to same-race relationships, interracial relationships are lower quality, as evidenced by their number of activities, stability, and reciprocation. Using data from Add Health, Elizabeth Vaquera and Grace Kao find that 54 percent of interracial friendships are reciprocated, in comparison with 66 percent of same-race relationships. Differences between same-ethnic friendships and different-ethnic (same-race) friendships are less pronounced and less consistent. Studies have yet to examine the sources of differences in the dynamics of interracial and inter-ethnic friendships. For instance, interracial relationships may have lower rates of reciprocation than same-race relationships because they receive less support from families or friends.

A handful of studies have used Add Health data to examine interracial romantic relationships in adolescence. These studies suggest that, among students who are romantically involved, the likelihood of having an interracial relationship declines considerably during the course of adolescence. Studies also find evidence that interracial romantic

relationships are slightly less stable than same-race romantic relationships, and that they involve fewer public and private displays of affection (e.g., meeting a partner's parent or thinking they were part of a couple). However, interracial relationships fail to differ from same-race relationships in terms of intimate displays of affection (e.g., kissing).

Despite the considerable evidence that interracial contact increases racial tolerance, little research has been conducted on the consequences of interracial friendship for attitudes and behavior. This could reflect the fact that it is difficult to determine whether associations between interracial friendship and subsequent outcomes are due to the selection of individuals who form these relationships or their actual influence.

Kara Joyner

See also Friendships in Adolescence; Interracial and Interethnic Relationships

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INTERRUPTIONS, CONVERSATIONAL

An interruption is a speech behavior that occurs when one person begins talking when another person is already talking and the original speaker stops talking. Interruptions can have implications for relationships depending on how they are interpreted. Interruptions may be interpreted as either

positive or negative depending on the personalities and backgrounds of the individuals involved, the nature of their relationship, and the content and context of the interaction. This entry describes how interruptions occur, who interrupts, how interruptions can be interpreted, and the implications of interruptions for relationships.

Dominance Perspective

Conversational interruptions have been framed in two ways in the literature. One view is that interruptions are violations of turn-taking rules. Many people accept that during conversations speakers should take turns and one person should speak at a time. Within this perspective, an interruption breaks these rules and violates another's right to continue speaking. Thus, individuals who interrupt are seen as dominating others.

Considerable evidence was garnered for this argument during the 1970s and 1980s from research on interactions involving individuals who differ in levels of perceived social power. This research showed that more powerful individuals tend to interrupt more often than less influential individuals. For example, doctors tend to interrupt more than patients, and employers tend to interrupt more than employees. In terms of close relationships, research has shown that parents tend to interrupt more than young children, but adolescents tend to interrupt more than their parents. Interpreted from the dominance perspective, this latter finding suggests that as children age, they attempt to gain more power or influence in the family by interrupting their parents.

The most controversial area of research has been the study of conversations between men and women. Early naturalistic studies showed that in cross-gender conversations, men tended to interrupt almost twice as much as did women. This finding was interpreted as confirming the assumption that men hold more social power than women. However, beginning in the 1990s, this conclusion was challenged by critical reviews of previous research, which revealed that whether men or women interrupt depends on the individuals involved and the context of the conversations. For example, in controlled studies in which men and women had equal expertise and social power, men and women initiated equal numbers of interruptions.

Conversational Style Perspective

Interruptions can also be interpreted within the larger social context of conversational behaviors. Interpersonal communication consists of the coordination and interpretation of subtle nonverbal cues, including voice quality, rhythm, volume, patterns of turn taking, and the use of overlapping speech, including interruptions. These nonverbal behaviors provide listeners with cues that signal how a speaker intends his or her words to be interpreted. Habitual use of particular nonverbal cues makes up a person's conversational style. One's particular conversational style depends in part on individual personality characteristics, but also on learning that comes from repeated social experiences. Members of specific cultural or social groups, or even families, learn to use similar patterns of nonverbal cues to signal certain intentions. Thus, individuals from different social backgrounds can have quite different, and often incompatible, conversational styles. If these individuals interact, their utterances can be misinterpreted due to different understandings about the meanings of nonverbal cues. For example, some speakers interject with comments such as "Right" or "I know" while others are speaking. These short utterances can be interpreted as attempts to take over conversations by those who strictly adhere to turn-taking rules or as encouraging listener responses by those who prefer more collaborative conversation. In other words, the former would view these interjections as interruptions, whereas the latter would view them as noninterruptive, simultaneous speech.

According to Deborah Tannen, who popularized the idea of conversational styles, interruptions occur when speakers use incompatible habits for turn taking and simultaneous speech. She claims that in many cases simultaneous speech can be initiated with the intention of being supportive, and whether the initiation of simultaneous speech ends up causing an interruption depends on whether the other individual stops talking. Thus, an interruption occurs because of the behaviors of both speakers, not because one speaker is trying to dominate the other speaker.

Two conversational styles that include different habits with regard to the use of simultaneous speech and interruptions have been studied. A

high-involvement style is characterized by a fast rate of speech, fast turn taking, short pausing, and frequent initiations of simultaneous speech. Speakers who use a high-considerateness style talk more slowly, use slower turn taking and longer pausing, and avoid simultaneous speech. High-involvement speakers use simultaneous speech to build rapport and signal involvement, whereas high-considerateness speakers avoid simultaneous speech to honor the principle of not imposing. The use of similar styles enhances involvement in the conversation; opposing styles may lead to interruptions. For example, when a high-considerateness speaker pauses within her turn, the high-involvement speaker will start talking because she believes that silence signals a lack of rapport, and because the high-considerateness speaker believes that overlapping speech is imposing, she will stop talking. Therefore, an interruption occurs because of the conversational habits and intentions of both speakers. This interpretation of interruptions has been supported by the finding that adolescents use a high-involvement style, whereas parents use a high-considerateness style; therefore, adolescents tend to interrupt their parents, and this difference in conversational styles often leads to negative feelings.

In conclusion, interruptions occur frequently in conversations for complex reasons involving the coordination of the communication habits of two or more speakers. Conversational interruptions can be interpreted as either affiliative or dominating depending on the nature of the relationships and the social background and intentions of the relationship partners. Whether interruptions are viewed as having positive or negative impact on a relationship depends on the compatibility and/or mutual understanding of the individuals having a conversation.

Sherry L. Beaumont

See also Communication, Gender Differences in; Communication, Norms and Rules; Communication Processes, Verbal; Communication Skills; Rapport

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INTERVENTION PROGRAMS, DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Domestic violence is a pervasive social problem that has devastating effects on all members of the family, as well as the larger society. Domestic violence includes physical, psychological, verbal, and sexual abuse perpetrated by one intimate partner against another partner. Rates of physical violence vary according to the sample from which they are calculated. The 1995 National Violence Against Women Survey, which measures violence as a criminal behavior, indicated that 22 percent of women and 7 percent of men reported being victimized by an intimate partner at some time in their lives. This entry discusses the history of intervention programs with domestic violence offenders, reviews the current state of offender treatment, and discusses current issues and challenges in the field.

Prior to the feminist movement in the 1970s, violence in the home was considered largely a private matter. In the 1970s, a group of feminist activists, led by individuals like Erin Pizzey and Susan Schecter, worked to develop a grassroots movement to change the acceptability of wife beating and to provide safety and shelter for female victims of violence. The shelter movement was successful in bringing the issue of male partner violence into the public dialogue and began offering a safe but temporary respite for victims of this violence. Eventually it became clear that simply providing a safe haven for victims was not enough. The work needed to focus not only on providing safety for victims, but also on getting men to stop being violent. Only recently have researchers recognized that women are also violent in relationships and that

intervention programs need to be developed to address female violence.

Most of the beginning work developing specialized treatment for domestic violence offenders grew out of the same feminist movement that developed shelters for victims. Advocates used what they learned working with victims to develop treatment for offenders. An emphasis that began in the early days of offender treatment and continues today is on requiring that offenders assume responsibility for their violence and that they are held accountable for the abuse they perpetrate, rather than allowing them to blame the abuse on their partner's behavior, their childhood experiences, or their drinking or drug use. Much of the early work, based on feminist principles, also emphasized changing men's sexist beliefs, which allowed them to believe that they are entitled to control their partner's behavior and to use whatever force is necessary to maintain their role as head of the household. The emphasis on accountability (and punishment) and the belief that men assault women because of patriarchal norms that support male dominance lead to an admonition against using any type of mental health treatment in response to male violence. The belief was that men hit because it works to control women, not because they have any mental illness that could be treated using a mental health perspective.

Current State of Domestic Violence Offender Treatment

Although the emphasis on accountability remains prominent in most offender intervention programs, most programs tend to use an eclectic set of interventions. Many programs still focus on teaching men about the negative effects of constricted male roles through sex-role resocialization and increasing men's awareness of control tactics so that they will be more aware of their abusive behaviors and will have increased empathy for victims. However, other programs have expanded their focus and teach offenders skills to replace destructive behaviors, work to help men change faulty patterns of thinking that lead to negative feelings and abusive behaviors, or help men deal with childhood experiences, attachment injuries, and shame through trauma-based approaches.

Controlled studies of the effectiveness of these programs began in the 1980s. Currently, more than 30 studies on program effectiveness exist. Many challenges face these analyses. Some studies rely on formal reports to the police. However, only a small percentage of reoffenses are reported to the police. When studies rely on victim reports (which are considered the gold standard), there are still difficulties. For example, follow-up is difficult. Many studies have a high level of attrition from pretest to follow-up. Several meta-analyses have been conducted that combine the effects found in each individual study and compare men who have received treatment with men who have not received treatment. These meta-analyses have consistently found that, although some men change after completing an offender program, men who are arrested for domestic violence but do not complete a program may also change. The amount of change attributed to completing treatment over and above the amount of change attributed to being arrested is small. Julia Babcock, in her meta-analysis, reported that treated batterers have a 40 percent chance of becoming nonviolent, and without treatment they have a 35 percent chance of becoming nonviolent. Thus, in her study, which compared the effect from all controlled studies of offender treatment with the effect found in the nontreated samples in each study, she found a 5 percent increase in success rate attributable to treatment.

State Standards for Domestic Violence Perpetrator Treatment

To ensure the quality of intervention programs provided to offenders, Roland Maiuro reported that in 2007 more than 90 percent of all states had developed standards for domestic violence offender intervention. These standards reflect the prevailing state of offender treatment. Almost all current state standards recommend or require that offenders be treated in groups. A variety of reasons are offered for requiring group treatment, including the idea that men will feel less isolated when confronting their problems, that they can participate in role-plays when learning new behaviors, and that they can give each other feedback. However, there is currently no empirical support for the value of group treatment over individual treatment.

In fact, some concern has begun to be raised that the group format can lead to negative male bonding. For example, a wife in one group reported that her husband came home and told her she had it easy and that he was much less violent than the other men in his group. Concern has also been expressed that group treatments may not address the specific factors leading an individual to become violent.

State standards also recommend or prescribe the focus of treatment. Although most states allow providers to address both male power and control and other social psychological concepts, 27 percent of the states in Maiuro's survey required that the only focus of treatment be on power and control; however, models that emphasize power and control as the only cause of domestic violence have not been shown to be more effective than other treatment models.

The length of the groups required by state standards also varies. Some states require as few as 12 weeks of treatment, whereas others require as many as 52 weeks. Most research finds little difference in outcome based on length of treatment in part because the dropout rate is higher in longer programs. Some studies find that men who complete the longer programs are more likely to end their violence than are men who complete shorter programs. However, overall, the 50 percent dropout rate for domestic violence offender treatment is a serious problem impacting the effectiveness of these programs and is higher than the dropout rate in general mental health treatment.

Current Issues and Challenges in the Field

Reducing Attrition

Although the field currently knows little about what is effective in treating abusive men, some interesting work has begun to examine ways to decrease dropout rates. For example, one study found that attendance monitoring and mandatory monthly court reviews decreased attrition from 52 to 36 percent. Another study found that a marathon group in which men attended 12 hours on Friday night and all day Saturday, in comparison with a standard 2-hour orientation group, reduced attrition from 45 to 25 percent in the first four sessions. Another study found that supportive telephone calls and

hand-written letters to men who missed a session reduced attrition. Finally, one study found that African-American men with high cultural identification had lower dropout rates in a group for African-American men only than they did in a heterogeneous group. Further work is needed in this area.

Couples Treatment

Although only 30 percent of state standards allow couple sessions to be used in addition to male-only groups, research is beginning to suggest that, with carefully screened couples, couples treatment, and especially multicouple group treatment has been shown to be as effective as male-only treatment groups. These groups generally exclude couples if a victim is fearful of her partner and if the abuser is not prepared to take responsibility for the abuse. Couples treatment may be especially useful if a couple chooses to stay together after the abuser has completed a gender-specific group and/or if the couple has not been court ordered to treatment, but both or either partner is using low-level violence in their relationship. Although couples treatment for violent couples remains controversial, a variety of rationales have been offered for couples treatment, including the fact that different types of abuse needs different types of treatment, and that relationship conflict is a strong predictor of domestic violence and couples who choose to stay together often need help resolving conflict. Finally, there is evidence that in many relationships, both partners use violence, and violence by the female partner is a strong predictor of violence by the male partner and of increasing levels of injury for the female partner. If the male is the only partner who learns nonviolent ways of resolving conflict, the violence in the relationship is not likely to end.

Making Distinctions Among Types of Abuse

Another important issue that faces professionals attempting to treat domestic violence is the fact that not all violence is the same. Although Maiuro's review of state standards found that 91 percent of these standards do not make distinctions between types of violence, research is clear that there are different types of violence. Different labels have been used to describe different types of violence,

yet most researchers at least distinguish the terroristic or characterological type of offender from the situational type of offender. Situational offenders become violent in response to a specific situation in the home. Often times both partners are aggressive. There is generally no personality disorder present. In contrast, the terroristic offender is much more likely to have a psychopathic personality disorder and to use coercive control in his everyday relationship with his partner. Most domestic violence researchers recommend that providers carefully screen offenders and offer treatment based on the characteristics of the offender, rather than the one-size-fits-all treatment offered by most certified programs. While most programs use the same approach with all men referred to the program, research is clear that all offenders are not the same. Further work needs to be done to determine which programs are most effective with which offenders.

Substance Abuse and Domestic Violence

Other distinctions that need to be addressed in treatment include distinct treatment needs presented by individual offenders, such as substance abuse. There is considerable overlap between battering and problems with alcohol or other drugs. Although most treatment programs offer only substance abuse or batterer treatment, there is growing support for integrated treatment. The standard belief in the domestic violence field is that treating substance abuse without specifically providing domestic violence offender treatment will not lead to cessation of violence. However, a group of substance abuse treatment researchers, including Tim O'Farrell and Bill Fals Stewart, have demonstrated that behavioral couples treatment for substance abuse is more effective in reducing domestic violence among participants than is individual substance abuse treatment.

Treatment for Female Offenders and Same-Sex Offenders

Finally, not only do gaps exist in treating different types of violence and co-occurring conditions (e.g., substance abuse), gaps also exist in targeting treatment to special populations. In particular, the field knows little about treating same-sex couples

or violent females. All of the published randomized trials have been conducted with violent heterosexual men. However, as indicated earlier, both males and females use violence in relationships. Violence also occurs in same-sex relationships. As a result of mandatory arrest laws, increasing numbers of heterosexual women are being arrested for domestic violence. There is a growing body of research seeking to understand these women. Most of this research points to the high levels of victimization and trauma that many violent women have experienced and suggest that treatment for these women needs to include an effort, not only to help them reduce their violence, but also to address earlier trauma. The largest gaps exist in understanding and intervening in violence between same-sex partners.

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See also Abuse and Violence in Relationships; Abused Women Remaining in Relationships; Batterers; Relational Aggression; Substance Use and Abuse in Relationships

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INTERVENTION PROGRAMS, SATISFACTION AND STABILITY

Partners committing to lifelong partnerships often hope for at least two favorable outcomes: to have a happy relationship and for the relationship to remain intact. However, longitudinal studies demonstrate dramatic declines in marital satisfaction across the first 10 years of marriage, and about half of American marriages end in divorce. Chronic dissatisfaction and relationship instability are associated with an increased risk for psychopathology in partners, compromised physical health, and less adaptive developmental outcomes in children. Satisfaction and stability are threatened by a variety of factors that can be thought of at three broad levels of analysis: relational, social environment, and physical environment factors. Relational factors are defined by the interactions between partners and include problems such as poor communication, power struggles, and low levels of intimacy. The social environment includes unsupportive communities and social networks, whereas the physical environment refers to factors such as economic hardship or stressful working conditions. Although existing data clearly suggest that many couples at risk for dissatisfaction and instability often experience problems at more than one level, few couples receive comprehensive intervention programs that address needs at multiple levels.

This entry reviews intervention programs for satisfaction and stability across these three levels of analysis: relational environment, social environment, and physical environment. The review begins with when and why couples seek treatment and the tendency for couples to focus on relational factors while overlooking problems in the social and physical environments. Couple therapies are

reviewed to illustrate interventions focused on relational factors, premarital programs as interventions from the social environment, and government programs as interventions intended to reduce stressors in the physical environment.

When and Why Do Couples Seek Interventions?

Data suggest that only 25 percent of marriages can be characterized as both satisfying and stable, but only about 10 percent of married couples ever seek premarital or couple therapy. Furthermore, the average married couple waits approximately 6 years after the onset of serious problems before entering couple therapy. Studies suggest that couples seeking treatment report several common problems including emotional dissatisfaction, communication problems, sexual problems, conflicts regarding money, and fears about separating or divorcing. It is also important to note that couples report seeking interventions not only to *decrease negative* aspects of the relationship, but also in hopes of *increasing positive* aspects of the relationship—that is, because of their love for their partner, wanting to save the good parts of the marriage, or a general desire to improve the relationship. Many of the presenting problems identified by couples seeking treatment are at the relational level of analysis. However, highly prevalent problems stemming from the social or physical environment, such as unsupportive communities or economic conditions, tend to be given lower priority or are entirely overlooked by couples and can even escape the attention of therapists. Interventions focused primarily on relational factors can be beneficial, but failure to address possible stressors from the social and physical environments can ultimately undermine intervention efforts.

Intervening at the Relational Level: Couple Therapy Interventions

The three therapies reviewed here are selected because their approaches embody some of the general principles of effective interventions for behavior, emotion, and cognition. These treatments have also been designated as “Empirically Supported Treatments” by the Society of Clinical

Psychology, one of the American Psychological Association's largest groups of psychologists specializing in interventions. Empirically supported treatments are based on randomized controlled trials demonstrating the benefits of a specific type of therapy, tested in more than one scientific study, and in which the group receiving treatment benefits significantly more than a control group that did not receive treatment.

Behavioral Couple Therapy

Behavioral Couple Therapy views dissatisfaction and instability as arising from a decrease in positive behaviors and an increase in the prevalence of negative behaviors. Behavioral Couple Therapy interventions can be broadly categorized into guided behavior change and skill-based interventions. Guided behavior change helps couples decrease negative behaviors (e.g., being late) in the interest of helping partners change more pervasive behavioral patterns (e.g., being disrespectful). Positive behaviors are increased through behavioral activation intervention components that encourage couples to engage in new sets of positive behaviors (e.g., leaving a kind note). Skill-based training focuses on coaching partners through specific methods for improving specific relational skills, such as how they communicate information and understand communication from their partner. Successful Behavioral Couple Therapy results in a more favorable ratio of positive to negative behaviors during interaction and increased levels of skill to cope with relational challenges.

Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy

The intimate bond between once loving partners can be torn apart by negative experiences that are driven by misinterpreted emotions and overly negative emotional reactions. Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy draws heavily on Adult Attachment Theory, providing a rich theoretical basis for understanding how current attachment styles between each partner govern the type of bond between partners. Anxious or avoidant attachment styles of partners often foster negative emotional reactions in a relationship and misinterpretations of partner's emotions. These factors can trigger a vicious cycle of negative feelings (e.g., fear and

anger) that create insecurity and a feeling of disconnect between partners.

The aim of Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy is to re-create an intimate bond between partners by changing the present insecure bond to a secure one, signified by security, safety, emotional accessibility, and responsiveness. Therapists do little to direct the client toward a specific goal; partners are provided a safe environment to express their hidden needs and wants, resulting in a deeper mutual understanding between partners, more positive experiences, and a secure, emotional connection. When successful, Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy results in a renewed secure attachment between partners, satisfying the need for close, secure relationships with others.

Insight-Oriented Couple Therapy

Dissatisfaction and instability, from an Insight-Oriented Therapy perspective, stem from individuals' lack of insight into underlying needs, automatic emotional reactions, and patterns of thinking about relationships from their early experiences. These early experiences can lead to relational thoughts and behaviors that are incongruent with the demands of current relational experiences. Insight-oriented therapy has three basic phases. First, therapists help each partner understand his or her own and his or her partner's relationship histories with family members and caregivers that have shaped current beliefs and behaviors regarding relationships. The therapist then helps couples link these insights to current relationship beliefs and behaviors. More adaptive relational outcomes follow when couples come to understand how their present emotions and behaviors are rooted in earlier core relationship themes that may be maladaptive in the context of the current relationship.

Is Couple Therapy Effective?

Couple interventions across most modalities, including Behavioral Couple Therapy, Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy, and Insight-Oriented Therapy, are generally effective in improving and maintaining relationship satisfaction and stability. Across clinical trials, an average 80 percent of couples report higher levels of satisfaction at termination than couples not receiving any therapy

at all. Interestingly, clinical trials reveal that beneficial effects are not limited to relationship satisfaction. Couples interventions are also effective in treating other types of comorbid disorders, including depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress.

Data supporting the durability of treatment over time provide a more mixed picture. What is robust at long-term follow-up assessments is that treatment is better than no treatment, and in many cases long-term treatment fares better than short-term treatment. However, relapse rates can vary across modalities and across the few studies with follow-ups assessed more than 1 year after the end of therapy. For example, in a clinical trial comparing Behavioral Couple Therapy and Insight-Oriented Couple Therapy, a 4-year follow-up found that about 50 percent of couples in Behavioral Couple Therapy reported being satisfied, compared with about 70 percent in Insight-Oriented Couple Therapy. Of course, higher satisfaction does not guarantee increased stability. Stability results at the 4-year follow-up found that 38 percent of Behavioral Couple Therapy patients had divorced, compared with only 3 percent in Insight-Oriented Therapy. There are also groups of individuals who show little or no gains during therapy or at follow-up assessments, and these couples are classified as “unresponsive.” This sizable minority of couples not maintaining gains in satisfaction, who eventually divorce or who are unresponsive, has led researchers to look beyond interventions at the relational level.

Intervening with already distressed couples, in the confines of a therapist’s office, for 50 minutes a week, is prototypical of couple therapy intervention approaches. The limited scope and dose of this intervention approach has led some researchers and practitioners to think in different ways about the timing and breadth of interventions. Regarding timing, longitudinal studies demonstrate that maladaptive relational behaviors, emotional instability arising from insecure attachment styles, and poor insight into unrealistic expectations are often present before a couple marries. A number of environmental factors such as unsupportive social networks or economic stress are also identifiable before marriage. Increasing recognition that threats to marital satisfaction and stability exist at multiple levels before marriage has led researchers to consider a broader range of

premarital intervention approaches. Premarital interventions incorporate Behavioral, Emotion-Focused, and Insight-Oriented Couple therapy principles through relational-level interventions, but unlike the therapeutic context, premarital interventions tend to be proactively delivered within a couple’s social environment.

Interventions from the Social Environment: Premarital Interventions

For centuries, in many Western countries, marriage was the gateway to economic stability, mating, and parenthood. Today, it is increasingly possible to be economically self-sufficient, over half of those in the United States will cohabit, and it is relatively common to rear children without marriage. These dramatic changes in the social environment have coincided with a view of marriage primarily as an instrument for personal happiness, as less binding, and as relatively independent of one’s community standing. Premarital interventions are often delivered by religious organizations and increasingly by government-sponsored programs. In an era in which social environments place less value on marriage and are less supportive of marriage, social institutions strongly encouraging participation in premarital interventions may convey cultural value regarding the importance of marriage and may also provide opportunities to build social support from other couples or mentors.

Premarital interventions educate and counsel couples in ways similar to the couples therapies reviewed earlier. Most premarital intervention programs share three common intervention components: behavioral interventions focused on building relationship skills, fostering insight into trait-like differences between partners (e.g., attachment styles), and bolstering positive aspects of the relationship. A recent study applying the criteria for Empirically Supported Treatments found evidence for four different premarital programs: Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program (PREP), Relationship Enhancement, Couple Communication Program, and Strategic Hope-Focused Enrichment. Meta-analyses of effectiveness studies have generally found large effects on satisfaction immediately following participation. Couples that participated in premarital programs

were more satisfied than 79 percent of couples that did not participate. It is also important to note that there is encouraging evidence for the mechanisms underlying the effectiveness of premarital interventions on satisfaction. Participants in standardized (e.g., PREP) and nonstandardized (e.g., Catholic Church) premarital programs are less likely to resort to domestic violence and also demonstrate improvement in interpersonal skills (e.g., communication, empathy), which are associated with higher levels of satisfaction.

Although immediate results are an important component regarding effectiveness of premarital interventions, how well these results are sustained throughout the course of marriage is an equally important aspect of evaluating premarital intervention effectiveness. Follow-up studies conducted 6 months after initial interventions demonstrate that couples maintain the positive effects of their participation. This is seemingly true until the 1-year mark after marriage, at which point longitudinal findings for the effectiveness of treatment begin to differ across studies. Some researchers argue that the high levels of satisfaction experienced after participation in premarital programs is sustained for 3 years, whereas others argue that effects on satisfaction only last through the first year of marriage. Although more long-term clinical trials of premarital interventions are needed, current findings generally suggest that premarital interventions stemming from the social environment can be protective of satisfaction and stability.

Policy Interventions for the Physical Environment

A stressful physical environment is a powerful threat to satisfaction and stability and a potential impediment to successfully implementing interventions at the relational level or from the social environment. A couple besieged by financial burden, multiple work stressors, living in a crime-ridden neighborhood, or living in neighborhoods with high rates of drug and alcohol abuse may not be able to devote time and attention to seeking out or successfully implementing interventions of the sort described earlier. For example, during the first 5 years of marriage, men's unemployment doubles the risk of divorce. Other studies find that perceived stress at the workplace is associated

with increased marital conflict. Numerous studies link stressful physical environments to decreased satisfaction and stability, which suggests that, for couple therapies or premarital interventions to be effective, interventions aimed at relieving environmental stress is often necessary.

Public policy decisions to fund intervention programs for marriage at both the federal and state levels have focused on encouraging marriage, providing premarital interventions to prevent instability, and relieving economic pressure. Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) is the primary federal program for policy interventions for protecting marital satisfaction and stability. The program delivers \$16.6 billion to states each year. States match the federal funds and are free to structure public policy programs to encourage the formation and maintenance of marriage. Some states choose intervention programs that provide financial incentives for low-income couples to enroll in premarital intervention programs before marriage; others choose job training, child care, or cash assistance to families.

Effectiveness studies are underway in many states, but thus far there are no longitudinal follow-ups of randomized clinical trials to show whether these policy interventions are successful. The most encouraging data to date suggest that there are relatively high rates of participation and retention in some TANF-sponsored programs. Furthermore, well-trained professionals without an extensive psychological educational background can deliver the programs effectively. Although there is an intuitive appeal to interventions from the social environment or interventions that lessen stress from the physical environment, it is important to remember that in practice both couples and interventionists often overlook the influence of environmental factors and the need to intervene directly on environmental factors. It is likely that a combination of effective policies targeting couples' social and physical environments, combined with effective relational-level interventions, is ultimately needed to protect or enhance a couple's satisfaction and stability.

Future Directions for Satisfaction and Stability Interventions

Despite tremendous advances in developing intervention programs, there are still many areas for

improvement in research and practice. One important task will involve experimental tests of which components in intervention programs have the strongest causal effects on outcomes. In addition, little is known about which components are more helpful for increasing satisfaction and which are more helpful for protecting relationship stability. For example, it may be that premarital interventions aimed at communication skills are particularly protective of satisfaction, whereas interventions aimed at sustainable employment may be especially protective of stability.

Another pressing question is how interventions at the couple, social, and physical environment levels interact to promote healthy relationships. Arriving at more precise estimates of the “dose” of intervention needed at the three levels discussed in this entry is important because it would allow interventionists to find the right balance between efficiency and thoroughness of intervention. Given limited financial and human resources when intervening with couples, this increased precision would allow more couples to receive interventions.

Despite the need for further improvements, it is important to remember that most couples benefit from current intervention programs. Effective interventions come from interventionists incorporating best practices, from communities that are supportive of couples, and from policies that alleviate stressors in the physical environment. Increased collaborative efforts across these three levels will likely be integral to ensuring that couples receive a combination of interventions that facilitate their hopes for a happy and stable relationship.

Ty Tashiro and Casi Nichole Meyerhoff

See also Contextual Influences on Relationships; Couple Therapy; Economic Pressures, Effects on Relationships; Longitudinal Studies of Marital Satisfaction and Dissolution; Physical Environment and Relationships; Prevention and Enrichment Programs for Couples

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INTIMACY

Intimate relationships enrich our lives with meaning and pleasure. Confiding in close relationship partners provides significant benefits to physical and mental health, distinguishes more rewarding from less rewarding relationships, and contributes to relationship satisfaction. Human beings have a *need for intimacy* that, when unfulfilled, leaves them feeling lonely and depressed. This entry defines intimate interactions and relationships, discusses three specific forms of intimacy (emotional support, expressions of positive regard, and sexuality), and addresses intimacy within friendships and romantic relationships. It concludes with discussions of intimacy changes over time, how people cope with the psychological risks of intimacy, and how individual differences in intimacy needs affect close relationships.

Three Defining Characteristics of Intimate Interactions

Karen Prager and Linda Roberts distinguished intimate interaction from other kinds of interactions by three necessary and sufficient conditions: self-revealing behavior, positive involvement with the other, and shared understandings.

Self-Revealing Behavior

Self-revealing behaviors are those that reveal personal, private aspects of the self to another. Self-revealing

behavior, or self-disclosure, is related to greater emotional involvement, fulfillment of needs, and relationship satisfaction. Self-disclosure facilitates the development of new intimate relationships and helps to maintain ongoing ones. Self-revealing behavior and accompanying emotional support are the *sine qua non* of intimate interactions for men and women.

Both verbal and nonverbal behavior can be self-revealing. Deeply self-revealing behavior usually involves the expression of “vulnerable emotions,” such as hurt or sadness that expose the “innermost self.” When interaction participants reveal more personal, vulnerable aspects of themselves through self-disclosure, and when they express feelings about what they have disclosed, they perceive their interactions to be more intimate.

Self-revealing behavior is that aspect of intimacy that has been most closely associated with higher levels of well-being; however, the mechanism by which it benefits the individual has not yet been determined. One study tested the hypothesis that changes in hormone levels, specifically salivary testosterone levels, would account for some of self-disclosure’s health benefits. The study found that higher self-disclosure moderated short-term testosterone changes in men who interacted with a female peer versus sat alone for 15 minutes.

Positive Involvement

Positive involvement refers to the individual’s devotion of full attention to the partner during an interaction. It also refers to positive regard for the other that is communicated through nonverbal and verbal cues. Some behaviors that signify positive involvement convey *immediacy*, defined as the directness and intensity of interaction. Decreased distance, increased gaze, and greater facial expressiveness create immediacy, as does verbal “tracking” of the partner’s communication and use of present-tense verbs. Interactions characterized by immediacy are associated with positive affect.

Partner responsiveness refers to behavior that conveys attention, interest, understanding, and empathy for the other’s perspective. In Harry Reis and Philip Shaver’s interpersonal process model of intimate interactions, intimacy is a process that begins with one person’s self-revealing behavior and continues with the other person’s display of understanding, validation, and caring toward the discloser.

Research supports the contention that responsive behavior contributes to daily experiences of intimacy in romantic couple relationships, over and above effects of self-disclosure. In both college-age dating couples and married couples, interactions are not as intimate when partners are perceived to be insensitive or unresponsive to the other’s self-disclosure. Responsiveness is also important in helping relationships. Early research by Carl Rogers identified therapist acceptance, warmth, and caring as critical conditions for therapeutic change. A recent study found that rape victims disclose less about their experiences when counselors are less responsive.

Mutual Understanding

The third condition for an interaction to be intimate is that it results in shared understandings between partners. Through intimate interaction, both partners understand (or come to understand) an aspect of the other’s inner self. This intimate knowledge endures beyond the interaction and becomes a distinguishing feature of relational intimacy.

Partners who believe they are understood accurately are more satisfied with their relationships, as when partners read their thoughts accurately during an interaction. One study compared interaction partners’ ability to guess what the other was thinking in pairs of strangers, casual acquaintances, friends, and dating partners, assessing the influence of intimacy and gender in each group. Partners with higher perceived levels of relational intimacy were better able to guess the other’s thoughts than less intimate dyads. Female partners were more perceptive than males regardless of the level of relational intimacy.

Forms of Intimate Expression

Several areas of research have shed light on specific types of intimate interactions. These include research on reassurance and emotional support, communication of positive regard, and sexuality.

Reassurance and Emotional Support

Some intimate interactions are characterized by *emotional support*, in which one partner shares a

difficulty and the other offers comfort, reassurance, confidence building, and more benign perspectives for thinking about the problem. Adults who perceive that others, especially their spouses, are available to provide emotional support when they need it enjoy positive outcomes, including better mental health and immune functioning and less marital distress.

Recent research indicates that it is just as important for partners to share one another's joys as it is for them to provide sympathy for their sorrows. Shelly Gable, Gian Gonzaga, and Amy Strachman videotaped young dating couples while they talked with each other about a positive event and a negative event, and then they asked them to report on how understood, validated, and cared for they felt during the interaction. The listening partner's responses to disclosures of positive events, more than his or her responses to negative event disclosures, predicted the disclosing partner's feelings of well-being and relationship satisfaction 2 months later.

Expressions of Positive Regard

Communicating positive, loving feelings toward a partner is an important aspect of intimate communication, both as a disclosure and as a response to disclosure. Perceiving one's partner as having a positive view of oneself, especially a partner who knows one very well, helps partners maintain high self-esteem.

Partners who communicate positive regard to one another may be in a better position to sustain intimacy in their relationship. Work by Sandra Murray and her colleagues suggests that people determine how much vulnerability they will risk with their partners, in part, on the basis of how positively they believe their partner regards them. Expressions of positive feelings contribute uniquely to couple relationship partners' daily experiences of intimacy.

Sexuality

Heterosexual couples that remain married report that their sexual relationships are better after marriage, whereas those that divorce report, in retrospect, that theirs were worse. Whether they engage in more kissing and affectionate touching or more frequent sexual contact or both, sexuality

both signals and maintains relationship satisfaction. Although satisfied partners engage in more frequent sexual relations than less satisfied partners, frequency varies as a function of partners' age, sex, sexual orientation, and length of time together.

Desire or lack thereof is a more significant indicator of a relationship's functioning than coital frequency. Pamela Regan found that sexual desire is more closely associated with feelings of love than sexual behavior in the minds of college students, although passion may better reflect a developing intimate relationship than one that is stable and ongoing. Couples that present to therapists with sexual desire problems have a poorer prognosis than those whose problems are centered on a lack of shared gratification. Although satisfaction with the sexual relationship correlates positively with romantic partners' overall relationship satisfaction, the presence of sexual contact does not guarantee that partners are emotionally intimate.

Intimate Relationships

The defining characteristics of intimate interactions—self-revealing behavior, positive involvement, and mutual understanding—provide the basic elements for defining an intimate relationship. Intimate relationship partners have shared multiple intimate interactions that, over time, distinguish an intimate relationship from a casual or nonintimate one by virtue of accumulated knowledge or understandings of the other.

Intimate Friendships

As people get to know one another, the intimacy in their interactions increases. Among teenagers and adults, the breadth and depth of self-disclosure and emotional support increases as relationships progress from casual acquaintances to close friendships. As relationship satisfaction, love, and feelings of security increase, so too does intimacy. This pattern of increasing intimacy with acquaintance is discernable in face-to-face contact between college friends and, as more recently demonstrated, in teenagers' online relationships. More intimate friendships have more staying power, as a recent 19-year longitudinal study of intimate friendships from college to middle adulthood demonstrated.

From their first contact with a new acquaintance, girls and women on average communicate more intimately than men do and continue to do so once they become friends. This gender-related pattern replicates in Western cultures outside the United States, but is less evident in non-Westernized countries. Maria Cancian suggests that Western men have less intimate friendships than women do because Western cultures have linked intimacy with femininity. Gender differences are not due to different conceptions of intimacy held by women and men, however. Rather, they reflect the fact that men, relative to women, describe themselves as less concerned with meeting emotional intimacy needs within their same-sex friendships.

Sex differences in friendship intimacy seem to reflect traditional norms for masculine and feminine behavior in the United States. In gay communities, some men may actively reject traditional norms for masculine behavior, and intimacy in their friendship pairs resembles that for female pairs. Similarly, androgynous boys (i.e., those who have incorporated feminine traits into their personalities) are more likely to have intimate male friendships than masculine sex-typed boys. In contrast to men, women are believed to be “relationship experts” and are encouraged—even pressured—to place more emphasis on becoming skillful at relating intimately. This expectation is reflected in women’s ability to communicate their emotions effectively to their spouses. Excessive concern about intimacy on the part of women may have a downside, however. In their zeal to maintain a high level of openness, warmth, and emotional support in their friendships, women may fail to deal constructively with anger and competitiveness, occasionally leading to inappropriate aggressive behavior against their closest friends.

Intimacy and the Romantic Relationship

Intimacy is a central desire and expectation that most romantic partners bring to their relationships. More intimate couples are happier couples; partners who self-disclose more to one another, who have more frequent sexual contact, who are emotionally responsive, and who perceive each other as each perceives him or herself are more satisfied and stable couples.

Mutual understanding assumes special significance in the context of an ongoing couple relationship because the personal knowledge that is obtained through intimate interactions endures and accumulates. Over time, understandings of the other extend beyond the experiences contained within any particular interaction. These understandings, or *intimacy schemas*, mediate the impact of individual interactions. Intimacy schemas guide future relationship behavior and elicit emotional reactions to specific partner behaviors. When frequent intimate interactions result in partners feeling understood, other potentially volatile differences, including religious and ethnic differences, are less likely to contribute to relationship problems.

Intimacy schemas, if they represent mostly positive experience, can result in a backdrop of loving, positive feelings about the partner that buffer the relationship from negative emotions that arise. This *positive sentiment override* can sustain the relationship even when shared intimate experiences are not immediately forthcoming. A similar pattern exists with perceptions of support availability, which may persist during times when the partners are not seeking support from each other. Positive expectations of support availability reliably distinguish between more and less satisfied couples. Conversely, when partners hold negative perceptions of the relationship, those perceptions predict divorce with more than 80 percent accuracy.

More relational intimacy is usually associated with more satisfaction; however, some couples have less intimacy than others, but are satisfied because their level of relational intimacy fulfills their lower needs for intimacy. Partners whose needs are not met may argue about intimacy-related issues, such as how much each should express to the other about his or her private feelings and thoughts, how often partners should have sexual relations, and so forth. Partners who argue about intimacy report higher levels of marital distress than those who have other kinds of incompatibilities.

Because romantic relationships typically involve intense emotions, both positive and negative, the skillfulness with which partners handle and communicate their emotions contributes to both relational intimacy and relationship satisfaction. Partners who not only manage their own emotions skillfully, but are able to respond skillfully to the other partner’s emotional expressions, create an

atmosphere of *intimacy safety* in their relationship, which enhances intimacy and thereby enhances marital satisfaction.

Relational Intimacy Over Time

In romantic relationships, on average, intimate interactions decline in frequency over time. Sexual intimacy declines most precipitously within the first 1 to 2 years. There are also documented declines in affectionate expression, in the number of pleasing things partners do for each other, and in the time partners spend in joint leisure activities. These changes do not necessarily create dissatisfaction for the partners, however.

In established, long-term relationships, partners' level of mutual understanding may mitigate the need for frequent intimate interactions. Even in the absence of explicit self-disclosure, close friends are better able to infer each other's thoughts and feelings during an interaction than are pairs of strangers. Research suggests that long-standing friends and romantic partners may not need to self-disclose in order to know what the other needs in the way of support, acknowledgment, or validation. Possibly, relational intimacy is an overriding knowledge and familiarity with the partner that may reduce the need for frequent self-disclosure.

Regulating Intimacy: Intimacy's Risks and Joys

In the best relationships, the possibility of a joyful and meaningful intimate encounter coexists with the risk of hurt. In an intimate relationship, partners maintain a delicate balance between openness and unguardedness, on the one hand, and self-protection and concealment, on the other hand.

Relationship partners are well aware that they can be hurt in the context of an intimate relationship. Partners who feel less secure may inhibit their levels of self-disclosure or distance themselves for the sake of self-protection. Disclosure regarding taboo topics (e.g., extrarelationship activity) is avoided in college student dating relationships because some topics are perceived as threatening to the relationship. Secrecy is sometimes used to prevent rejection or breaking up.

Sex differences in self-disclosure are mitigated in heterosexual romantic relationships where

women and men report similar patterns of self-disclosure. Despite these similarities in disclosure levels, women are lonelier in their romantic relationships than are men, initiate more separations, and report more problems. Women and men have similar standards for their romantic relationships, although women are more likely to report that their standards are not being met. Either women's socialization to be relationship experts causes them to be more aware of relationship problems or more willing to report them or women are more effective relationship partners than are men, resulting in men who are less likely to be lonely.

Individual Differences and Intimacy

Some people appear to be content with much less openness, emotional support, sexual contact, and/or affectionate expression than others. Dan McAdams's research on intimacy motivation has supported the notion that some people desire and seek out opportunities for intimate interaction more frequently than others. High-intimacy motivation may be an advantage because individuals whose intimacy needs are stronger put more effort into their intimate relationships and engage in intimate and problem-solving communication more frequently. Perhaps as a result, individuals with strong intimacy needs have more satisfying relationships. Further, they prefer partners who are warm and open and have similar interests. Partners whose needs are met more frequently have more intimate contact and less conflict.

Individual differences in working models of attachment (i.e., secure vs. insecure working models) are also associated with variations in intimacy needs and preferences. People with certain insecure attachment expectations (e.g., those who dismiss their need for a close and secure relationship) have little tolerance for the risks of intimacy and are more likely than others to maintain multiple and superficial sexual relationships. In contrast, secure individuals are more often sexually exclusive and least likely to engage in behavior destructive to their relationships. Individual differences in intimacy-related needs and fears appear to be systematically associated with attachment expectations.

Karen J. Prager

See also Affection and Affectionate Behavior; Closeness; Deteriorating Relationships; Developing Relationships; Emotional Communication; Empathic Accuracy and Inaccuracy; Friendships, Sex Differences and Similarities; Interpersonal Process Model of Intimacy; Intimacy, Individual Differences Related to; Marriage and Sex; Self-Disclosure; Sex and Love; Understanding

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INTIMACY, INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES RELATED TO

Close relationships are commonly seen as providing opportunities for individuals to engage in intimacy, including self-disclosure, interdependence, and trust, with a single partner. Moreover, relationships with high levels of intimacy experience greater relationship satisfaction and longer relationship longevity. Although the presence of intimacy plays an important role in predicting satisfaction in close relationships, as well as in maintaining these relationships over time, individuals differ not only in how interested they are in the pursuit of intimacy, but also in their ability to engage in such a pursuit. This entry reviews prevailing theoretical models that describe individual differences related to intimacy, as well as the measurement of these differences.

Erikson's Life-Span Approach to Intimacy

According to Erik Erikson's life-span model of psychosocial development, individuals go through a series of eight stages during their lives, each of which is marked by a conflict that must be resolved. Successful resolution of each stage leads to a positive outcome, whereas unsuccessful resolution leads to ongoing challenges with that particular task (e.g., trust vs. mistrust).

Considerable research on Erikson's life-span model has focused on the two key tasks worked on during adolescence: forming a stable identity (Stage 5 in Erikson's model) and, subsequently, forming intimate relationships (Stage 6). During early adolescence, individuals face the task of Ego Identity versus Role Confusion, in which they must develop a sense of individual identity or remain confused about defining themselves. Only those who have successfully developed a sense of identity are able to move on and effectively pursue the task as the next stage: Intimacy versus Isolation. In this stage, individuals evaluate potential romantic partners and whether they are interested in settling down. Because the theory of life stages proposes that an individual's capacity for intimacy depends at least partially on successful resolution of tasks from earlier stages, including identity, individuals who have

not yet reached closure in identity formation, meaning they have not successfully resolved their identities, may not be ready to merge their evolving identities with another. In line with this view, research indicates that those who form stable identities in adolescence are also most likely to form intimate attachments in early adulthood.

Erikson's view that individuals must form stable identities prior to attempting to merge those identities with another person in their pursuit of intimacy has received some criticism. In particular, some researchers believe that this model appropriately describes the connection between identity and intimacy for men, but believe it is less appropriate for describing how women work on these tasks. For example, Carol Gilligan theorizes that women are more likely to work on intimacy prior to forming a stable identity, and that this work on intimacy may even help women define themselves.

Successful resolution of both the Ego Identity versus Role Confusion and the Intimacy versus Isolation tasks can be measured using either a semistructured interview or a self-report questionnaire. The semistructured interview examines individuals' attitudes and behaviors toward intimate relationships. The self-report questionnaire consists of 12 items assessing each of the stages and assesses whether individuals have successfully resolved a given task.

Intimacy Goals

In an extension of Erikson's life-span approach to personality, Nancy Cantor and colleagues' work has focused on how individuals within a given group or culture may all take on a given task during a particular life period, but will do so in distinct ways. According to this approach, both situational and personal factors influence how individuals approach or "take on" these tasks. For example, following the dissolution of a close relationship (e.g., through divorce or death of a spouse), an individual may be more interested in self-reliance than in interdependence. In turn, whereas one person may see a close relationship as an opportunity to become interdependent with another person, another may see it as an opportunity to explore a new identity and/or achieve independence from one's family of origin.

Although the prevailing cultural meaning for relationships emphasizes the pursuit of intimacy, not all individuals are ready or able to exclusively or even predominantly focus on merging with another and sharing emotional intimacy. Moreover, although committed to pursuing relationships, individuals are likely to vary widely in their actual skill at creating and maintaining intimacy. In turn, individuals differ systematically in the extent to which they pursue intimacy goals within their relationships.

Individuals' general orientation toward the pursuit of intimacy goals in romantic relationships is measured using the Social Dating Goals Scale, a 13-item self-report scale assessing individuals' focus on self-disclosure, interdependence, and reliance in a dating relationship. Scores on this scale are positively correlated with ego achievement and negatively correlated with interpersonal ego diffusion, indicating that those with a strong focus on intimacy goals have successfully resolved their identity issues. Interestingly, and in line with previously described models of individual differences in intimacy, those who have not yet resolved their identity issues are more likely to pursue self-focused goals in their close relationships than intimacy-focused goals. Scores on the intimacy goals scale are also positively correlated with secure attachment and negatively correlated with anxious attachment. There is no association between strength of intimacy goals and avoidant attachment, suggesting that people with a strong focus on intimacy goals in their relationships are not particularly fearful of or uninterested in such relationships—they simply have other goals to pursue.

McAdams's Intimacy Motivation

According to Dan McAdams and colleagues, an individual's motivation affects how he or she interacts with others, as well as the types of behavior he or she is able to evoke from others. These motives are characterized by specific thought and affect patterns, and they influence interpersonal behavior. Specifically, this model proposes that motives lead to particular expectations and behavior, which in turn affect others' behavior, as well as one's perception of the others' behavior.

One such motive, intimacy motive, describes the extent to which an individual experiences the

need for close, warm interpersonal relationships. McAdams differentiates the intimacy motive from other interpersonal motives, such as the need for affiliation and the need for power. Those who are high in intimacy motivation spend more time thinking about and interacting with people and in interpersonal relationships, feel more friendly and connected to others during social interaction, and appraise social situations as more desirable and appealing than those with weak intimacy motivation. For example, compared with those who are low on intimacy motivation, individuals who are high on intimacy motivation are more likely to engage in conversation and write personal letters. Individuals who are high in intimacy motivation are also more likely to adopt a communal, listening role in interactions, as well as to report more episodes involving self-disclosure.

According to this model, intimacy motives are linked to personality dispositions and are measured by the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT). The TAT is a widely used projective test within personality psychology in which people see a standard series of ambiguous pictures and must tell a story about each picture, including the event shown in the picture, what has led up to it, what the characters in the picture are feeling and thinking, and the outcome of the event. Researchers then analyze the stories to uncover underlying needs, attitudes, and motives. For example, one picture shows two people sitting on a park bench near a river. Themes related to concern, communication, and positive affect would be scored as reflecting a high intimacy motive.

Individual Differences in Attachment

In the late 1980s, researchers Cindy Hazan and Phillip Shaver extended classic theory and research on attachment between children and their caregivers (developed by John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth) to adult romantic relationships. In particular, these researchers noticed that interactions between adult romantic partners shared similarities to interactions between children and caregivers, including a desire to be close to each other, a feeling of comfort when their partners are present, and a tendency to use partners as a secure base when encountering various surprises, threats, and challenges that life presents. These similarities

led Hazan and Shaver to extend attachment theory to adult romantic relationships and to see the principles of attachment between children and caregivers as fundamentally the same as the principles of attachment between adult romantic partners.

Individuals' attachment styles in their adult romantic relationships are associated with particular patterns of interactions, beliefs, attitudes, and strategies of conflict resolution. Individuals who have developed secure attachment models in early childhood are the most likely to succeed at creating intimacy in close relationships because they have a secure base on which to build communion. However, individuals who have developed insecure models of attachment in early childhood may be reluctant or even unable to pursue intimacy in romantic relationships because they lack a secure base on which to build such interactions.

Researchers typically assess attachment styles in adulthood using self-report measures. The most commonly used approach is the Experiences in Close Relationships (ECR) scale, a 36-item self-report measure that assesses individuals' scores on two subscales, Avoidance (or Discomfort With Closeness and Depending on Others) and Anxiety (or Fear of Rejection and Abandonment).

Other Models Assessing Intimacy

Although the models described previously have received considerable attention in the literature on individual differences in intimacy, other researchers have developed different approaches to conceptualizing and measuring intimacy in close relationships. Karen Prager, for example, defines *intimacy* in terms of intimate behavior (such as self-disclosure), affective tone (such as positive feelings), and listening and understanding (such as feeling understood by one's partner). Her diary method of assessing intimacy, the Interaction Record Form for Intimacy, asks participants to rate daily interactions on 17 items, which are then grouped into three categories that define intimacy.

Another way of conceptualizing intimacy is by assessing the extent to which individuals define themselves in terms of their close relationships, which is called *relationship self-construal*. This approach is taken by Susan Cross and her colleagues, who describe people who are high on

relationship self-construal as thinking and acting in ways that develop and enhance their close relationships, and using such relationships for self-definition, self-enhancement, and self-expression. (In contrast, people who are high on independent self-construal view the self as independent and separated from others.) Relationship self-construal is assessed using a brief self-report questionnaire that assesses the extent to which people think about their close friends and family when they think about themselves and whether they feel that close others are a part of who they are.

Conclusions

Although this summary of individual differences in how intimacy is conceptualized and measured has presented these different models of intimacy as distinct from one another, it is likely that these measures are related in multiple ways. For example, the extent to which someone pursues intimacy goals in close relationships depends on how effectively he or she has resolved identity issues. Similarly, attachment security is related to both intimacy goals and intimacy motivation. Future research is needed to examine how these distinct individual differences in intimacy work together to predict feelings, thoughts, and behaviors in close relationships.

Catherine A. Sanderson

See also Attachment Theory; Intimacy; Love, Companionate and Passionate; Love, Prototype Approach; Love, Typologies; Motivation and Relationships; Personality Traits, Effects on Relationships; Trust

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INVESTMENT MODEL

Relationship scientists have exerted considerable effort toward understanding why some relationships persist over time, whereas others wither and die. Many researchers focus on the determinants and consequences of positive affect—attraction, satisfaction, or love. The implicit or explicit assumption is that if partners love each other and feel happy with their relationship, they will be more likely to persist. In some respects, this point of view makes good sense: All things considered, it is easier to stick with a happy relationship than a miserable one. Although satisfaction is certainly important, it is only part of the picture in understanding persistence.

The Investment Model was developed to explain why satisfaction is not enough to sustain long-term involvement—why some relationships persist despite dissatisfaction, why some people abandon relatively happy relationships to pursue desirable alternative partners, and why relationships persist despite day-to-day fluctuations in satisfaction. According to the Investment Model, commitment is the key to understanding tendencies to remain in relationships. This entry describes the Investment Model, outlining the primary causes of commitment, discussing some of the more important consequences of commitment, and illustrating the utility of this model for understanding “unjustified persistence,” such as persistence in an abusive relationship.

Determinants of Dependence and Commitment

The Investment Model is based on the principles of interdependence theory, which argues that dependence is a central structural property of relationships—a property that is particularly relevant to understanding persistence. Dependence describes the extent to which a person literally “needs” a given relationship or relies uniquely on the relationship for attaining desired outcomes. How do people become dependent? Interdependence theory identifies two main processes through which dependence grows. First, people become more dependent to the extent that they experience high satisfaction. *Satisfaction level* describes the degree to which an individual experiences positive versus negative affect as a result of involvement. Satisfaction grows to the extent that a relationship gratifies the individual’s most important needs (e.g., companionship, intimacy, sexuality, and belongingness), as well as to the extent that obtained outcomes exceed comparison level or the individual’s generalized expectations regarding the quality of a relationship (i.e., expectations based on previous experience or social comparison). Dependence is also influenced by the quality of available alternatives. *Quality of alternatives* describes the perceived desirability of the best available alternative to a relationship. Quality of alternatives increases to the extent that a person’s most important needs could be fulfilled independent of the current relationship (e.g., by a specific alternative partner, the general field of eligible others, or on one’s own).

Thus, interdependence theory suggests that dependence is greater when an individual wants to persist in a given relationship (satisfaction is high) and when he or she has no choice but to persist (alternatives are poor). The Investment Model extends these claims in two respects. First, the model suggests that satisfaction and alternatives do not fully explain dependence. If dependence were based merely on the satisfactions derived from a current relationship in comparison to those anticipated elsewhere, few relationships would endure. Many relationships survive periods during which they are not satisfying, even when attractive alternatives are available. The Investment Model therefore asserts that a third factor explains persistence. *Investment size*

describes the magnitude and importance of the resources that become attached to a relationship—resources that would decline in value or be lost if the relationship were to end. People may invest directly or indirectly: Direct investments are those resources that are put directly into a relationship, such as time, self-disclosure, and emotional energy. Indirect investments occur when initially extraneous resources become inextricably connected to the relationship, such as children, mutual friends, or shared possessions. Both types of investments enhance dependence by increasing the costs of ending a relationship—to abandon a relationship is to sacrifice invested resources.

The Investment Model further extends interdependence theory by suggesting that commitment emerges as a consequence of increasing dependence. *Commitment level* describes the intent to persist in a relationship, including long-term orientation toward the involvement, as well as feelings of psychological attachment to it. How does commitment differ from dependence? Dependence is a structural property of relationships—dependence describes the addictive effect of wanting to persist (feeling satisfied), having no choice but to persist (possessing poor alternatives), and needing to persist (high investments). As people become more dependent, they tend to develop strong commitment. Commitment is the sense of allegiance that is established with regard to the source of one’s dependence. Because John is dependent on Mary, he develops an inclination to persist with her, comes to think of himself as part of “John and Mary,” and tends to consider the broader implications of his actions, such as implications for his partner or long-term goals for the relationship. As such, the psychological experience of commitment reflects more than the bases of dependence out of which it arises. Commitment is the psychological construct that directly influences everyday behavior, including relationship maintenance mechanisms and decisions to persist in versus leave a relationship.

Consequences of Commitment

The empirical literature provides consistent support for Investment Model predictions. Commitment is positively associated with satisfaction and

investment size and is negatively associated with quality of alternatives. Each of these variables makes a unique contribution to predicting commitment. Also, (a) compared to less committed people, highly committed people are substantially more likely to persist in their relationship, and (b) commitment level mediates the associations of satisfaction, alternatives, and investments with persistence.

Of course, strong commitment does not magically cause relationships to persist. Rather, commitment promotes adaptive relationship-relevant acts, which in turn cause relationships to persist. Researchers frequently label these adaptive acts *relationship maintenance mechanisms*, defined as the specific means by which partners manage to maintain long-term, well-functioning relationships. Why should commitment promote prorelationship behaviors? As noted earlier, committed individuals experience high satisfaction, perceive their alternatives to be poor, and have invested heavily. They are psychologically attached to their relationships, and they think about their relationship over the long run, rather than merely in the here and now. The implications should be clear. First, committed individuals literally need their relationships; the more one has to lose, the more effort one exerts to hold onto what one has. Second, committed individuals are oriented toward long-term outcomes and typically recognize that it is in their long-term interest to develop patterns of reciprocal prorelationship behavior. Third, because committed individuals are psychologically attached to their relationships, they may experience themselves and their partners as merged into a single entity, such that self-interest and partner interests become blurred. Finally, strong commitment may yield communal orientation, including inclinations to respond to the partner's needs in a relatively unconditional manner.

Numerous maintenance mechanisms have been identified, including both behavioral maintenance acts (changes in behavior) and cognitive maintenance acts (cognitive restructuring). The behavioral maintenance acts include: (a) *accommodation*, or the willingness, when a partner enacts a potentially destructive behavior, to inhibit the impulse to retaliate and instead react in a constructive manner; (b) *willingness to sacrifice*, or the tendency to forgo immediate self-interest so as to promote the well-being of the partner and relationship; and

(c) *forgiveness of betrayal*, or the victim's willingness to forgo desire for retribution and demands for atonement, instead reacting in a less judgmental, more constructive manner. The cognitive maintenance acts include: (a) *cognitive interdependence*, or the tendency to think in terms of "we, us, and our" rather than "I, me, and mine"; (b) *positive illusion*, or the tendency toward relationship-enhancing illusion—the inclination to perceive one's relationship as both better and not as bad as other relationships; and (c) *derogation of alternatives*, or the tendency to disparage tempting alternative partners, minimizing the attractiveness of their abilities or attributes. Each of these maintenance mechanisms has been shown to be promoted by strong commitment and in turn to promote couple well-being and longevity.

Unjustified Persistence: Remaining in an Abusive Relationship

As noted earlier, simple positivity of affect (e.g., attraction, satisfaction, and love) is not enough to predict stay/leave behavior. Sometimes people persist in completely unsatisfying relationships. Continued involvement in an abusive relationship serves as a good illustration of this phenomenon. Why do people who have been physically battered sometimes choose to stay with their partners? Why would someone remain in a relationship that carries a real risk of serious injury or death? Explanations that emphasize personal dispositions—such as low self-esteem or learned helplessness—tell only part of the story. Through its emphasis on dependence as the structural basis for commitment, the Investment Model helps us understand why abused individuals may sometimes feel that they have no choice but to remain with their partners—because their alternatives are poor and/or because they have invested a good deal in their relationships.

Indeed, the Investment Model has been employed to predict and understand the conditions under which people are likely to remain in abusive relationships. Such research reveals that the decision to persist typically is only minimally related to how dissatisfied the victim is with the relationship. Rather, persistence is first of all predicted by quality of alternatives, in particular by

the quality of the victim's economic alternatives—victims are more likely to persist when they have poor alternatives due to limited education or low personal income. As such, they are constrained from developing a life independent of the abuser. In addition, persistence is predicted by investment size—victims are more likely to persist when they are married to their partners, have been involved for a longer period of time, and have children with their partners. Thus, the Investment Model can fruitfully be used to understand “inexplicable” persistence: People often persist with unjustified, unsatisfying courses of action—unprofitable enterprises, insupportable wars, and unwinnable arms races—because they have nowhere else to go and/or have invested too much to quit.

Conclusions

It is noteworthy that the Investment Model has been shown to predict feelings of commitment, decisions to persist, and diverse relationship maintenance mechanisms not only in young adults' dating relationships, but also in marital relationships, and not only in heterosexual relationships, but also in gay and lesbian relationships. Moreover, the model has been tested in diverse cultures—in the United States, the Netherlands, and Taiwan. Finally, the model has been used not only to understand commitment in romantic contexts, but also to understand commitment to friendships, commitment to diverse formal and informal groups, commitment to consumer products, and commitment to jobs and organizations. Thus, the investment model is a powerful means of understanding how and why people become committed to a given course of action, choose to persist at it, and become motivated to engage in benevolent maintenance behaviors that serve to support continued involvement.

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See also Abused Women Remaining in Relationships; Accommodation; Commitment, Predictors and Outcomes; Commitment, Theories and Typologies; Forgiveness; Interdependence Theory; Maintaining Relationships; Mutual Cyclical Growth; Willingness to Sacrifice

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IOWA FAMILY TRANSITIONS PROJECT

This program of research was initiated in rural Iowa in 1989 and has continued since that time for almost 20 years. The study began as an investigation of a cohort of more than 500 early adolescents in two-parent (the Iowa Youth and Families Project) and single-parent (the Iowa Single Parent Project) families. During the adolescent years, the study focused on the development of these focal adolescents (G2) and their relationships with their parents (G1), their siblings, and their close friends. Because the current phase of the research involves the transition of cohort members from their families of origin to a second generation of families, it is now called the Family Transitions Project (FTP).

As the G2s have moved from adolescence to adulthood, the project has added new relationships to the study involving adult friends, romantic

partners, and their G3 children. Retention of G2s in the study has been excellent: 95 percent of the original cohort members have participated in at least one annual assessment during the past 4 years. Each generation in the study has been assessed over a several year period of time using a measurement strategy that is both extensive (i.e., covers multiple domains of personal and social characteristics) and intensive (i.e., employs a multi-informant approach that includes self-reports, other family member reports, teacher reports, ratings by trained observers, school records, and public records). This review discusses findings from this research on the quality of these different types of relationships over time.

Parent–Child Relationships

Research on the parent–child relationship has focused particularly on reciprocal processes in this intergenerational union. An important initial publication in this domain showed that disruptive behavior by the adolescent during a problem-solving task was positively related to harsh and inconsistent parenting over time in a reciprocal process; that is, the more disruptive the adolescent, the more harsh the parent and vice versa. Disruptive adolescent behavior also reduced nurturing and involved parenting over time while such parenting also seemed to reduce disruptive behavior. Cooperative adolescent behavior had no influence on positive parenting; however, nurturing and involved parenting appeared to promote cooperative adolescent behavior. These findings were extended by research showing that parental and adolescent negative affect in general, not just related to problem solving, were reciprocally interrelated across the years from early to late adolescence. When parents and adolescents demonstrated high levels of negative affect toward each other during early adolescence, their expression of negative affect toward each other continued to increase across adolescence, but slowed slightly during late adolescence. The basic message from this program of work on parent–child relationships is that patterns of negative reciprocity are robust and developmentally damaging when they occur by early adolescence.

Sibling Relationships and Friendships

In an important demonstration of how perceptions of quality (i.e., happiness and satisfaction) develop in sibling relationships, the project drew on the behavioral model of romantic relationships to propose that greater observed hostility and lower observed warmth in sibling interactions would reduce perceived quality over time during the adolescent years. Findings were consistent with these predictions. Moreover, perceived relationship quality had no impact on the style of sibling interactions. This analysis supported the view that it is interactional quality in close relationships that either fosters or reduces a positive evaluation of the relationship. A similar analysis focusing on adolescent friendships showed that G2 hostility toward a friend diminished the quality of their relationship, whereas supportive behaviors enhanced it. These results replicated the findings related to siblings. In addition, this study showed that the behaviors that G2 demonstrated toward friends were strongly influenced by the same types of behaviors by G1 parents toward G2.

Romantic Relationships

Romantic relationships of both the G1 and G2 generations have also been studied. Findings for the G1 generation include the following: (a) conflicts about work and family life diminish marital quality, (b) economic pressures and couple psychopathology increase marital problems but supportiveness and effective problem solving between couples help buffer these stress effects, (c) supportiveness in social networks enhances relationship quality but conflicts can diminish it, (d) negative cognitive biases and neuroticism exacerbate negative behavioral interactions that increase the likelihood of marital instability, and (e) satisfaction with sexual relationships enhances marital quality and reduces marital instability.

Research on the adult romantic relationships of the G2 generation show that G1 parenting characterized by nurturance, involvement, and effective childrearing practices predicts G2 interactions with a romantic partner that are high in warmth and low in hostility. This interactional style promotes greater relationship quality. This program

of research also has shown that positive G2 personality attributes like optimism and positive emotions promote success in romantic relationships, whereas negative personality characteristics like neuroticism intensify instability and conflict. In addition, nurturing interactions in the family of origin have been shown to promote G2's secure romantic relationship style and relationship success during the adult years.

Future Directions

In the coming years, the Iowa Family Transitions Project will continue to conduct research on relationships in these three-generation families, including relationships between the G1 grandparents and G3 grandchildren. The project is unique in several respects. It provides a rare opportunity to study relationship initiation, development and termination across many years and multiple generations, and does so with a rural population that is largely ignored in the social science literature.

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See also Developing Relationships; Economic Pressures, Effects on Relationships; Family Functioning; Friendships in Young Adulthood; Parent–Child Relationships; Work–Family Conflict

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ISOLATION, HEALTH EFFECTS

Social epidemiologists have traditionally defined *social isolation* as low levels of social integration, indexed by fewer and less diverse social connections with others. Conversely, higher levels of social integration are evidenced by increased numbers of various social ties, including ties with family, friends, religions, clubs, and other group memberships that create social relations with others. Importantly, evidence supports a profound effect of social isolation on physical health, including increased risk for disease and mortality. The health risks of poor social integration underscore the substantial biological implications of human relationships. Notably, even individuals with seemingly ample numbers of social ties (e.g., are married, have an extensive family network, have work relationships) report feelings of isolation and loneliness, and such perceptions may carry health risks as well. As such, both structural determinants and perceptions of isolation are receiving current empirical attention in order to understand how social connections relate to physical well-being. After presenting evidence for social isolation's effects on mortality and morbidity, this entry describes plausible mechanisms linking social isolation to physical health, including contemporary thinking about these important associations between human relationships and health.

Isolation and Mortality

The notion that social isolation has powerful effects on well-being and mortality was proposed in social theory over a century ago. In his sociological study of social regulation in the late 1800s, Émile Durkheim concluded that low levels of social attachment led to a higher likelihood of suicide, highlighting the pivotal role of social bonding in individual and societal survival. More than a half-century later, epidemiological studies began to confirm the impact of social isolation on mortality. Common among these and more current studies has been the extensive measurement of family ties, friendships, marital status, and group memberships in order to characterize individuals' social integration. Provocative evidence

has accumulated that having fewer social ties is as good a predictor of earlier death as are substantial biomedical risks like cigarette smoking and sedentary lifestyle. In their seminal study of almost 7,000 residents of Alameda County, California, Lisa Berkman and S. Leonard Syme found that individuals who reported the fewest social ties were significantly more likely to die over a 9-year period compared with those having the highest levels of social connections, even after controlling for well-established biomedical risk factors. A later reanalysis of the Alameda County study data by Teresa Seeman and her colleagues suggested that the importance of various social ties changes for survival as people age. Although being unmarried related more strongly to earlier death than ties with family and friends for residents below age 60, among those older than 60, having fewer than five contacts per month with close friends and/or family was a better predictor of mortality than marital status. Notably, social isolation among those older than 60 related to a 17 percent higher risk of death, compared with older adults with 5 or more family or friend contacts per month.

Since the 1970s, associations between isolation and mortality have been widely replicated with residents from Tecumseh, Michigan; Durham County, North Carolina; Evans County, Georgia; Sweden; and Finland, among various samples. In some studies, the effects of isolation on survival have been stronger for men than women, and racial differences have also been found, but more research is needed to determine the nuances of the isolation and health link. In all, supported by strong evidence from these large-scale, general population-based studies, the association between isolation and mortality has gained a foothold in the biomedical and behavioral science literatures, substantiating long-held beliefs about the role of social relationships to human survival.

Disease Development, Progression, and Survival

Sparked by the early research on survival, the effect of social isolation on disease onset and course gained empirical attention in the 1980s. Research to date has focused primarily on cardiovascular disease (CVD), including risk for heart

disease development (incidence) as well as survival after heart disease onset. Some studies indicate that after controlling for important biomedical risk factors, social isolation indeed increases risk for cardiac disease incidence. More consistent evidence exists for the effect of isolation on cardiac disease-related mortality and all-cause mortality among patients with existing heart disease. In a comprehensive study of ischemic heart disease, stroke, and cancer incidence and survival, Thomas Vogt and collaborators assessed social connections of CVD- and cancer-free health maintenance organization members and found that reduced network size and scope (when social ties are limited to one domain, such as the family, with few ties across various other domains, such as social clubs, church, or the workplace) increased the risk of all-cause mortality across a 15-year period. Reduced network scope also increased the risk of developing ischemic heart disease, but was unrelated to cancer or stroke incidence. In a study of 763 Swedish men without CVD at baseline, Kristina Orth-Gomer and colleagues found that lower social integration was related to almost four times the risk of developing heart disease across a 6-year period compared with higher social integration. Beverly Brummett and colleagues examined *supportive* social contacts among more than 400 patients with existing coronary artery disease. Social support network size was based on responses to several questions that asked the patient to identify persons with whom they liked to talk and do things and who provided emotional and tangible resources during stressful times. Over a 5-year period, patients with three or fewer supportive social contacts had twice the risk for mortality due to both cardiac-related mortality and all-cause mortality, compared with those with greater than three socially supportive contacts. This effect of isolation was independent of age and, notably, disease severity.

Some studies also point to a possible association between social isolation and cancer mortality. For example, among Alameda County study residents, George Kaplan and Peggy Reynolds found that women who had no or few social contacts were twice as likely to die across a 17-year period from all cancer types compared with women with many social contacts. However, other studies have failed to find a relationship between isolation and cancer

mortality, and only a few among studies of cancer *development* suggest social isolation as a risk factor. Thus, the role of social isolation in cancer incidence and survival remains uncertain.

Aside from its relationship to chronic disease, social isolation also appears to influence the course of acute illness. In a well-controlled study by Sheldon Cohen and colleagues of psychological and social factors related to the development of the common cold, health study volunteers reported on their social connections and were later exposed to varying doses of a cold virus. After viral exposure, individuals characterized by lower levels of social integration were 4.2 times more likely to develop an upper respiratory infection compared with those more socially integrated. Taken together, evidence has accumulated linking a deficit in social connections to the increased risk of both disease and mortality. What is less understood are the pathways leading to social isolation's deleterious health effects.

How Does Isolation Impact Physical Health?

The challenge for contemporary researchers is to identify the mechanisms that contribute to the increased health risk experienced by socially isolated individuals. Various avenues for explaining isolation's effects on health have been proposed and evidence suggests important interactions among psychological, social, and biological factors that confer risk to persons without significant social ties. Socially isolated individuals evidence heightened biological markers of risk, including higher levels of stress hormones, higher resting blood pressure, and weaker immune responses compared with those with more social ties. Such evidence provides one potential physiological explanation for subsequent health risks of isolation, but the origin of these biological risk factors among the socially isolated remains unknown. A better understanding of behavioral and psychosocial factors that contribute to physiological dysfunction will help shed light on the complex relationship between social isolation and health.

One behavioral pathway linking social relationships to health might be the influence that significant others have on one's enactment of healthy behaviors. For instance, a spouse can remind a pain patient to take required medication, friends encourage continued exercise when it becomes a

social activity, and children may serve as caretakers for elderly parents. Alternatively, others can discourage unhealthy behaviors like smoking or excessive alcohol use. With few social ties, there exists little or no external influence on decisions about health behaviors. Greater attention to the ways that social isolation relates to decisions and enactment of health behaviors is needed.

Social support, considered to be the emotional, physical, and informational resources provided by others, especially during stressful times, has been suggested as a key factor in the link between social integration and health. According to the direct effects model, social support is proposed to exert effects on health by bolstering people's sense of belonging, purpose, and control. Thus, social ties are integral to emotional and psychological well-being, which also relate strongly to physical health. The buffering model suggests that social support can buffer the harmful effects of stress on the body; as such, the socially isolated may be at risk for exacerbated and potentially harmful physiological stress effects. Indeed, evidence exists for both models. Importantly, studies also indicate that lower levels of social support can explain why fewer social ties relate to poor health. Understanding how various supportive aspects of social relationships influence physiological function and health outcomes is helping to clarify important associations among social isolation, integration, and physical health.

Finally, other psychological factors associated with social isolation likely influence physical health as well. The socially isolated have higher rates of depression and anxiety, both of which can exacerbate and be exacerbated by poor health. More recent evidence suggests that the psychological experience of loneliness, apart from objective indicators of social integration (i.e., numbers of social ties), has unique effects on the body and may too be a pathway contributing to the health effects of social isolation. The psychological concomitants of social isolation have yet to be fully revealed, and doing so will provide additional elements to the complex picture concerning the health effects of isolation.

Conclusion

In general, a significant lack of social contacts appears to have important effects on our physical

health. The socially isolated have higher rates of mortality as well as physiological and biological profiles indicative of health risk. There also exists some evidence that social isolation is related to increased risk for disease, especially coronary heart disease, and acute illnesses, such as the common cold. There is considerable current interest in understanding the mechanisms linking isolation to health. There also remains a question concerning whether there exists a linear or threshold effect in the social tie and health relationship: Do those with moderate to high levels of social contacts benefit from the addition of more social ties, suggesting an ever-increasing, linear contribution of integration to health, or does the health benefit of increasing one's social network only befall the socially isolated? There is evidence for both a linear and threshold model, and further examination in this area is necessary. In all, continued attention to the interplay among biological, psychological, and social factors that tie social isolation to increased morbidity and mortality will promote further understanding about the crucial role of social relationships to health.

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See also Loneliness; Marriage and Health; Social Isolation; Social Support, Nature of; Social Support and Health; Stress and Relationships

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J

JEALOUSY

Jealousy is an unpleasant emotion that arises when one perceives that an important relationship with another, or some aspect of that relationship, is threatened by a third party (a rival). It can have powerful personal and social impact. On the one hand, jealousy may lead to desirable outcomes: redirecting a loved one's attention to the self and reestablishing bonds. On the other hand, it also can have serious negative consequences. For example, jealousy is often implicated as a cause of spousal abuse and is the third or fourth most common motive in nonaccidental homicides across cultures. Romantic relationships provide particularly fertile ground for the elicitation of jealousy. However, jealous feelings also occur across a variety of interpersonal relationships. For example, jealousy can be experienced by children when their parents shower attention and affection on a sibling, or by a person who feels upset over being excluded by friends who are socializing together. Thus, jealousy requires the involvement of three individuals (the self, the partner, and the rival), which is sometimes referred to as a *love triangle*. This entry covers theories of jealousy, including conceptual debates about its origin and definition, presents empirical work on the ontogeny of jealousy as well as work on individual differences in jealousy, and discusses empirical challenges faced in the field.

Definitions and Theory

Although everyone would agree that jealousy involves unpleasant feelings, there is no unanimity on the exact nature of the distress. The feelings we call jealousy may be a blend of affective reactions that arise from more basic emotions such as anger, fear, and sadness. One possibility is that all of these emotions may be experienced simultaneously by a person during a jealous episode. A second possibility is that an individual does not feel several emotions at once, but rather experiences a series of different emotions over the course of a single jealousy episode. Which emotion is felt at any given time would depend on the exact aspect of the situation on which the person is focused. For example, contemplating future loneliness when the relationship is over might elicit sadness, whereas focusing on the partner's dishonesty might elicit anger. A final possibility is that jealousy is a unique emotional state that produces its own distinct feelings and behaviors that differ from other emotions such as fear and anger. In any case, it is generally assumed that the function of jealousy is to motivate behaviors that will break up the threatening liaison between the partner and rival and maintain the relationship between the self and the partner.

Close personal relationships provide individuals with an abundance of physical and psychological benefits. Therefore, it is probable that people have a variety of psychological predispositions toward maintaining relationships. In human phylogenetic

history, it is likely that people who established and protected relationships usually left more offspring. Thus, whatever psychological dispositions helped maintain relationships would have been selected for and passed down to us through our genes. Jealousy is likely to be one such evolved psychological trait. It may even have originally evolved as a response to competition among siblings who compete for a parent's resources, attention, and care. However, once jealousy evolved to protect one particular type of relationship, it likely became useful in protecting other important relationships such as friendships and romantic relationships from interlopers.

In everyday conversations, the term *jealousy* is frequently used to refer not only to feelings that arise in a love triangle, but also to feelings that are based on longing for or desiring what another person has. For example, someone might exclaim, "I'm so jealous of your good grades!" Although the same word might be used in these different contexts, many researchers would argue that the underlying emotional state is probably different. Wanting what another has is more aptly described as envy, whereas jealousy occurs over the potential loss of an existing relationship to another person. Rejection, or fear thereof, also can be an important part of jealousy. However, the rejection that triggers jealousy is generally seen as different from some other types of rejection in that one's interpersonal loss involves another's gain.

Jealousy is also sometimes categorized into two subtypes—"suspicious jealousy" versus "fait accompli jealousy." Suspicious jealousy occurs when one fears that there is a potential, but uncertain, threat to the relationship. Fait accompli jealousy is a response to a betrayal that is certain or has already occurred.

Development of Jealousy

Signs of jealousy have been found in young children. Some research has shown that a parent's attention merely being directed toward another child is enough to elicit jealousy in infants as young as 6 months. These infants exhibited more negative emotion when their mothers interacted with a lifelike baby doll, relative to when their mothers played with a nonsocial toy (i.e., a book

that made sounds). This suggests that at least some primitive forms of jealousy can be elicited without complex thoughts. However, with additional cognitive development, the triggers for jealousy become more sophisticated. For example, by preschool age, the specifics of a social triangle affect whether jealousy arises. One study found that 4-year-old children showed more jealousy when their mothers interacted with a similar-age peer than when she interacted with an infant. Jealousy in younger infants was not affected by the rival's age. Thus, it appears that, over the course of development, an individual's social and cognitive appraisals of the exact nature and meaning of the interactions between the rival and the loved one become increasingly important in determining whether jealousy is experienced.

Research approaching jealousy from a social-cognitive perspective has focused primarily on two general factors that cause a loved one's involvement with another to be particularly threatening: (1) when it reduces relationship rewards that are derived from the primary relationship, and (2) when it challenges some aspect of a person's self-concept, self-regard, or other self-representations. Thus, people ponder the meaning and ramifications of their loved one's relationship to the rival: "Will this rival relationship reduce the important things I get from my relationship with my partner such as attention, affection, and support?" and "What does this mean about me? Am I unlovable, unattractive, unworthy?" The answers to these questions generally affect the intensity and nature of the jealousy that is experienced.

Individual Differences

Attachment Styles

Research suggests that differences in attachment style may play an important role in jealous reactions. According to attachment theory, people's experiences, starting in infancy, lead them to form internal working mental models of relationships that include beliefs about others and the self. Some research categorizes attachment styles into three types: (1) secure people feel comfortable being interdependent and intimate with an attachment figure, (2) anxious-ambivalent people want closeness but fear abandonment and worry that their

attachment figure may not truly love them, and (3) avoidant people are uncomfortable with too much intimacy and have difficulty in completely trusting the attachment figure. Research suggests that the anxious-ambivalent attachment style is associated with a propensity toward perceiving a greater number of relationship threats, which may lead to more frequent and/or more intense bouts of suspicious jealousy. Individuals with a secure attachment style are less prone to experience jealousy over an ambiguous threat. Some studies suggest that attachment style also may be associated with how people choose to express their jealousy. Securely attached individuals report that they are more likely to express, in constructive ways, their jealous anger toward their partner while attempting to maintain the relationship. Avoidant individuals report expressing more jealous anger toward the rival and are likely to create distance in the relationship, whereas people with anxious attachment attempt to suppress overt acts of jealous anger.

Gender

Some studies find women to be more jealous than men, whereas other studies find the reverse. Overall, however, there seems to be no major consistent differences in the intensity of jealousy in the two genders. Early work suggested that jealousy in men was a stronger motive for murder than in women. However, careful analyses of murder motives, taking into account men's overall greater tendency to commit extreme violent acts, show that a woman who commits murder is as likely to be motivated by jealousy as a man who commits murder. Some research even suggests that women murderers may be relatively more motivated by jealousy than male murderers (albeit the difference is slight).

A controversial topic that has been the focus of much research is whether men and women are jealous over different forms of infidelity. One theory, which is sometimes referred to as the Jealousy as a Specific Innate Module (JSIM) view, hypothesizes that gender differences should exist in jealousy over a romantic partner's infidelity: Men should feel relatively more upset over sexual betrayal and women over emotional betrayal. This view proposes that historically men and women have faced different threats to their rates of producing viable offspring (inclusive fitness). Because fertilization

occurs internally within women, a man could never know with 100 percent certainty that an offspring was his own. Therefore, the problem faced by ancestral man was to ensure that he spent his resources (food, time) only on children that were genetically his. Supporting nongenetically related children would not only decrease the number of biological children that he had, but would also help pass another man's genes on in place of his own. Hence, the JSIM theory proposes that men who were particularly vigilant to sexual infidelity could prevent this from happening. Thus, modern men should be particularly jealous of sexual infidelity. A woman, in contrast, always knows that an offspring is her own, and therefore a mate's sexual infidelity per se would not pose as large of a threat as it would to a man. Instead, an ancestral woman had to guard against her mate giving his resources to other women and their children, which would decrease the likelihood of the woman's own children surviving and reproducing. Thus, present-day women should be particularly jealous over emotional infidelity. Inherent in this is the assumption that a man's emotional involvement is a proxy for his spending resources on another.

Some support for gender differences consistent with this view came from early studies that reported that when people were forced to predict whether a partner's sexual or emotional infidelity would be more upsetting, relatively more women than men picked emotional infidelity. However, several lines of new research with other types of measures and with participants who have actually experienced a loved one's betrayal have not found consistent gender differences in reactions to sexual and emotional infidelity. One study with adults of a wide age range found that men and women, regardless of sexual orientation, focused more on the emotional aspects of their partner's actual betrayal relative to the sexual aspects.

This raises the interesting question of why evolution would have failed to produce gender differences. One possibility is that there may have been no need for sexually dimorphic jealousy mechanisms—a more general jealousy process may have addressed the inclusive fitness risks faced by either gender. Perhaps the most successful way for both sexes to prevent a partner's infidelity would be to be watchful of the common early warning signs of either form of infidelity. People usually display

flirting behaviors such as increased eye contact and smiling well before they have sex or fall in love. This occurs in modern times and presumably in the ancestral past. Because the same behaviors can signal the beginnings of emotional interest, sexual interest, or both, attunement to these common early warning signals would enable both men and women to prevent their partners from engaging in either form of infidelity. This hypothesis is consistent with the emerging evidence that men and women show similar reactions to sexual and emotional infidelity.

Pathological or Morbid Jealousy

Sometimes jealousy takes such extreme characteristics that clinicians will diagnosis it as *pathological jealousy* (also called *morbid jealousy*). This disorder involves intense negative feelings, frequently produces strong urges to spy and check on a partner, and can motivate violent behaviors. Patients suffering from pathological jealousy often have delusions that their romantic partner is cheating on them. Before giving a diagnosis of pathological jealousy, clinicians must believe that the patient has weak and implausible evidence of betrayal or is responding to a betrayal with an overly intense or exaggerated reaction. Of interest, there are gender differences in the prevalence of pathological jealousy, with approximately 64 percent of the cases occurring in men and 36 percent of the cases occurring in women. Recent research suggests that at least some cases of pathological jealousy are a form of obsessive-compulsive disorder, and the disorder is sometimes treated with the antidepressant medication, fluoxetine.

New Methodologies for Studying Jealousy

Several paradigms have been created in the developmental arena to actively elicit jealousy over a parent's attention to a sibling or other child, including the one described earlier. In adults, paradigms that induce jealousy in live interactions are far more scarce (less than a handful of studies). Recently, several researchers have begun grappling with this issue by designing studies that involve interpersonal interactions that produce jealousy in controlled and ethical ways. David DeSteno and

colleagues have designed an orchestrated social encounter in which one person (a confederate of the experiment) rejects the actual participant in favor of a third person. As predicted by social-cognitive theories of jealousy, this work found that threatened self-esteem plays an important role in the elicitation of jealousy and provided further evidence for the link between jealousy and interpersonal aggression. Eddie Harmon-Jones and associates also have employed a rejection scenario in which participants play with two computer-generated players. This study is one of the first to look at brain activity during jealous experiences and found that greater jealousy is associated with increased activity in the left frontal cortex. Research on other emotions suggests that the brain's left hemisphere may play a particularly strong role in emotions that lead to approach behaviors, such as occur during anger or pleasant emotions. This can be contrasted with emotions associated with withdrawal behaviors such as fear or sadness. These data are consistent with the hypothesis that jealousy, at least initially, is an emotion that inclines one to engage in approach behaviors, which may include active attempts at breaking up the threatening liaison or maintaining the relationship.

Examination of jealousy in established romantic relationships can be particularly challenging ethically. The researcher must be concerned about the potential damage to the romantic relationship that might occur as a result of any jealousy manipulation. For this reason, the vast majority of research on romantic jealousy has relied either on hypothetical scenarios in which participants try to imagine themselves in situations and then attempt to predict how they might feel or react or on retrospective recall of jealous experiences. Such approaches clearly offer important insights about jealousy. However, they also have limitations. People often are not good at accurately predicting how they will feel about something that is not currently happening, especially when they have had no actual past experiences with the emotional situation. For example, if one has never had the experience of a partner cheating, then it is difficult to know how one would react when actually confronted with such a situation. Recall of past jealousy experiences may be a better measure of jealous feelings. Yet, it too has limitations, such as potential recall bias or memory omissions.

A new paradigm, created in Christine Harris's lab, helps overcome some of the ethical obstacles of actively eliciting jealousy in couples. A participant is shown a flirtatious computer dialogue that is purportedly between the participant's partner and a rival. In actuality, there is no rival, and the partner is told exactly what to enter into the computer. This has the advantage that jealousy is actually elicited, but any potential harm to the primary relationship can be completely eliminated at the end of the experiment by revealing that there was no real third person and that the partner did not actually engage in flirtatious behaviors. (Follow-up phone interviews conducted after the experiment also confirmed the lack of relationship harm.) This experimental work has documented that physiological arousal increases during jealousy and has also shown that jealousy can be expressed through derogation of the rival.

Conclusion

In summary, there is no doubt that jealousy can have negative ramifications as discussed previously. However, jealousy also can have positive effects for the individual and for the relationship. For one, it alerts one to potential relationship threats, which can promote behaviors that help to maintain the relationship (such as discussing the threat or encouraging the partner to take steps to avoid potential temptation). For example, a 7-year longitudinal study found that individuals who were high in jealousy were more likely to have successful relationships than individuals who were low in jealousy. Other work suggests that jealousy may have differential relationship impact depending on one's attachment style. Securely attached individuals reported that a past jealousy experience brought them closer to their partners—an effect not experienced by anxious-ambivalent or avoidant individuals.

Christine R. Harris

See also Adult Attachment, Individual Differences; Attachment Theory; Dark Side of Relationships; Envy; Evolutionary Psychology and Human Relationships; Stalking

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JOB STRESS, RELATIONSHIP EFFECTS

Research on the association of job stress with the health and functioning of personal relationships, particularly relationships outside of work, has a long history. Most of this research has focused on the impact of job stress on family relationships, exemplified by research on *work–family conflict* and (more currently) *work–family balance*. A persistent assumption in research is that the impact of job stress is assumed to be more significant for women than for men. There exists, however, considerable evidence that job stress also affects men's relationships. Job stress, moreover, may affect relationships beyond those in the worker's household, although this possibility is much less commonly examined in the literature. In addition, job stress may not necessarily have deleterious

effects on family or other relationships. Individual workers and families develop successful ways of coping to mitigate the negative impacts of job stress on their relationships.

Contemporary research on the relationship effects of job stress is a multidisciplinary endeavor, encompassing social psychology, sociology, organizational behavior, and policy research. Research has evolved in response to social trends, especially the increasing labor force participation of mothers in the last 40 years and the increase in dual-earner families. The first section of this entry reviews major terms and theoretical approaches used in this research area. The second section examines the specific types of job stress that are believed to affect relationships. The third section reviews gaps in the literature on relationship effects.

Theoretical Approaches

There is abundant evidence that chronic job stress (including interpersonal conflict at work) is related to poorer physical and mental well-being. Since 1980, researchers have paid increasing attention to how the contagion of stress from the workplace to personal relationships may reduce well-being. Stress contagion from the job to other settings is generally classified into two types: *spillover* and *crossover*. *Work spillover* is defined as job stress that crosses the boundary from work into another area of life. Spillover can be either behavioral (paying less attention to a spouse or child) or affective (feeling more impatient with them). Crossover occurs when stressors experienced on the job have an impact on the behavior or mood of a significant other person, such as a spouse or child.

Researchers from many disciplines have contributed to the study of work spillover and crossover. For example, social and gender role theories in sociology have long influenced research on the relationship effects of job stress. Psychological and organizational research on spillover has applied the sociological definition of social role, which is the set of normative expectations for behavior in an important domain of life. Gender roles are defined as expectations for appropriate masculine and feminine behavior. From these definitions of social and gender roles emerged the ideas that conflict can develop between job duties and family

relationships, and that women are more likely to experience significant relationship effects from job stress because of social expectations that women rear children and defer their own careers to accommodate their husbands.

Studies conducted in the 1960s and 1970s, when fewer mothers participated in the paid labor force, started with the premise that work–family conflict was primarily a problem for working mothers. Changes in women’s employment patterns, however, have led to shifts in both the definition of work–family conflict and in the focus of research. The majority of married women in the United States and other developed nations now are cobreadwinners for their households, and their contributions have helped raise family living standards. Research has also established that men are contributing more time to household work and to child care. A more contemporary view of work–family conflict is that it is experienced when household breadwinners do not have enough time to fulfill their joint work and family commitments. Work–family conflict is viewed as the result of having too few hours in the day. This evolving view about the cause of work–family conflict also strongly suggests that men as well as women experience its effects.

The shift in explanation about what causes work–family conflict has also led to the introduction of more eclectic theoretical perspectives into the study of job stress spillover and crossover. Specifically, studies of spillover and crossover have been greatly influenced by theories about stress exposure. Chronic job stress is believed to cause fatigue, exhaustion, anger, or withdrawal from household responsibilities and relationships, and it affects both men and women.

Stress exposure theories emphasize not only exposure to job demands, but also situational and personal factors that influence how workers perceive and cope with those demands. For example, Robert Karasek’s influential demand-control model includes predictions about how job demands and worker control over the pace and number of those demands influence other areas of life. High demand–high control jobs encourage workers to become active problem solvers, low demand–low control jobs encourage workers to be passive copers, and high demand–low control jobs (high-stress jobs) produce exhaustion, fatigue, and social withdrawal. A modification of the Karasek model

to include social support also suggests that positive social relationships can protect workers from the negative health effects of excessive job demands.

Job Stress and Family Relationships

The application of stress exposure theories to research on relationship effects of job stress has led to several advances over empirical findings predicted by traditional social and gender roles theories. First, long work hours and the combination of a couple's work hours are associated with experiencing more job demands and more spillover and crossover of job stress into family relationships. Spillover from work to family is particularly acute in single-parent families. Second, and contrary to the predictions of traditional role theory, men's and women's relationships are both affected by job stress. The impacts, however, differ. Women are more likely than men to take preventive actions against bringing job stress home, such as by working fewer hours and avoiding more demanding jobs. Men are more likely than women to expect family members to adjust to their job stress. Third, interpersonal conflict at work, job insecurity, lack of control over work demands, and insufficient rewards relative to efforts can affect a worker's family. Daily job stressors of all types are associated with marital arguments and withdrawal. Job stress may affect the quality of relationships with children negatively by decreasing time spent with children and increasing arguments. Fourth, there are individual and between-family differences in how job stress affects family relationships. Families with a history of conflict are particularly vulnerable to tensions associated with job stress. Workers who have a history of psychological distress or neuroticism are more likely to report spillover of job stress into their family relationships.

Researchers have also examined positive, problem-focused coping strategies that mitigate the impact of job stress on family relationships. Supportive spouses respond to each other's job stress and mitigate the impact on their children. In related research on the work-family interface, the term *work-family balance* has shifted the focus away from a wholly negative view of how work influences family life. Empirical studies have found

that dual-earner couples typically develop successful (or at least good enough) collaborative strategies to perform major household tasks, rear and monitor children, maintain rewarding household relationships, and stay employed. Parents also actively negotiate arrangements with their employers to make it possible to fulfill work and family commitments, both over the short and long term. Although some of these strategies may involve juggling too many demands and lead to the perception that life is stressful, the aim of the strategies is to keep family relationships healthy in the long run.

Underexplored Areas in Job Stress Relationship Effects

The study of the relationship effects of job stress has been shaped by changing experiences among workers in developed nations (the United States, Europe, and Asia). Less attention has been paid to equally important changes in family relationships that may complicate the picture, such as the increase in the number of single-parent families, stepfamilies, and parental cohabitation in lieu of remarriage.

Several studies in the last decade have focused on job stress effects on relationships in single-parent families. As mentioned, single parents are more likely to report frequent spillover between job stress and home life, particularly in low-income families where parents lack adequate resources for child care.

Few studies have explicitly considered work spillover and crossover effects in families led by remarried parents or cohabiting partners. Cohabitation has become common in the United States and Europe, and many children spend several years of their childhood with a cohabiting parent. This is a critical gap in research because step and cohabiting families tend to report more family conflict and less cohesion. As described previously, research on job stress spillover and crossover has shown that the impacts on relationships vary depending on the degree of conflict and supportive interactions in households.

The impact of parental job stress on children also deserves fuller exploration, particularly in single-parent families. There is considerable research indicating that mothers and fathers withdraw from

interacting with children or experience tension with them after a bad day at work. National data on time use, however, suggest that long work hours (and maternal employment) have not reduced the number of hours, on average, that married parents spend with their children. Both mothers and fathers in two-parent families spend more time with their children than they did 30 years ago and have increasingly spent that time on activities that contribute to their children's cognitive and social development. (Employed single mothers spend about the same amount of time with their children as they did 30 years ago, but are also increasing time spent on child developmental activities.) One possible explanation of these trends is that working parents perceive a greater need to invest in their children to ensure educational and future occupational success. Parents spend less time on housework, leisure pursuits, and (if married) with each other.

Finally, job stress may have an impact on overall levels of social integration in a society. The impact of job stress on the transition to marriage and parenthood is rarely studied. It is well-known that men and women in economically developed nations are marrying later, and the reasons are not entirely clear. In Europe, several theorists have raised the possibility that job stress and long work hours among early career men and women delay marriage and discourage childbearing within marriage, causing startling declines in overall fertility. Even fewer theorists have considered the impact of job stress on the formation of friendships. A recently published study suggests that job demands and stress among recent cohorts in the United States are responsible for the decreasing size of social networks, with perhaps lasting consequences on social integration and well-being.

Elaine Wethington

See also Conflict, Family; Conflict, Marital; Contextual Influences on Relationships; Dual-Earner Couples; Employment Effects on Relationships; Role Theory and Relationships; Stress and Relationships

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JUSTICE NORMS APPLIED TO RELATIONSHIPS

In relationships, members exchange resources (i.e., each member makes contributions to the relationship and receives benefits from the relationship). Researchers have long been interested in the rules and norms that govern these exchanges. Although several *justice norms* have been postulated, scientists have tended to focus on three of these rules: the equity rule (rewards are distributed in proportion to the contributions made by each individual), the need-based rule (rewards are distributed in response to the needs of each individual regardless of his or her contributions), and the equality rule (everyone receives similar rewards regardless of needs or contributions). Many different resources can be exchanged in relationships. Resources can be both tangible (e.g., money, material goods) and intangible (e.g., affection, love, time, effort) and vary depending on the relational setting. This entry discusses the three justice norms that people may use when distributing resources in their relationships.

Equity, Need, and Equality

The rule that has received most attention in research is the *equity rule*. John Stacy Adams originally formulated Equity Theory in the 1960s to explain employees' job satisfaction and motivation, but he postulated that the equity rule would be relevant in all human relationships in which exchanges of resources take place, including close relationships such as relationships between romantic partners or close friends. According to Equity Theory, a distribution is equitable when the ratio between contributions and rewards of each individual to an exchange is equal. Imagine a situation in which two friends take on a job to paint someone's house for a certain amount of money. When the job is done, the two friends have to divide the money between them. All else being equal, if one friend has spent twice as many hours on the job, then, according to Equity Theory, the money should be divided accordingly (i.e., that friend should receive two thirds of the money and the other friend one third). The ratio becomes unequal whenever either member is receiving too much or too little, relative to what they are contributing. Equity Theory proposes that individuals who perceive themselves as either overbenefited (receiving more than a fair share) or underbenefited (receiving less than a fair share) will become distressed, but that underbenefit is more distressing than overbenefit. Equity Theory further predicts that the distress leads to efforts to either restore actual equity (by changing one's own contributions or by convincing the other individual to change theirs) or psychological equity (by changing one's perceptions and expectations of each individual's contributions and rewards). If this fails, individuals may end the relationship or disengage from it.

The idea that equity applies to all human relationships has been challenged by researchers who postulate that the justice norm used will depend on the type of relationship. According to these researchers, the equity rule is the typical justice norm in exchange relationships (business relationships and relationships between strangers), but not in communal relationships (relationships among romantic partners, friends, and family members). An important feature of communal relationships is that people are concerned with the other person's welfare and well-being. In such relationships,

people are thought to use a *need-based rule*: They are responsive to the other person's needs without expecting or wanting a benefit in return. Also, receiving a benefit does not create a debt that has to be reciprocated at a later time. The responsiveness to needs is expected to be mutual: Each member will try to accommodate the other person's needs to the best of his or her ability. Going back to the example of the friends painting the house: Suppose these are close friends and the friend who spent fewer hours on the job really needs the money, but was unable to put in the hours because he got sick. In that situation, the other friend might very well go 50:50 on the money. He might even give the whole amount to his friend if the friend's needs are pressing (e.g., the friend is otherwise unable to pay the rent) and he does not desperately need the money at present.

Still other researchers have suggested that, particularly in close relationships, people use an *equality rule*, that is, they split benefits (and sometimes costs) evenly among members regardless of each member's contributions. In the prior example, friends using an equality rule would split the money evenly regardless of the fact that one friend spent more hours on the job than the other and regardless of differences in needs. Although the equality rule has been distinguished as a separate rule, it has been argued that dividing benefits (or costs) evenly can be consistent with both an equity rule and a need-based rule and is therefore difficult to test in research. A situation in which resources are divided equally is equitable when both members contribute the same. In a situation where both members have equal needs, an even split is consistent with following a need-based rule. In the remainder of this entry, we therefore focus on research examining the equity rule and the need-based rule.

Research

Equity

Whether one feels equitably treated in a relationship is a subjective experience. Therefore, researchers generally measure perceived equity with self-report methods. In many studies, a global measure of equity is used. Respondents are typically asked to think about everything that is exchanged in their relationship with a specific other person

(e.g., a romantic partner, friend, or coworker) and provide an overall assessment of the equity or inequity of the relationship. Other studies use detailed or domain-specific measures of equity. For example, romantic partners might be asked to rate their own contributions, their partner's contributions, their own outcomes, and their partner's outcomes in a number of areas (e.g., love, status, money, goods, services, and sex). A formula is then used to compute the (in)equity in the relationship.

Research indicates that in a wide variety of interpersonal relationships, including romantic relationships (dating, engaged, married, couples facing a serious illness, older people), friendships, and relationships at work (with coworkers, clients, supervisors), individuals who feel equitably treated score higher on indices of well-being such as (marital) satisfaction and lower on measures such as negative feelings about the exchange (e.g., anger, sadness, guilt), loneliness, depression, burnout, and absenteeism, compared with individuals who feel inequitably treated, particularly underbenefited. A limitation of the research in this area is that many studies are cross-sectional, which means that perceptions of equity and the proposed outcome variables are measured at the same time. This precludes statements about causality, that is, it is impossible to tell whether inequity leads to distress, as is postulated by Equity Theory, or that distress leads to inequity. In longitudinal studies, support for both causal pathways has been found. Several authors now suggest that the relationship between perceived equity and other variables such as satisfaction and commitment may be circular and that perceived equity can be both a cause and a consequence.

Need

Support in favor of the use of a need-based rule in close relationships stems mostly from laboratory studies. These studies have shown that participants are more responsive to another person's needs when they are in an existing communal relationship with this other person as opposed to an exchange relationship (e.g., close friends compared with casual acquaintances) or are led to desire a communal relationship as opposed to an exchange relationship with this other person. Research conducted with married couples has shown that people

consider the need-based rule to be more ideal in marital relationships and that spouses try to follow that rule to a greater extent in their relationships than the equity rule or the equality rule. There is also some evidence that, at least for women, the perception that communal rules are followed in the relationship is associated with increased perceptions of fairness.

Equity and/or Need in Close Relationships?

With respect to relationships among strangers, acquaintances, and other less intimate relationships, there is considerable agreement among scientists that the equity rule is an important justice norm in these relationships. With respect to close relationships, scientists advocating the equity rule and the need-based rule have been on opposite sides for many years. As discussed previously, there is empirical support for both rules in close relationships. How can these research findings be reconciled? Some authors have argued that both rules are not as different from one another as they appear at first sight. Researchers advocating a need-based rule maintain that in close relationships members should be mutually responsive to each other's needs. If both parties adhere to this rule, then in the long run such an exchange would be equitable. It has been argued that an immediate reciprocity ("tit for tat") strategy is indeed maladaptive for ongoing close relationships, but that people do strive for reciprocity or equity in the long run. Other researchers postulate that, although many people would consider the need-based rule ideal and worth striving for in close intimate relationships, people don't always live up to this rule. It has been suggested that people may change to an equity rule when their needs are not met or when they are under stress. Thus, according to these researchers, both rules apply to close relationships; however, they clearly maintain that the need-based rule is the ideal rule and that people strive toward using this rule.

Scientists have also examined the possibility that some people are more likely to use a certain norm than other people and that there might be individual differences in people's sensitivity to violation of these norms. Research has shown that people differ in how exchange-oriented

(a tendency to seek immediate reciprocity) or communally oriented (a tendency to respond to other people's needs) they are in their relationships. Although some research shows that people high in exchange orientation or low in communal orientation are more sensitive (i.e., experience more negative outcomes) to inequity, these findings are not entirely consistent over studies. Other individual difference variables that have been examined are attachment style and self-esteem. There is some evidence that suggests that securely attached individuals (who generally believe that others are trustworthy) are more likely to perceive equity in their romantic relationship, whereas individuals with an anxious attachment style (a tendency to worry about abandonment and not being loved enough) are more likely to feel underbenefited. It has also been suggested that individuals with a secure attachment style might be more likely to follow a need-based rule in their relationship compared with people with an anxious or avoidant style. However, this assumption has not been empirically tested yet. With respect to self-esteem, some research suggests that individuals with low self-esteem are more negatively affected by feeling underbenefited in a romantic relationship than are individuals with high self-esteem.

One other factor that has been studied in equity research is gender. Research generally shows that men are more likely to report feeling overbenefited in their romantic relationships, whereas women are more likely to report feeling underbenefited. There is also evidence that women are more negatively affected by perceptions of inequity, overbenefit, and underbenefit than are men.

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See also Communal Relationships; Fairness in Relationships

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K

KINKEEPING

Kinkeeping, in most of the related research, has been defined as keeping in touch with family members and/or keeping family members in touch with one another. Occasionally, kinkeeping has been more broadly defined to include providing tangible assistance to family members (e.g., helping with tasks such as household chores), but this definition seems too broad. Some researchers include emotional support as part of kinkeeping work, while others see the provision of emotional support as a specialized role. In this entry, the definition of kinkeeping is restricted to activities related to communication and contact, activities that promote a sense of continuity and solidarity in families.

This entry discusses the need for kinkeeping, the activities and impact of kinkeeping, and the presence in many families of the position of family kinkeeper. Consideration is given, as well, to kinkeeping in the context of transnational immigration and in the Internet age.

Why Is Kinkeeping Necessary?

In contemporary society, maintaining solidarity and continuity in families may become problematic as families experience disruption stemming from, for example, death, geographical and social mobility, immigration, and life-course transitions such as marriage and divorce. These and other factors may pose a challenge to maintaining kin

relationships. If family members do not make an effort to keep in touch, kin ties may become attenuated. Kinkeeping in families seeks to ensure this does not happen.

Structure of Kinship in Adult Life

In North America and Europe, the basic family unit is the nuclear family, that is, parent(s) and children. Living arrangements reflect this emphasis in that most households consist of nuclear families (with some variation due to marital status, childlessness, sexual orientation, and ethnicity). Over time, as children grow up, marry, and have children of their own, several nuclear families result; these remain connected through social and emotional ties. This broader network, consisting of older parents and their adult children and grandchildren, has been characterized as a modified extended family. Although large family reunions involving the wider extended family may occur from time to time, the modified extended family, involving adult siblings and their parents and children, comprise the family ties that seem most important to individuals in our society. Much of the work of kinkeeping involves maintaining ties between members of the modified extended family.

The Work of Kinkeeping

Kinkeeping work may include activities such as hosting or arranging family gatherings; transmitting

family news among family members; keeping in touch by phone, mail, or electronic means; creating and maintaining a family genealogy; and recognizing special occasions such as birthdays and anniversaries. Another kinkeeping activity is maintaining family harmony, for example, by acting as a mediator or peacemaker to resolve family disputes.

Some researchers have included preserving traditions as kinkeeping. These traditions may be religious, ethnocultural, or special ways of celebrating holidays that seem unique to a family's members. Preserving these traditions often provides a sense of family identity and gives meaning to family relationships. Preserving traditions may be particularly important to older family members who are immigrants, but assimilation of younger family members into the ways of the host country may result in the loss of traditions. Some research has pointed to the important role older immigrants play in preserving traditions, thereby enhancing feelings of family solidarity and continuity. Researchers have termed this symbolic kinkeeping, referring to activities that go beyond activities such as hosting or arranging family gatherings to include activities that reinforce a sense of meaning and importance of family. Examples of such activities include passing on ethnic culture, religious values, family stories, and special family recipes.

Transnational Kinkeeping

Immigration and emigration pose a multifaceted challenge to family ties. One of the challenges is maintaining family bonds across vast distances and in the face of cultural change. Some research has shown that older immigrants act as links between kin in different countries through sharing news and photographs and other such activities. As is discussed below, the Internet and cell phones have no doubt made transnational communication much easier than it was in the past. In addition, affordable air travel has enabled older immigrants to make visits back to the country of origin, adding to the opportunity to maintain their own personal ties and to nurture those between family members in the old and new countries, for example, by keeping everyone up to date on family news.

Family Kinkeeper: A Specialized Role

Whereas kinkeeping is performed informally by several family members in many or most families, a Canadian study found that in many families there is someone who is perceived to perform the specialized role of kinkeeper. In that study, just over half the participants said there was a person in their family who works harder than others at keeping family members in touch with one another. The researchers conceptualized this person as occupying a position in a familial division of labor and called this position the kinkeeper.

Kinkeeping is mainly a female activity (although it is important to note that men do kinkeeping work as well and occupy the position of kinkeeper in a minority of families). It is not surprising that kinkeeping is gendered in this way since much research has found that relationships between women are key linkages in kinship relations in North America. The mother–daughter tie has been found to be the strongest of all kin ties among adult kin and daughters to be the most common providers of help to aging parents.

The position of family kinkeeper is most commonly passed from mother to daughter. One of the main reasons for kinkeeping appears to be challenges to maintaining sibling ties over the adult life course, first as siblings have children and second as they have grandchildren. The death of parents seems to bring this challenge into focus as middle-aged women come to perceive that their family and their siblings' families will drift apart unless conscious kinkeeping efforts are made. There is some overlap as age-related changes lead mothers to begin to decrease their kinkeeping activities and adult daughters to begin to increase their efforts; in time, however, a new family kinkeeper moves fully into the position.

Although there is little recent research on kinkeeping, future research might test the hypothesis that as gender roles in general have become less traditional, men's involvement in kinkeeping may have increased. More men may be doing kinkeeping work and occupying the position of family kinkeeper.

The Impact of Kinkeeping

Having a family kinkeeper is associated with greater extended family interaction and a greater

emphasis on family ritual. Kinkeeping may also have an impact on individual well-being. Among today's older women, performing kinkeeping activities is positively associated with reported happiness. This may be a cohort effect in that these women were socialized to traditional gender role expectations and experience satisfaction when they fulfill these expectations. Today's younger and middle-aged adults are less traditional about gender roles and show no association between kinkeeping activities and reported happiness.

Kinkeeping and the Internet

There is little research on how the Internet has enhanced kinkeeping. It is very likely, however, that the Internet is used for kinkeeping activities in many families and that it will be used even more in the future as computer-savvy cohorts age. It is easy to see how the Internet could be used for virtual family reunions, maintaining family trees, maintaining a family photo album, having family chat rooms, locating distant relatives, and so on. Documenting these possibilities, however, remains a task for future research.

Although the methods by which kinkeeping occurs may change in the future, as families themselves continue to change, the prevalence of kinkeeping activities attests to the importance individuals attribute—and no doubt will continue to attribute—to maintaining family relationships and to a sense of family identity and continuity.

Carolyn J. Rosenthal

See also Aging Processes and Relationships; Extended Families; Families, Intergenerational Relationships in; Kin Relationships; Sibling Relationships

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KIN RELATIONSHIPS

Kin relationships are traditionally defined as ties based on blood and marriage. They include lineal generational bonds (children, parents, grandparents, and great grandparents), collateral bonds (siblings, cousins, nieces and nephews, and aunts and uncles), and ties with in-laws. An often made distinction is between primary kin (members of the families of origin and procreation) and secondary kin (other family members). The former are what people generally refer to as immediate family, and the latter are generally labeled extended family. Marriage, as a principle of kinship, differs from blood in that it can be terminated. Given the potential for marital breakup, blood is recognized as the more important principle of kinship. This entry questions the appropriateness of traditional definitions of kinship for new family forms, describes distinctive features of kin relationships, and explores varying perspectives on the functions of kin relationships.

Questions About Definition

Changes over the last 30 years in patterns of family formation and dissolution have given rise to questions about the definition of kin relationships. Guises of kinship have emerged to which the criteria of blood and marriage do not apply. Assisted reproduction is a first example. Births resulting from infertility treatments such as gestational surrogacy and in vitro fertilization with ovum donation challenge the biogenetic basis for kinship. A similar question pertains to adoption, which has a history going back to antiquity. Partnerships formed outside of marriage are a second example. Strictly speaking, the family ties of nonmarried cohabitantes do not fall into the category of kin, notwithstanding the greater acceptance over time of consensual unions both formally and informally. Broken and reconstituted families are a third example. The growth in divorce, remarriage, and the formation of stepfamilies has created complex kin networks in which relationships between people who have blood ties are not sustained, and kinlike relationships exist between people who have no blood ties. The chosen families of gays and lesbians are a fourth example.

Their extended family networks, often including former lovers, former spouses, friends, children from heterosexual marriages, and children acquired through adoption or the use of birth technologies, are personally constructed rather than governed by rules of blood and marriage.

The diversity in networks of kin relationships is relatively new, and scientific and lay vocabularies have difficulty keeping pace with social reality. The field does not have the terminology for new and complex kin relationships. The term ex-granddaughter-in-law, introduced by Gunhild Hagestad, serves as an example: Not only do scholars need to get used to the idea that grandchildren can be middle-aged adults with families of their own, but the field lacks the words for relationships shaped by divorce and remarriage.

In scientific texts, the terms *quasi* or *fictive* kin are often used to denote relationships where the traditional rules of kin membership do not apply. These terms carry the connotation that there are real family relationships (defined by blood and marriage) and other family relationships. There is a need to rework the definition of kin relationships to take better account of social reality. Insight can be gained from the practice of law, where regulations regarding adoption, guardianship, gay marriage, registered partnership, inheritance, visiting rights, and maintenance obligations are being developed. Increasingly, conceptualizations of kin relationships need to consider construction and flux rather than take an assumed established structure as their point of departure.

Characteristics of Kin Relationships

An essential difference between kin relationships (other than the marital tie) and nonkin relationships is that the former are given whereas the latter are made. The family of origin forms a constellation of relationships into which a child is born and that exists independently of that individual. This constellation of relationships is, however, very dynamic. It changes as new generations are born and old generations die. Positions within intergenerational chains shift as children become parents and parents become grandparents.

Endurance is another distinctive quality of kin ties: They continue to exist even if left dormant.

Nevertheless, as research on the consequences of divorce for intergenerational family ties shows, they are not inalienable.

Though one's family of origin is "in no sense chosen" (1993, p. 167), to use the words of Janet Finch and Jennifer Mason, there is an element of choice regarding which kin ties are honored. Research findings show that these choices are guided by, among other factors, kinship norms. In most Western societies, the normative obligation to provide support is weaker for genetically more distant family members. Norms are also weaker for ascendant (up lineal lines) than descendent (down lineal lines) kin. The strongest kinship norm is the obligation toward children, followed by that toward parents. Cross-cultural research finds variations in the prioritization of kin relationships. An emphasis on lineal bonds is more typical of Caucasian and Asian families, whereas an emphasis on collateral bonds is more typical of Black families.

Kinship norms do not form a set of preordained rules. As Graham Allan states, kin solidarity in Western societies is permissive rather than obligatory. The norms do not require mutual aid, and under specific circumstances (e.g., poor relationship quality, large geographic distance), it is socially acceptable to deviate from them. A strong theme in research on practices of support and care is that kin responsibilities are negotiated interactively. Sometimes negotiations are overt and explicit, but more often they are implicit. Important elements in the negotiations are shared histories, relationship quality, conflicting commitments, and the personalities of those involved.

The negotiation of kin responsibilities is more likely in individualistic (Euro American) cultures, which stress independence, self-sufficiency, and the pursuit of personal goals, than in collectivistic (Islamic or Confucian) cultures, which stress kin-group membership and the submission of individual goals to the needs and wishes of the family. Ethnic minorities and lower-income groups in Western societies also tend to have collectivistic kin orientations. In collectivistic cultures, the family is seen as defending its members against social and economic hardship. The avoidance of disgrace is a strong motivator to comply with kin-group demands.

Kinship relationships do not exist in isolation. They form a network of bonds of varying intensity

across time and across members. The interdependencies between kin network members are crucial to understanding kinship behavior. The concept of linked lives is often invoked to describe the ways in which decisions taken by a kin network member or events taking place in the life of a kin network member have repercussions for others. Grandparenting research, for example, has documented the consequences of middle-generation divorce for contacts with grandchildren. Contacts might improve, worsen, or remain unchanged, depending on the quality of ties with the parents of the grandchild. Sibling research has shown that the decision to provide help and companionship to parents is structured by expectations about what siblings will do. Those who have a sibling who is emotionally closer or lives nearer to the parent are less inclined to step in and help. Kinkeeping is another concept that captures how kinship operates as a network. Specific family members, often women, fulfill the role of keeping others informed about what is happening in the family, organizing get-togethers, and encouraging direct interactions. Kinkeeping serves to facilitate access to others.

Perspectives on Kin Relationships

Research on kin relationships is more readily associated with anthropology than with sociology and psychology. Literature searches using the word *kin* produce many more references to anthropological work than to studies conducted in sociology and social psychology. Typical for anthropology is that kin relationships are studied as a system that is crucial to the organization of society. In an attempt to understand the orderly functioning of small-scale societies in the absence of state or governmental institutions, anthropologists tend to view kinship as providing a stable political structure and a basis for social continuity. Classic anthropological studies focused on the way in which political groupings, which were recruited through kinship, protected their economic interests and passed their property on. Kin-group membership, marriage rules, and matrilineal versus patrilineal succession are central to these studies.

Research on kin relationships in sociology and psychology is scattered throughout the literature, appearing under headings such as intergenerational

relationships, sibling relationships, and grandparenthood. The adult parent–child bond has been studied more extensively than any other kin relationship. Research on extended kin such as aunts and uncles, nieces and nephews, and cousins is sparse. Information on these sets of relationships most often comes from studies of childless older adults. A consistent finding is that extended kin figure more prominently in the social networks of childless older persons than in those of aging parents. Although primary kin (parents, children, siblings) generally remain significant throughout life, qualitative studies show that, for some, extended kin fulfill unique supplementary functions—as family historians, mediators, mentors, and buffers in conflict. Given the dominant research focus on the nuclear family, little is known about the conditions under which special bonds between extended family members are developed.

Though the research on kin relationships conducted by sociologists and psychologists is generally not framed as research into the organization of Western societies, it does provide insight into their structural and institutional characteristics. First, this field of research contributes to an understanding of sources of social inequality. Work on intergenerational transmission, for example, reveals the ways in which advantages and disadvantages are passed on from generation to generation. Transmitted resources are both material (gifts, inheritances, financial support) and nonmaterial (cultural and social capital, norms and values, educational and professional opportunities). Studies using kin network characteristics as determinants of life chances form another example. Findings consistently show that kin support has a positive impact on health independent of potentially confounded factors such as socioeconomic status, health-risk behaviors, use of health services, and personality.

Second, research on kin relationships is informative about mechanisms underlying social cohesion. Part of this research is based on the premise that kin relationships serve as bridges between social groups. For example, families are one of the few contexts where people of different ages meet and interact. Analyses of marriage patterns reveal whether people marry in or outside their social circle. Another strand of research focuses on kin relationships as a critical basis of social

control. Strong interdependencies imply that the behavior of fellow family members can be called into question. Given increasingly egalitarian relationships, the direction of social control is not only from the old to the young but also the other way around.

Third, research on kin relationships provides insight into processes of modernity. This is achieved by examining the changes in kin relationships that accompany changes in economic conditions, labor market arrangements, government provisions, laws, and cultural climate. A leading question is whether given economic and social circumstances facilitate or require particular kinship patterns. Family sociologists writing in the 1950s argued, for example, that a nuclear family system with its self-contained units was best suited to meet the mobility requirements of industrialized societies. More recently, migration scholars have attributed the rise in transnational families, where members live across national borders, to the growing wage gap between poor and rich countries and the increased demand for care services in developed countries.

Pearl A. Dykstra

See also Aunts and Uncles, Relationships With; Extended Families; Families, Definitions and Typologies; Families, Demographic Trends; Families, Intergenerational Relationships in; Fictive Kinship; Kinkeeping; Sibling Relationships

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KIN SELECTION

Kin selection refers to the evolutionary process leading to adaptations that promote altruism among close genetic relatives. Also known as Inclusive Fitness Theory, Kin Selection Theory was first described by William Hamilton in 1964 and is perhaps the most significant addition to Darwin's theory of evolution by natural selection in the 20th century. At the time of Hamilton's publication, altruism had been a biological mystery; there was no cogent account for why evolution would select for altruistic behaviors that reduced one's own chances of surviving and reproducing and enhanced the survival and reproduction of another. After all, natural selection was thought to produce solely selfish behaviors—a "nature red in tooth and claw." Hamilton's elegant theory provided the missing logic for how altruism could have evolved. This entry discusses the logic of kin selection and provides examples of the kinds of questions Kin Selection Theory can address.

The Logic of Kin Selection

The key to understanding kin selection is to take a gene's-eye view. A gene, unlike an individual, can propagate in two different ways. The first is by promoting the survival and reproduction of the body in which it resides. The second is by promoting the survival and reproduction of other bodies that have a high probability of possessing an identical copy. Who is likely to share a copy of the same genes? By virtue of sharing common ancestors, close biological relatives have a greater than average chance of sharing genes. The more closely related kin are to one another, the greater the likelihood they will share genes. For instance, nuclear family members (mother, father, children,

and siblings) on average have a probability of .5 of sharing a particular gene in common. The probability of sharing a particular gene in common with a grandparent, niece, nephew, aunt, uncle, or half sibling drops to .25; a first cousin drops to .125, and so on. This probability describes the degree of relatedness between two individuals and is a crucial component of Kin Selection Theory. An example is provided for how to compute degree of relatedness at the end of this entry.

Hamilton proposed a set of mathematical equations that captures the rules evolution might have approximated to shape a system producing kin-directed altruism. In its most basic form, kin selection can be represented by the equation $r_i C_i < r_j B_j$. This states that selection will tend to favor altruistic motivations when the costs associated with individual i performing an altruistic act (C_i) weighted by individual i 's degree of relatedness to himself (r_i) are less than the benefits bestowed on recipient j (B_j) discounted by the i 's degree of relatedness to j (r_j). Since r_i equals 1 (people have a probability of 1 of having the same genes as themselves), the equation is typically written $C < rB$, where it is understood that the person performing the altruistic deed is oneself and another person is the beneficiary.

Questions Addressed by Hamilton's Equation

Hamilton's equation is a powerful tool for investigating when it pays to behave altruistically (or selfishly) toward another and when one should want others to behave altruistically (or selfishly) toward oneself or related others. It also provides a means of examining conflicts of interest. For instance, since Bart is more closely related to himself, he may want to be selfish and not share his Butterfinger with his sister Lisa (maybe just a crumb), but his mother Marge likely sees the world differently and would want Bart to share right down the middle since she is equally related to Bart and Lisa.

When To Be Altruistic?

Hamilton's equation can be used to compute when it pays to be altruistic to another individual. For instance, from Bart's perspective, when should

he help Lisa? Starting with Hamilton's equation: $r_i C_i < r_j B_j$, it is possible to substitute in the degrees of relatedness. Bart is the one incurring the costs of helping (C_i), and since he is 100% related to himself, $r_i = 1$. In this example, Lisa is the one who benefits (B_j). Last, r_j is Bart's degree of relatedness to Lisa, which is $\frac{1}{2}$ (see below for how to compute this probability). Hamilton's equation becomes $C < \frac{1}{2} B$ or $2 C < B$. In words, this means that it would pay for Bart to help Lisa when the benefits to her are greater than twice the costs to him. Lisa needs to really benefit from an altruistic act for it to be worth Bart's while to help her. If she were a half sister with a degree of relatedness of $\frac{1}{4}$, Lisa would have to really really benefit, greater than four times the costs Bart incurs for being helpful ($4 C < B$).

Of course, Hamilton's equations are simplified and do not take into account the many other variables selection weighs when shaping altruistic motivations. For instance, age, context, and the benefits of reciprocated altruism are not considered yet are known to play an important role when individuals decide when and whom to help. Nevertheless, they provide a good first approximation of the patterns of altruism one might expect. Additionally, Hamilton's equations may be most likely to apply to acts that carried fitness consequences generation after generation in ancestral environments. In particular, Hamilton's equation is expected to operate when resources are scarce and decisions about altruistic effort have large fitness consequences (e.g., risking one's life to save someone, sharing food when one is hungry or during famine, etc.).

When Will a Person Believe That Another Should Behave Altruistically?

In addition to computing when Bart would likely help Lisa, Hamilton's equation enables computations about when Bart should want Lisa to help him. Starting with Hamilton's equation, $r_i C_i < r_j B_j$, it is important to consider who is incurring the cost and who is benefiting. In this example, Lisa is incurring the cost to be altruistic to Bart, and Bart is reaping the benefits. Because Bart is interested in his perspective in this decision, it is necessary to indicate his degree of relatedness to the individual incurring the costs (Lisa) and his degree of relatedness to the individual receiving

the benefits (himself). Hamilton's equation thus becomes $\frac{1}{2} C < 1 B$. This is because Lisa is incurring the costs, and Bart's degree of relatedness to her is $\frac{1}{2}$. Bart is getting the benefits, and his degree of relatedness to himself is 1. Restated conceptually, while Bart cares that Lisa is incurring some costs to help him out, he is only half as sensitive to her costs as he is to his own gains. This is because Lisa only has a .5 probability of sharing Bart's genes. So from Bart's perspective, Lisa should help whenever the benefits to Bart are at least half the costs to her.

Conflicts of Interest

Hamilton's equations can also be used to identify points of conflict. Each person sits at the center of a unique web of familial relationships (e.g., one's sister is someone else's daughter, granddaughter, niece, mother). This means that tradeoffs optimal to oneself may not be viewed as optimal by others with different degrees of relatedness to the actors involved. As the above examples show, it is possible to calculate the answer to the question "When should Lisa help Bart?" from both Lisa's and Bart's perspective. For Lisa, the answer is whenever the benefits to Bart are greater than twice the costs to her, or $B > 2C$. For Bart, the answer is whenever the benefits to himself are greater than only half the costs to Lisa, or $B > \frac{1}{2}C$. Thus Lisa and Bart will not see eye-to-eye whenever $\frac{1}{2}C < B < 2C$. This range of costs defines the scope of conflict. Although much of the research on genetic conflicts of interest has been done in nonhuman species, researchers have identified conflicts of interest during human pregnancy where offspring attempt to extract more resources (e.g., blood glucose) than is optimal for the mother to give.

In general, what this exercise shows is that from a gene's-eye perspective two people are unlikely to share the same view about who should be delivering benefits of what magnitude to whom. This has implications for understanding socialization concerning altruism. Who would teach Bart to share with his sister when $C < 2B$? Not his mom. She would urge him to share whenever $C < B$ because from her perspective she is equally related to Bart ($r = \frac{1}{2}$) and Lisa ($r = \frac{1}{2}$), cancelling both degrees of

relatedness from the equation. If it were left to Lisa, she would teach Bart to share whenever $2C < B$. So to a certain extent, children might have decision rules that are resistant to certain types of socialization, particularly processes that do not match the cost-benefit outcomes that would have maximized their own inclusive fitness. This possibility has not been fully explored, and future research is needed to determine the extent to which Hamilton's equation explains modern-day human behavior.

It is worth keeping in mind that individuals do not consciously calculate Hamilton's rule to decide when to share or be selfish. Rather, these rules are likely to be integrated into a variety of motivational and cognitive processes in a manner that causes some acts of altruism to seem minor and others more laborious. Additionally, kin selection is only one route to altruism based solely on probabilities of relatedness. Certainly, kin share with and help each other due to principles of reciprocal altruism and mutual valuation. These are likely very strong factors involved in generating altruistic behaviors among close genetic relatives. A complete understanding of the relationships among family members requires consideration of all sources of altruistic motivations.

Cognitive Architecture of Kin Selection

Hamilton's theory of inclusive fitness and the associated equations have helped propel the field's understanding of human social relationships. Nevertheless, almost 50 years after its publication, the field has only just begun to explore the psychological mechanisms mediating kin-directed altruism. For instance, according to Hamilton's equation, a key variable is degree of relatedness, r . But how does the mind approximate r ? Certainly people can make the calculations explicitly, but this probably is not how daily decisions are made.

Since people cannot see another person's genes directly, the best evolution could do is to design a mechanism that uses cues that were reliably correlated with genetic relatedness in the ancestral past to compute an internal index of relatedness. One cue that has been investigated as an indicator of siblingship is childhood coresidence duration. Ancestrally, childhood coresidence would have been a good indicator that another individual was

a sibling because children being cared for by the same mother (and father) would have remained in close physical proximity. If childhood coresidence does indeed serve as a cue to siblingship, then it should influence the computed internal index of relatedness, which in turn should regulate levels of altruism. Indeed, the longer two individuals coresided during childhood, the greater the level of altruism between the pair. Certainly, cues other than coresidence duration might govern assessments of kinship such as seeing one's mother caring for a newborn, facial resemblance, and olfactory recognition. Because any cue to kinship should affect the calculation of one's degree of relatedness to another, a good litmus test for a potential kinship cue would be to see whether it does indeed predict levels of altruism in the manner predicted by Hamilton's theory.

How to Compute Degree of Relatedness (r): What Is the Probability You Share a Gene With Your Full Sister?

The answer is .5, and here is how this is computed. People can share a gene with their sister either because their mother gave each of them the same gene or because their father did. When computing r , each possible route of transmission needs to be considered separately. Starting with the mother, the probability she is the source of the shared gene equals the probability a gene in the child came from the mother \times the probability she gave the sister the same gene (both events need to occur, and in logic this requires multiplying the probabilities). Because people are a diploid species, receiving half of their genes from each parent, this translates into 0.5×0.5 , which equals .25. So the probability of sharing the same genes with a sister via a mother is .25. Following the same logic, the probability of sharing a gene with a sister via a father is also .25. This means that the probability of sharing the same gene with a sibling through either your mother or father is $.25 + .25$, or .5.

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and Bill von Hippel*

See also Evolutionary Psychology and Human Relationships; Fictive Kinship; Kin Relationships

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KISSING

Kissing is a highly species-typical instance of human behavior. Why do people kiss? Does kissing have important consequences? Do men and women use kissing to achieve different objectives? What about kissing technique? Why are males more likely to attempt to initiate open mouth kissing with tongue contact?

The origin of kissing behavior is a good place to start. Long before the invention of blenders and baby food, mothers probably chewed up food and then transferred small portions of the food from their mouth to their baby's mouth to introduce solid food into the baby's diet. Some people theorize that kissing is an evolved derivative of this primitive feeding gesture between mother and child.

There are at least three different types of kisses. Kissing can be used as a ritualized symbolic greeting gesture, as when people meet and kiss each other on the cheek or hand. Kissing on the face but rarely the lips also occurs among family members as a gesture of affection and caring between close relatives. Romantic kissing, on the other hand, is more likely to involve kissing on the lips and often has mating or sexual overtones.

Romantic kissing occurs in over 90 percent of human cultures. Even among those cultures where kissing is absent, courtship often involves face touching, face licking, face rubbing, and nose-to-nose contact, which like kissing brings the participants into close intimate facial contact. Some of humans' closest living relatives, chimpanzees and bonobos, appear to engage in kissing behaviors as well.

Kissing may be part of an evolved courtship ritual. Based on a recent study of 1,041 college students all but five had experienced romantic kissing, and over 20 percent estimated kissing more than 20 partners. When two people kiss, there is a rich and complicated exchange of information involving chemical (smell and taste), tactile, and postural cues. Kissing can have profound consequences for romantic relationships. A kiss will not necessarily make a relationship, but the evidence shows that it can break or kill a relationship. Most students who were surveyed report having found themselves attracted to someone in one or more instances, only to discover after they kissed him or her for the first time that they were no longer interested. It would appear, therefore, that kissing may activate evolved, hardwired unconscious mechanisms that function to assess the genetic compatibility, reproductive viability, and health of a prospective partner.

Evolution is not about survival, it is about reproduction. When it comes to competition for passing genes on to subsequent generations, insemination is the name of the game for males. For females, however, insemination is the mere beginning of the reproductive process that includes pregnancy, childbirth, breast feeding, and extended periods of childcare that can span many years. The costs and consequences of reproduction are dramatically different for females than for males. Because females bear the burden of the reproductive costs, females have been selected to put a lot of emphasis on making careful, judicious mate choices. Since females pick up the tab when it comes to reproduction, females have a vested interest in the other 50 percent of the genes being carried by each of their children. Clearly, females that not only mated preferentially with high-quality males but also picked mating partners who were likely to enter into a long-term committed relationship that involved providing for and protecting her and her dependent children would have had an adaptive advantage.

As a consequence, men and women often kiss for different reasons. Although both sexes rate kissing as a highly romantic act, women consistently rate kissing as more important at all stages of the relationship than do men. Not only do females place more emphasis on kissing, but they are more likely than males to insist on kissing before a sexual

encounter and more likely to emphasize the importance of kissing during and after sex as well. Most females would never dream of having sex with someone they never kissed. By comparison, many of the males in this survey said they would be happy to have sex without kissing, and males were far more likely than females to agree to have sex with someone who was not a good kisser.

Males tend to kiss as a means to an end—to gain sexual favors or to reconcile. Far more men than women think kissing can end a fight, and there is evidence that conflict resolution is facilitated by increasing amounts of kissing. In contrast, females kiss to establish and then monitor the status of their relationship. Among those in committed relationships, women continue to use kissing to assess and periodically update the level of commitment on the part of their partner. There is also evidence that the amount of reported kissing between partners is directly related to relationship satisfaction.

There are also differences in kissing technique. Males are more likely than females to initiate open mouth kissing and kissing with tongue contact. It is possible that the exchange of saliva during kissing may have biological consequences. Male saliva contains small amounts of the sex hormone testosterone, which if administered over sufficiently long period of time could affect a female's libido.

Suffice it to say that there is growing evidence that romantic kissing evolved as an adaptive courtship strategy that functions as a mate-assessment technique, a means of initiating sexual arousal and receptivity, and a way of maintaining and monitoring the status of a bonded relationship.

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See also Affection and Affectionate Behavior; Evolutionary Perspectives on Women's Romantic Interests; Sexuality

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L

LANGUAGE USAGE IN RELATIONSHIPS

The words that people use in conversation convey information about who they are, their motives, their audience, and their situations. Findings from laboratory and naturalistic studies over the past decade suggest that the words people use can yield clues about the quality of their relationships. This entry discusses the role of language usage in romantic relationships, focusing specifically on issues of analysis, the types of words that are important in relationships, data collection, and clinical implications.

Language serves a variety of functions in relationships. It can be an index of relationship status, an instrument of relationship maintenance or change, or the embodiment of essential relationship characteristics such as autonomy and interdependence. Some have gone as far as to say that relationships are simply language games that change as language changes. In this view, a couple's language *is* the relationship. However, theorists in this area more often view language patterns and relationship beliefs as distinct phenomena that are intimately associated—seeing relationships as both a function of the words that couples use and a framework for future word use.

Analysis of Language Usage

There are three main quantitative approaches to linguistic analysis that have emerged over the past

half-century. The first is judge-based thematic content analysis, which uses human judges to identify the presence of various thematic references (e.g., love, anxiety, and motivation) on the basis of empirically developed coding systems. The second is latent semantic analysis (LSA), a bottom-up approach to language analysis that examines patterns of how words covary across large samples of text, akin to a factor analysis of individual words. LSA can be used, for example, to examine patterns of word use among satisfied couples compared with those who are dissatisfied. The third is word count analysis, which examines the relative frequency of words in a given text or speech sample. Word count programs vary in their designed purposes and complexity of analyses. For example, the General Inquirer, which arose out of the psychoanalytic and need-based traditions in psychology, uses complex decision rules to clarify the meaning of ambiguous words that are used in multiple contexts. Researchers studying language use in politics (e.g., speeches, political advertising, and media coverage) often use Diction, a word count program that characterizes texts by the extent to which they reflect optimism, activity, certainty, realism, and commonality.

One of the most often employed word count programs is Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC), which was developed by social psychologists to investigate the words that people use when they write about emotional experiences. LIWC works by searching for words in a given text file that have been previously categorized into more than 70 linguistic dimensions, including standard

language categories (e.g., articles, prepositions, and pronouns), psychological processes (e.g., positive and negative emotion words), and traditional content dimensions (e.g., sex, death, home, and occupation). Research using computer programs such as the General Inquirer, Diction, and LIWC has provided substantial evidence of the social and psychological importance of word use. Of particular relevance for intimate relationships are personal pronouns and emotion words. These two broad categories of words and their significance for relationships are described in turn next.

Personal Pronouns

Much of the interest in the role of language in relationships has focused on pronouns, in particular first-person plural or *we* words (*we*, *us*, and *our*) because they appear to be markers of shared identity and affiliative motivation. It has been argued that the extent to which couple members think of themselves as part of a unit or larger group reflects cognitive interdependence and commitment, often termed *we*-ness. For instance, people increase their use of first-person plural pronouns after a large-scale collective trauma or a home football team victory. Among those in romantic relationships, highly committed partners use *we* pronouns more frequently when talking about their relationships (e.g., *We really have fun together*), compared with less committed ones (e.g., *She's really a lot of fun*). Thus, the use of *we* may capture important ways that couples think about their relationships. However, in the published studies that have examined language use during interactions between romantic partners (as opposed to when people are describing their relationships to outsiders), *we* use is surprisingly unrelated to either relationship quality or stability. Why might this be the case? One possible explanation is that *we* use during couples' interactions does not directly tap how they think of themselves as one unit, that couples' feelings of interdependence simply are not reflected in their everyday use of *we*. Alternatively, contextual effects may be at work. Although *we* use during problem-solving interactions and naturalistic daily conversations seem unrelated to relationship quality, *we* use during other types of interactions, such as those discussions specifically

geared toward positive aspects of relationships or discussions about the future, may tap aspects of interdependence.

Second-person pronouns (*you* and *your*) have been interpreted as indicative of other-focused attention. For example, high self-monitors—people highly concerned with how they are perceived by others—use *you* at higher rates than low self-monitors. Similarly, individuals high in trait anger use *you* at higher rates than those low in trait anger. With regard to romantic relationships, *you* use during problem-solving discussions has been found to be negatively correlated with relationship satisfaction and positively correlated with negative relationship behaviors. Couples' use of *you* may be more important in the context of problem-solving discussions compared with everyday conversations. For example, *you* use in discussions about daily events (e.g., *Are you going to the basketball game tonight?*) may be quite different from *you* use during conflict (e.g., *You can be really difficult sometimes!*).

Clinical researchers have argued that *you* statements are indicative of blaming or psychological distancing, whereas *I* statements reflect healthy communication patterns, such as self-disclosure and verbal immediacy. There are a couple of possible reasons that higher *I* use may indicate better relationship quality. Some have speculated that *I* use reflects higher levels of self-disclosure, promoting intimacy and closeness. *I* use also may reflect positive aspects of autonomy within a relationship. Although experiencing interdependence or relatedness is one key to relationship closeness, managing a sense of independence or autonomy within a relationship also is important. From an interactionist perspective, autonomy and interdependence are two separate constructs, with autonomy and interdependence at a balance in which each allows or enables the other.

In contrast to *I*, use of *me* appears to be linked to relationship dysfunction. For example, previous studies have shown *me* use to be positively related to negative interaction behaviors and negatively related to relationship satisfaction. Although the frequency of *I* use reflects self-disclosure and perspective taking, frequency of *me* use may reflect passive strivings or victimization narratives that are characteristic of poor-quality interactions and less-satisfying relationships.

Emotion Words

The other broad category of words linked to relationship quality is emotion words. In everyday life, when we want to know how a person is feeling, we usually just ask him or her. The specific words that the person uses to respond—words such as *happy*, *sad*, *angry*, and *nervous*—often indicate his or her emotional state. Emotion words measured by word count programs such as LIWC appear to generally reflect people's underlying emotions. Preliminary evidence suggests that they may play a key role in romantic relationships.

Although one would expect greater use of positive emotion words and lower use of negative emotion words to be related to relationship quality, there are a number of contextual issues to consider when taking a word count approach. The first issue relates to the person at whom emotion words are directed (e.g., *I am so angry with Sally* vs. *I am so angry with you*); emotion words can have different meanings depending on their targets. The second issue relates to when an emotion word is preceded by a negation (e.g., *I am not mad at you* vs. *I am mad at you*). Although studies show that variations in emotion word use are positively associated with variations in trait-level emotional expressivity, even when not taking negations into account, separating emotion words into separate categories based on co-occurrences with negations is useful in disentangling associations between emotion word use and relationship quality. The third issue relates to sarcasm (e.g., *Oh, great*). Word count approaches typically are unable to distinguish between emotion words that are used to express genuine emotion from those laced with sarcasm. By first identifying when emotion words are used in the context of couples' interactions and then coding them for relational context, co-occurrences with negations and sarcasm, a clearer picture of the relevance of emotion words for relationships is possible.

Emotion words that couples use in everyday conversations with each other are associated with relationship satisfaction and stability in a variety of ways, with important distinctions depending on whether these words are used genuinely, preceded by negations or used sarcastically. Genuinely expressed positive emotion words are positively related to people's own and their partners' satisfaction. Perhaps

surprisingly, preliminary evidence suggests that genuinely expressed negative emotion words are unrelated to satisfaction or stability. However, positive emotion words preceded by negations are negatively associated with relationship satisfaction. Further, both positive and negative emotion words used sarcastically are negatively related to satisfaction and stability. Thus, the current evidence suggests that associations between negative emotion words and relationship health may be obscured unless contextual issues of language such as sarcastic tone and co-occurrence with negations are taken into account.

Collection of Language Data

There are a number of sources of language data in the context of relationships. Most previous research has assessed word use during laboratory problem-solving discussions, but there are a wide variety of contexts in which word use during couples' interactions can be assessed. These include other types of laboratory interactions such as those geared toward eliciting social support, naturalistic conversations recorded at home, phone calls, and e-mails. One relatively new technology—instant message (IM)—has recently been used to measure couples' everyday language use. Unlike e-mail, IM allows its users to chat with each other in real time so that a conversation can unfold much in the same way that spoken conversation does. With regard to studying language use in relationships, IM provides an opportunity to examine the associations between word use and relationship quality in the absence of nonverbal cues. During IM conversations, the attributions that couple members make about each other are based solely on the words that they use and offer an exciting new approach to studying the words that couples use in their everyday lives—across conflicts as well as more positive moments.

Obviously, the language that couples use in their IMs represents only a fraction of the words that most couples—even frequent IM users—likely exchange with each other. It is unknown to what extent couples' IM conversations mirror their face-to-face interactions. Although some have suggested that online communication may be more disclosing and emotionally expressive than spoken communication, no

studies have directly compared the association between online communication and face-to-face communication in naturalistic settings. It may be that certain words that couples use are more salient in IM communication than in spoken communication, and vice versa. Other new technologies, such as the Electronically Activated Recorder (EAR)—a microrecorder that samples people's acoustic social environments—offer relationship researchers exciting new possibilities to study couples' word use as it naturally unfolds each day. Initial evidence suggests that the words people use in their relationships have different meanings depending on the context (e.g., during conflictual vs. supportive interactions). It seems essential that word use be examined across a variety of settings and situations before we can fully understand how and under what conditions word use is linked to relationship functioning.

Clinical Implications of Language Use in Relationships

There may be important clinical implications for the types of words that people use in their relationships. For example, in Behavioral Couple Therapy, couples often are encouraged to use more *I* statements when discussing problems in their relationship. Investigations of the role of word use in relationships present the possibility that encouraging couples' use of other types of words during therapy—such as positive emotion words—may be beneficial as well. Although therapists may not be able to readily change how happy people are in their relationships, they may be able to effect subtle changes in the words that couples use. This is in line with current cognitive and behavioral approaches to therapy, which are geared toward enhancing relationship functioning through the modification of couples' behaviors. Promising findings from experimental laboratory studies of unacquainted individuals show that manipulating word use can indeed lead to changes in perceptions of closeness. Additional experimental research and studies that assess changes in relationship quality and word use over time are still needed to elucidate the causal direction of these associations and, in turn, their clinical relevance. Such research would help clarify whether a couple's word use merely reflects their underlying thoughts and feelings about their

relationship or actively shapes the future course of that relationship.

Richard R. B. Slatcher

See also Communication, Instant Messaging and Other New Media; Communication Processes, Verbal; Communication Skills; Computer-Mediated Communication; Interaction Analysis; Maintaining Relationships

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LEADERSHIP

Leadership is “a process of social influence in which an individual, a leader, is able to enlist the support of other individuals, the followers, in the accomplishment of a task or mission.” One important concept in this definition is that leadership is a *social* process. Without groups, there would be no leaders and no need for leaders. The primary function of leadership is to coordinate the efforts of others to accomplish something that cannot be done by one individual alone. A second noteworthy concept is that leadership is based on influence (i.e., persuasion), not power. No leader can force group members to give their highest level of effort regardless of the amount of power in the position. Finally, leadership is about accomplishing a task or achieving a successful mission. An effective leader, then, is one who is able to motivate followers to give

high effort, help them achieve needed competency, and coordinate their efforts to attain the group's goals. How leaders effectively accomplish these three functions has been the subject of study since the turn of the 20th century.

It should be noted that the discussion of leadership given here applies to small groups or teams, in which leaders are in close contact with followers.

Research and Theory

Leadership is a multifaceted phenomenon involving interactions among multiple individuals in complex and dynamic environments. There have been many false starts and dead ends in the development of a scientific understanding of this phenomenon. An examination of how research and theory have developed over time provides a basis for synthesis and integration.

Traits

Early studies of leadership viewed effective leadership as dependent on characteristics of the individuals who occupied the leadership role. A wide variety of traits have been studied by contrasting leaders and nonleaders or effective leaders and ineffective leaders in corporations, military organizations, sports teams, and other settings. Traits studied for their relationship to leadership include intelligence, cognitive complexity, need for power, need for affiliation, physical appearance, energy, verbal fluency, originality, dominance, social skills, and many more. However, the findings of this approach were disappointing. A few leader characteristics (most particularly intelligence) bore a modest relationship to leadership status or effectiveness, but no single trait or combination of traits was sufficiently predictive to provide a basis for leadership selection, training, or explanation.

Behaviors

The failure of research on personality and other traits led to research on specific behaviors that might characterize effective leadership. One set of studies interviewed industrial workers about the behavior of their supervisors. Two types of supervisors were found frequently. One type, termed

production-oriented supervisors, spent most of their time structuring the work, assigning tasks, and monitoring for performance. A second type, termed *employee-oriented supervisors*, were more concerned with making sure that morale was high and that workers felt represented and protected.

In another research program, college students were placed in groups and given tasks (such as discussing a social problem or writing a witty essay), and the behavior of group members was observed and categorized. It was found that some students spoke more than others, and the talkative ones fell into two categories. Some, who were labeled *task specialists*, displayed behaviors that emphasized accomplishing the assigned task, such as offering ideas or asking task-relevant questions. Others, labeled *socioemotional specialists*, focused on making sure that every group member had a chance to speak or that tension was relieved by jokes and friendly comments.

An extensive examination of the behavior of military officers resulted in the development of questionnaires for reporting on leader behavior by subordinates, peers, or observers. The two major categories in these questionnaires were called *Initiation of Structure*, which included behaviors like assigning tasks, judging work output, and encouraging high performance. The other category, *Consideration*, included behaviors related to mutual trust and respect between leaders and followers.

Although all of these studies seemed to indicate that some leaders emphasize the task side of leadership and others the social or emotional side, no category of behavior was clearly related to leadership effectiveness. So, as was the case with the search for leadership traits, behavioral research found no simple answers to the complex questions of leadership.

Contingency Theories

In the 1960s and 1970s, progress toward understanding leadership was made by researchers who tried to relate characteristics of leaders with aspects of the leadership situation, such as follower support, task clarity, and formal authority. By and large, these studies indicated that the success of a leadership behavioral style or decision-making process depended on (i.e., was contingent on) the

nature of the situation. Directive, authoritative, and task-focused leaders were most effective when supportive followers and clearly understood tasks allowed the leader to direct the work group with confidence. However, situations that were more ambiguous, due to interpersonal tensions or vaguely define tasks, required leaders to be more open to influence and garner advice from followers.

Studies of follower motivation and satisfaction revealed that the effectiveness of a leader's coaching and counseling behavior depended on the personality of the follower and the nature of the task. Giving subordinates a lot of specific direction was most motivating when followers did not clearly understand their task and wanted the structure provided by the leader. However, when tasks became simpler or when followers were independent, the best leaders were those who were considerate and supportive, rather than demanding and directive.

Information-Processing Approaches

Leadership depends on perception and judgment. Leaders try to assess follower interests and capabilities, and followers evaluate leaders and potential leaders to decide how to react to their influence. Social psychologists have long known that perceptions and judgments are not simple and straightforward. Research on leadership shows the same pattern. What an observer (e.g., a follower or boss) sees in a leader's behavior is strongly dependent on what the observer expects to see. Once observers decide that a leader is effective or appropriate, they tend to also see behaviors that they think are characteristic of a good leader, even when those behaviors may be absent.

Similarly, leaders' judgments about followers are often oversimplified or self-serving to the leader. In other words, when a problem arises with a subordinate or group, a leader's desire to take credit for good outcomes and avoid responsibility for failure can cloud judgment.

Transformational Leadership

A long-standing subject of interest has been *charismatic* leaders like Alexander the Great, Mahatma Gandhi, or Martin Luther King, Jr. Such leaders are defined by their unusually great influence over

subordinates. Projecting an image of almost superhuman ability, combined with a transcendent vision, charismatic leaders evince very high levels of confidence in themselves and their followers. Charismatic leadership is sometimes referred to as *transformational* leadership because it transforms the leadership relationship from a quid pro quo contractual relationship into one in which leader and followers become totally dedicated to the collective mission.

Modern research on transformational leadership in groups and organizations reveals that followers respond enthusiastically to leaders who (a) show high task-related competence, (b) articulate a compelling vision, (c) treat each subordinate as a unique individual, and (d) challenge subordinates to explore new ideas and develop new competencies.

The Dark Side of Leadership

Recently, research has focused on some of the less attractive features that leaders may demonstrate. When leaders accumulate great power, they may (a) become disdainful and remote from followers, (b) develop a strong compulsion for taking action even when they aren't sure what action to take, and (c) begin to believe that the norms and rules followed by "ordinary" people don't apply to them.

Synthesis and Integration

Careful examination of the most empirically supported findings among these disparate perspectives provides a basis for a synthesis and integration. That integration indicates that successful leaders must establish a basis for influencing followers, building relationships that enable and motivate followers, and coordinating a group's resources for mission accomplishment.

Establishing Legitimacy as a Basis for Influence

Influential communicators must be seen as competent and trustworthy to be credible. Potential followers decide that a leader is competent by observing behaviors that match the followers' expectations for how a competent leader should behave. These expectations may not be explicit, but they affect judgments. Leaders who fit the "leadership

prototype” are deemed to have the necessary qualities to gain influence.

In the early stages of leader–follower interactions, judgments of a leader’s trustworthiness or honesty are again based on our expectations—for example, how an honest person behaves (e.g., makes eye contact, speaks in a sincere tone of voice). After followers have had a chance to interact with a leader over time, judgments are based on actual evidence of competency (e.g., moving the group toward its goals) and honesty (e.g., following through on promises and not making contradictory statements to different followers).

Building Relationships That Empower, Enable, and Motivate Followers

Once a leader has gained influence by establishing credibility, she or he must guide followers in the accomplishment of their tasks and motivate them to make the greatest contribution possible. Motivation and guidance depend heavily on good coaching. As a leader interacts and observes each follower, the leader begins to understand the follower’s skills, knowledge, and motivation. If those capabilities are not sufficient for successful completion of the follower’s responsibilities, the leader may intervene by explaining or teaching the follower. Effective coaching requires more than identifying a follower’s strengths and weaknesses. A leader must also be sensitive to a follower’s personality and values. People respond differently to instruction depending on how much they perceive that they need it. One follower might be comfortable with some level of task or role ambiguity because that makes the task a more interesting and satisfying arena for learning, growth, and achievement. Another follower might be upset by that ambiguity and greatly desire more structure and clarity in the job. Highly effective team leaders relate to each follower as an individual, understanding and responding to each in a way that helps the follower to stay interested and motivated by his or her responsibilities. That level of understanding is sometimes difficult for a leader to achieve because the leader’s own sense of self-esteem may interfere with accurate and unbiased judgments.

Another important aspect of the leader–follower relationship is that it is an interpersonal exchange.

Leaders give followers protection, help them to achieve their personal goals, and respect them as individuals. In exchange, followers give leaders loyalty, effort, and deference. As in other relationships, when the exchange is perceived as fair, both parties are motivated to make the highest contribution possible to their common goals. Fairness is often based on the way that a leader makes decisions. Leaders who listen to followers before making a decision (giving voice) and explain the reasoning behind the decision after it is made (justification) communicate respect for followers, and that respect enhances the quality the exchange relationship.

Deploying the Group’s Resources to Achieve Mission Accomplishment

The effective coordination of collective efforts requires a match between the nature of the task environment and the procedures used for group communication and decision making. When the goals and methods for accomplishing a mission are clear and well understood, as they would be for a highly experienced group, greatest efficiency of effort is achieved when leaders take authority and provide clear direction. However, when the exact nature of the goal or the best way to achieve it is unclear, as it might be in novel or highly complex situations, the most effective leadership is highly democratic and participative, which allows the knowledge and expertise of every group member to be applied to achieving the goal.

Even when all the procedures described earlier are followed, groups can encounter daunting situations because of physical danger, overwhelming task complexity, or extreme importance of succeeding. Under these circumstances, groups that have confidence in their own capability and believe strongly in the group’s ability to accomplish the mission can overcome even the most threatening situations. Leaders who are highly confident are calmer, less defensive, and more resilient—qualities that enhance their ability to understand the environment and the needs of their followers. Highly confident leaders instill confidence of the group in itself. Collective confidence is associated with high goals, perseverance, and the ability to cope with adversity.

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See also Cooperation and Competition; Group Dynamics; Interpersonal Influence; Persuasion

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LEISURE ACTIVITY

Leisure is generally seen as one of the most valued areas of our everyday lives. Many people are impatient to retire from work to pursue those activities that they enjoy the most—for example, traveling, visiting family members, going to museums, and so forth—and thus live a “life of leisure.” The importance that we attach to “leisure,” then, only makes sense when we contrast it with “work,” and this comparison is a relatively recent phenomenon. This entry discusses the emergence of leisure as a distinct component of everyday life and its importance as a context for interactions among family members.

Historical Background

In western Europe, as Geoffrey Godbey and Stanley Parker observed, time spent at work consistently increased from the Middle Ages until the middle of the 19th century, whereas in America, the work week averaged at least 70 hours for factory workers by 1850; in other words, work increased and leisure declined from the end of the Middle Ages until the height of the Industrial Revolution in the mid- to late 19th century. This reduction in leisure was not only mirrored in longer work hours, but, more generally, by perhaps

the single most conspicuous characteristic of industrialization: the spatial segregation of daily life, wherein work came to be done in a specialized place (at work) at a certain time and under particular conditions, and leisure (and family life, generally) tended to occur somewhere else (at home). Although the average work week in western Europe has diminished to less than 40 hours during the past century, it would be fair to say that industrialization created leisure the way we know it, as a distinct and largely residual sphere of life, as the time left over after work.

Family as a Context for Leisure

So how do modern Americans—and modern American families—“spend” all of this “extra” time? Questions regarding family leisure are complicated. For example, people define leisure activities differently, and one person’s leisure is another person’s work (hobbies and volunteer activities are good examples of this principle). Moreover, social scientists know considerably more about how families work than how they play, although we have long believed that “the family that plays together, stays together.” It is fairly easy, however, to make the case that leisure behavior is an especially useful lens through which to view family behavior. Leisure behavior is discretionary behavior and lends itself well to questions about what families do in the way of leisure activities, and with whom family members undertake these activities, when they do not have to do anything at all?

Family members face several issues if they decide to participate in a leisure activity together. Leisure involving more than one person, in general, can be difficult to coordinate due to a handful of reasons. For one, parents and children may not enjoy the same leisure activities, and children may not be inclined to pursue the same activities. It is also the case that marked differences in family members’ physical abilities and maturational levels can be a deterrent to joint leisure, both in terms of parents and children, as well as between siblings who are separated by several years. Along the same line, leisure activities hold different possibilities for interaction, some necessitating coordination among several people (e.g., playing cards) and others being essentially solitary activities that

provide restricted opportunities for interaction (e.g., reading). Further, leisure activities that may be undertaken by more than one person are still subject to the interactional preferences of those involved. For example, research shows that those who “specialize” in activities (i.e., become devoted to certain leisure activities and become quite skilled at them) tend to avoid participation with nonspecialists, and this is one way that companionate family leisure may be deterred (e.g., all family members enjoy playing tennis, but the husband played collegiate tennis, is a specialist, and is uninterested in pursuing that particular activity with others who cannot play tennis at his level). Research also shows that wider social network factors may bear on the extent to which family members participate in the same activities; for example, a wife may like going to garage sales and, further, may enjoy going to sales with her husband, but be disinclined to do so when her husband’s friends and/or relatives are also involved. It should also be recognized that differences between family members in the simple structural characteristics of everyday life—such as work and school schedules—can deter joint leisure regardless of activity and interactional preferences.

Marital Leisure

As a subset of family leisure, marital leisure is especially intriguing for those interested in the dynamics of married life for several reasons. Marital leisure underscores the importance of interpersonal compatibility, in that couples who generally like (and dislike) the same activities tend to pursue more leisure together and spend less time apart from one another. This fact is important because the extent to which wives and husbands pursue leisure activities together has long been one of the best predictors of their marital happiness. The strength of this association may not be as strong as is commonly assumed, however, and depends more on whether spouses are undertaking leisure activities that they both like versus those that only one of them enjoys. In fact, there is some evidence suggesting that leisure companionship is most closely linked with marital satisfaction only if it involves activities that both spouses like, whereas couples’ joint involvement in leisure that only the

husband enjoys is a source of dissatisfaction among wives. (The reverse, predicting husbands’ satisfaction from joint involvement in leisure the wife enjoys, was not found in this study.)

Finally, a developmental perspective on marriage observes that there are some fairly predictable changes in marital leisure over time. Leisure for most couples is largely couple-centered early in marriage, a pattern that changes with the arrival of the first child and the resulting restriction in their opportunity to pursue leisure as a couple alone, although parenthood may serve to reintegrate couples with their friends and extended families. Little is known about patterns of marital leisure further down the family life course in terms of what effects, if any, are seen in marital leisure as the last child leaves home (the “empty nest” phase) and as couples enter retirement, a stage wherein many retired couples paradoxically report that they feel too “rushed” to engage in much leisure, although, objectively, they actually have little to do.

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See also Compatibility; Marriage, Benefits of; Parenthood, Transition to; Shared Activities

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LESSER INTEREST, PRINCIPLE OF

The *Principle of Lesser Interest*, also called the *principle of least interest*, is a theoretical principle suggesting that, in romantic partnerships, when one partner is more emotionally involved than the other, the less emotionally involved partner can

exploit the more involved partner in various ways. This entry explores the origins of this principle, empirical findings, and related research.

Commonly discussed in the social-psychology literature on dating relationships, the Principle of Lesser Interest is usually attributed to Willard Waller, who observed in the 1930s that romantic partners often proceeded at different paces in their emotional involvement with one another. In Waller's view, large differences in emotional involvement put the less interested partner in a position to exploit the more interested party because the less-interested party could dictate the conditions of association.

Although Waller is widely credited with developing the Principle of Lesser Interest, he acknowledged other important sources for the principle, including a popular French epigram and sociologist Edward Ross. Ross had written (some 17 years earlier) in his sociology textbook that, in a variety of social relationships, the person who cared less could exploit the person who cared more. Ross went beyond romantic relationships in his thinking to consider parent-child relationships as well, but Waller's coining of the term focused primarily on premarital dating relationships.

Although there is not a large body of research on the Principle of Lesser Interest, several studies show support for the principle and related ideas. Perceptions of unequal emotional involvement are common among contemporary dating couples, and men are more likely than women to be perceived as the partners with less interest in their relationships. Less-interested partners are seen as having more control over the continuation of their relationships, and couples with unequal emotional involvement tend to have lower satisfaction than couples with equal involvement. Some studies have found that unequally involved relationships are more likely to break up than those with equal emotional involvement. Closely related studies show positive outcomes from equal emotional involvement between dating pairs; equal levels of dependence and commitment have been associated with positive emotions and relationship satisfaction.

Waller would likely not be surprised at any of these findings. He found evidence of the Principle of Lesser Interest in his 1930s observations of college students in prestigious fraternities and sororities. He also observed gender differences in these

relationships, noticing that women seemed more astute in relationship processes, and that their perceptions of relative involvement were particularly predictive of breakup. Although it does not appear that he tracked relationships across time, he would most likely have expected a higher breakup rate among unequally interested couples and seen their breakups as preferable to long-term emotionally unequal partnerships.

Contemporary research on the Principle of Lesser Interest is sparse and limited by its predominant use of quantitative methods and a focus on White, heterosexual college youth. Yet a broader view of the related literature reveals great interest in this general area of inquiry, if not in the Principle of Lesser Interest specifically. In recent years, for example, many researchers have explored power relations between couples (both heterosexual and same sex), searching for the practices that go along with contemporary egalitarian ideals. Interview studies of American couples reveal that relationship dynamics consistent with the Principle of Lesser Interest are common. Yet unequal interest and power can erode the strength of relationships over time, leading prominent relationship researchers such as Pepper Schwartz to promote the benefits of "love between equals." Peer marriage, she argues, is conducive to longevity and staying in sync with one's partner. Schwartz's position is in line with Willard Waller's own conclusions. In 1938, he described lesser interest relationships as being unhealthy in the long term due to the potential for extreme exploitation. He suggested that it might be better if these relationships dissolved before getting to the point of marriage.

Finally, it is useful to remember that the Principle of Lesser Interest may have wider application than just romantic relationships, as Edward Ross suggested in 1921 in his sociology textbook. Parent-child relationships are another potentially important type of relationship in which to explore the lesser interest dynamic. Although not drawing on the same theoretical origins, research on the "intergenerational stake hypothesis" has revealed a tendency for parents to report more emotional investment in their children than their children report about them across the life course. This research could be taken a step further to explore the extent to which children exploit this unequal emotional involvement coming from their parents.

There could be consequences for relationship satisfaction, exchange, and even continuity. Research of this type could be seen as a modified example of Willard Waller's principle of lesser interest, and an application of this concept many decades after it was first conceived.

Maria Schmeeckle

See also American Couples Study; Boston Couples Study; Egalitarian Relationships; Fairness in Relationships; Power, Predictors of; Power Distribution in Relationships; Satisfaction in Relationships

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LIES IN CLOSE AND CASUAL RELATIONSHIPS

Lying—defined as intentionally deceiving another individual in a relationship—is ubiquitous in social relationships. Lies may take the form of either withholding information (lies of omission) or overtly communicating information that one knows to be false (lies of commission).

Both retrospective diary studies and experiments that take more contemporaneous measures of deception confirm that lying is a consistent part of social life. In fact, a number of studies show deception in face-to-face conversations with rates as high as three lies per 10-minute period. Lies are

also prevalent in virtual communication, both in e-mailed messages and instant messages (IMs). The nature of the deceptions and the motivation behind them occurring in relationships vary significantly. Some lies are other oriented, such as lies meant to make recipients feel better about themselves. Other lies are self-oriented, designed to self-aggrandize, promote oneself, or hide information in an effort to gain an advantage over a recipient.

Deception is found in two main types of relationships: close romantic relationships and more casual friendship/acquaintance relationships. Not only do lies occur with considerable frequency, but the lies may have significant consequences for relationships. This entry describes current findings concerning lying to close and casual others, as well as the methodological challenges in conducting research on lying in relationships.

Lying in Romantic Relationships

According to self-reports, lying is present in some degree in most romantic relationships. In one survey, almost all individuals (92 percent) admitted to having been deceptive toward a romantic partner. Although the number of self-described minor lies decreases in interactions involving a close relationship partner, the lies that do occur tend to represent more serious breaches of trust. In fact, almost two thirds of lies involving serious betrayals of trust involve people's closest relationship partner.

People reserve their most severe lies for those with whom they are romantically involved. Not surprisingly, diary study participants cite a wide variety of reasons for lying. Primary motivations for lying include attempting to get something someone feels entitled to, avoiding conflict, and efforts to present oneself in a favorable light.

Although lie tellers in romantic relationships often report that their deceptive behavior is driven by altruistic goals, such as to spare a partner's feelings, recipients of lies generally do not share the perspective that kindness and concern are the motivating factors of their partner. However, when the same individuals who report unhappiness at being the recipient of lies are placed in the position of being a "lie teller" as opposed to a "lie receiver," they view their deceptive statements as

altruistically motivated, justified, and induced by the lie receiver. Such research highlights that it is the social context surrounding a deceptive statement that gives the deceptive interaction its particular significance.

When explicitly seeking a dating partner or potential mate, deception is sometimes utilized as a strategy for attracting a potential companion. Social assets are exaggerated, and faults are hidden. Furthermore, men and women differ in their deceptive mate-seeking strategies. Consistent with widely held gender stereotypes, men are most likely to lie about their wealth and level of commitment, whereas women attempt to deceive men in regards to their physical appearance by using aids such as cosmetics. Additionally, although a significant degree of deception exists in the mate-selection process, most people are aware of and even expect deception as part of the courting process.

Such findings are consistent with evolutionary approaches to deception. For example, many non-human species use deceptive strategies, in terms of appearing bigger, stronger, or more sexually alluring, to attract a mate. Male green frogs lower the tone of their croak to sound larger and to ward off other potential competing males; female fireflies of certain species lure unsuspecting males by signaling a readiness to mate, only to eat their suitors upon arrival. Similarly, from an evolutionary perspective, humans may utilize their more sophisticated cognitive abilities to deceive in order to reflect wealth, fertility, or youth.

One of the reasons that lying may be so common within romantic relationships may be that lie tellers feel generally confident in their ability to deceive their partner. Not only do those people who lie to their partners feel that they are generally successful in not being detected in their lies, but they also believe that they are more successful in deceiving their partners than their partners are in lying to them.

The use of lies in relationships is not without costs, however. For example, a willingness to accept the presence of lies seen as altruistic, or “white lies,” is associated with less relationship satisfaction. Specifically, appearing to tell the truth in a relationship predicts greater relationship satisfaction and positive illusions about the relationship. It may be that deception early on is predictive of the future

erosion of integral components of the relationship, such as trust, intimacy, and commitment. Furthermore, individuals in failed romances may blame some other component of their interactions for their lack of positivity toward the relationship, when in fact the relationship failure may have been fostered by the false pretenses under which the relationship began.

Research explicitly examining the consequences of the use of deception in romantic couples finds that, although lies may have negative outcomes for the lie teller, there is actually a modest positive impact on the lie receiver—as long as he or she does not discover the deception. That said, although individuals tend to assume that their partners are more honest than themselves, if there is suspicion of lying, the consequences are negative for both parties. In the case of deception suspicion, even a small suspicion that one’s partner is lying has significant consequences on relationship satisfaction.

Although research consistently shows that deception is common in relationships, little work has examined individual differences in expressing and reacting to relational deception. One possibility that is receiving increasing attention is the connection between deception and attachment theory. Studies that directly examine the connection between adult attachment and deception find that people higher in attachment anxiety or avoidance are more likely to report deception in their romantic relationships, expect to be lied to more often, and show less authenticity in communicating with their partner. Furthermore, attachment security is connected to greater openness and more constructive patterns of communication. Given that one aspect of deception involves withholding particular types of communication, different working models of attachment are likely to predict the degree to which people engage in deception and the type of deception in which they engage.

Lying in Casual Relationships

Deception also plays a significant role in more casual relationships and, at least in terms of the frequency of deception, is likely even more ubiquitous than in romantic relationships. But deception does not always have negative consequences

for the functioning of relationships. For instance, deception skills are positively related to social competence. As one example of this phenomenon, adolescents who are best at deceiving others are also higher in social competence. Effective lying appears to serve as a social skill in which popularity is a consequence of the ability to both provide information to others that is socially desirable, as well as withholding information that might potentially hurt a recipient.

However, when someone is exposed as lying in casual relationships, the consequences are generally harmful. Liars who are found out are disliked by those to whom they lied even if the lies have no direct or significant impact on the recipient of the lies. Perhaps more important, those who learn that they have been lied to by a particular individual increase the level of their own lies to the liar. Consequently, the overall number of lies in an interaction increases significantly.

Furthermore, when lying to someone with whom one has only a casual relationship, or one with whom future interaction is unlikely, norms regarding deception seem to change. People appear to realize that the chance of their deception being discovered is lower and the lack of any bond with the receiver leaves people feeling less uncomfortable telling lies to strangers. Consistent with this view, lies that are told to strangers also tend to be less altruistic (in the sense of bolstering the recipient).

Certain situational factors also increase the use of deception. For instance, when one is confronted with the success of a partner, thereby threatening one's self-esteem, deception increases in an effort to improve one's social standing. Deception may thus be used as a means of improving mood and self-esteem when a threat is presented in the form of social comparison information.

There are also gender differences in deception in casual relationships. Overall, men and women generally lie the same amount, and the frequency of lies is similar whether the targets of the lies are male or female. However, although the frequency of deception may be approximately the same, the content of the lies told by men and women differ. Men's lies tend to be more self-oriented, motivated by a desire to enhance their self-image. In contrast, women's lies are more often intended to make the recipient of the lie feel more positively about him- or herself.

Methodological Issues

Researchers face several methodological hurdles in studying deception. For example, one common technique involves having experimental participants keep a retrospective diary of any and all lies told. The problem with this methodology is that one cannot be sure that every lie is remembered and recorded accurately. Another problem is that self-reports may be colored by self-presentation motives.

A second popular method in deception research asks participants to review a video or transcript of statements made recently to a partner and to indicate their accuracy. Although there is evidence that people will reveal lies when the subject matter is benign and there is no chance of punitive consequences, this method still relies on self-report and is therefore not a fully adequate solution. Deception researchers continue in their efforts to create a methodology that can accurately measure deception while avoiding reliance on self-reports.

The most recent efforts to find accurate measures of deception involve neuroimaging techniques, such as functional Magnetic Resonance Imagery (fMRI) and positron emission tomography (PET) scans. Results are promising, although as yet hardly definitive. For instance, there is evidence for increased brain activity in particular areas of the prefrontal cortex (involved in the coordination of thoughts and behaviors) and the amygdala (involved in processing and memory of emotional stimuli) while making deceptive responses. However, the results of such studies remain in their early stages.

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See also Deception and Lying; Openness and Honesty; Self-Disclosure; Self-Presentation

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LIFE REVIEW, ROLE OF RELATIONSHIPS

Humans are as much biographical as biological beings. Just as individuals may be understood in terms of cells and species, so too may they be characterized, in an equally fundamental sense, as storytellers considering and understanding themselves and their lives through the narrative terms of plots, events, and scripts of life; the characters, heroes, and villains; and the themes and settings in which events and interactions take place. Life review is the centerpiece of the life story.

Life review may be defined as the relatively systematic reflection on one's personal history, an elaborate form of reminiscence and retrospection. Robert Butler, a geropsychiatrist, coined this term and considered life review a normative developmental task of (although not restricted to) the later years, brought about by an awareness of life's end and/or critical life markers. The life review also holds a prominent place in the final stage of Erik Erikson's often cited life-span developmental theory. The life review serves both intra- and interpersonal functions and is believed to be most effective in social settings (i.e., in interaction with and in the presence of others); these personal and relational functions are described in this entry, particularly highlighting the social and group processes of the life review.

Personal Functions of Life Review

The personal functions realized by the life review range from the mundane and neutral (e.g., including reflective personal distractions during idle moments) to the profound and positive (e.g., clarifying problems and choosing courses of actions based on successful previous decisions; boosting self-confidence and morale based on the reflection on previous accomplishments). Some negative consequences of reviewing one's life have been noted, often attributed to rumination or perseverance on failures and associated with lowered self-esteem. The sharing of stories with others is believed to mitigate these potential negative consequences. The act of sharing is fundamentally a positive process and further enhances morale and self-esteem in this context through the role others might play in the process of reviewing a life, such as redirecting attention toward a more affirmative course and/or offering different and more encouraging interpretations of events and circumstances.

Relational Functions of Life Review

The relational functions of life review similarly range from the mundane to the profound. For example, life review may serve a purpose as basic as initiating conversations; individuals, in the company of others, may recall incidents, times, and circumstances as a means to "break the ice" or begin some dialogue. Life review may also serve to nurture or deepen relationships. Such effects have been noted in the Guided Autobiography, the group-based, thematic and semistructured approach to the life review developed by James Birren, a prominent gerontologist. In the structured setting of the Guided Autobiography, small groups (e.g., typically six persons) of women and men of various ages collectively review their lives according to a set of themes. This group process provides a cohesive setting for reflection and discussion—a process Birren calls the *developmental exchange*, in which trust in the group and intimate sharing are incrementally and mutually enhanced. Comparisons and contrasts may be observed, and individuals may see themselves and their lives reflected in the stories of others, removing perceived stigma and fostering

connections often across societal divides of age, gender, race, and other social categories.

Research also has found that individuals offer explicit prosocial and generative motives for telling their life story. Many individuals report that they want to share their stories with relatives and others, thereby providing a legacy and preserving the history of a family so that younger generations may come to know their elders and ancestors and hence their own family histories—their own stories. This teaching/informing function has been well established in life review research and appears to be a motive most significantly found among older adults.

Relatedly, the personalization and validation of a historical record is reported among the reasons for the telling and sharing of the life stories, most notably revealed in research with Holocaust survivors. Several international projects have been developed to capture these life stories as “living” and permanent records of the now elderly survivors of one of the world’s greatest atrocities. Survivors report their willingness to retell (or sometimes tell for the first time) their experiences so that such horror might never happen again—a way of giving to and protecting subsequent generations. Research has also found that it is important for individuals, such as these survivors, to have their stories witnessed. Reviewing these experiences in the presence of others claims, for the teller, the authority and the truth of the events; witnesses to these stories learn this truth and connect with the storyteller and his or her circumstances in a way that words on a page cannot.

These life lesson gifts, framed in the language of life review, have also found explicit expression in Ethical Wills, a way of sharing values, lessons, hopes, and dreams of an individual’s life with roots in the Hebrew Bible. Authors in this recently rediscovered field comment on the surprising imbalance in the efforts expended by individuals to bequeath and distribute the physical possessions acquired throughout life (by way of wills and other legal documents) relative to the dispossession of priceless nonmaterial assets: life’s meanings, personal goals, spiritual values, blessings, and forgiveness. The modern version of this formerly oral cultural practice is typically a written document, frequently in the form of a letter, and is often shared with others both prior to and following the

death of the author. An Ethical Will is a spiritual and narrative counterpart to the more familiar legal documents and recognizes that which is relationally and socially important in life.

Notwithstanding the prominent role of the “self” in these accounts, several researchers have proposed that the life review and other such stories are essentially coauthored by and with the significant others in an individual’s life. For example, in studies with women and men in later life, it was found that the events of others (e.g., birth of a grandchild, retirement of spouse) claim a significant place in an individual’s life review. Furthermore, the story is often adapted and shaped by the reports of another (e.g., when and how couples met), and a mutually consistent story emerges. Culture, too, plays a role in identifying the sorts of markers and events that an individual is likely to include in a life review and the ways in which such events are interpreted.

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See also Group Dynamics; Listening; Nostalgia; Self-Disclosure; Storytelling

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LIFE-SPAN DEVELOPMENT AND RELATIONSHIPS

All relationships develop over time, from the first interaction to the last one. This can take only a short time, as in dating relationships, or it can take a lifetime, as in sibling relationships. The development of one relationship can be viewed, in turn, within the broader perspective of the development of an individual who is involved in many different

relationships. Each relationship changes over time due to developmental changes of the two individuals involved in the relationship (they “grow together”) and as some relationships are dissolved and new ones are established. For example, the mother–child relationship likely changes if the mother takes a full-time job and thereby has less flexible time; also, the mother’s relationships with friends may change, and new ones with coworkers will be established. The metaphor of a *social convoy* over the life course nicely describes the flux and flow of these relationship changes: Individuals move through their lives surrounded by social partners to whom they maintain ever-changing relationships, as in a convoy of vehicles. This entry provides an overview of relationships from such a developmental psychology perspective.

Long-Term Stability of Relationships and Their Quality

The *long-term stability* of relationships and their quality follows three principles. First, relationships are the result of the continual interaction between two individuals. Thus, the quality of their relationship is influenced by their personalities (characteristic traits such as extraversion, neuroticism, etc.) and the history of their interaction. Therefore, the long-term stability of their relationship depends on the long-term stability of the two personalities involved. Also, their relationship is often affected by relationships with other people in their social network (external relationships). Therefore, any change of the personality of any of the people involved in these interactions limits the continuation of the relationship and can affect its quality (e.g., changes in satisfaction with the relationship, commitment, and attachment to the partner). The complex interactions between the involved personalities and relationships impose additional constraints on stability. Therefore, the stability of relationships is likely to be less than the stability of personality.

Second, human societies are characterized by continuous social and cultural change, such as economic or political change. As detailed analyses during the American Great Depression and the German Reunification have shown, such changes may have a strong impact on relationships. For

example, marriage, divorce, and birth rates dropped considerably in former Eastern Germany during the reunification. Third, individual development is organized in most cultures around *life-course transitions*, that is, age-graded, socially expected changes such as leaving the parental home, graduating from college, and beginning first full-time job, which, in turn, affect the relationships of the individuals in transition.

Although quantitative reviews of the stability and change in the number and quality of relationships have not yet been published, the few longitudinal studies that have compared relationship stability with the stability of individual personality traits consistently show that relationship quality is less stable than personality, particularly during life-course transitions, and that relationship stability is more challenged by societal change than personality stability.

Personality–Relationship Transactions

If relationships are less stable than personality, the chances are higher for personality to influence relationships rather than vice versa. Indeed, longitudinal studies have found more evidence for personality effects on relationships than vice versa. For example, sociability increases the probability of making new friends, shyness and social anxiety decrease this probability, neuroticism increases the probability of divorce, agreeableness decreases conflict in relationships, and conscientiousness increases involvement in family relationships. Among the few effects of relationships on personality that have been consistently found are effects of attachment security in infants on their later social competence, effects of friendships with antisocial peers on adolescents’ antisocial tendencies, and effects of the first stable romantic relationship on neuroticism and shyness (decreases). Thus, there is evidence for both directions of influences, but personality to relationship influences seem to be more frequent than relationship to personality influences.

However, these effects are often smaller than the correlations between personality change and simultaneous relationship change; in other words, relationships and personality often codevelop in a corresponding way. The main reason for this correspondence seems to be that people select and

evoke relationship experiences that deepen or accentuate their personality traits. For example, liberal students make friends more often with, and are more likely to marry, other liberal college students, which increases their liberal attitudes; aggressive children engage in vicious cycles of aggression with peers and family members, which increases their aggressiveness; antisocial adolescents join deviant cliques consisting of similarly minded peers, which increases their antisocial tendencies; and intellectually or physically competent students are more challenged by their mentors or trainers than less competent ones, which increases their competence.

Life-Course Perspective

Many of the relationship changes occurring over developmental time are due to age-graded, socially expected changes, often called *normative life-course transitions*. For example, moving out of the parental home changes the relationships with one's parents and siblings, but also with peers, who become more important. The term *norm* here refers to a social expectation rather than to a statistical norm (it is expected that young adults do not continue to live in their parents' home, although some do). In addition, non-normative life events may affect the relationships of an individual (e.g., a mother's separation from the father may also affect the mother-child relationship). A life-course perspective on relationships considers both normative and non-normative changes as they occur between birth and death, classifies these changes in ways that are meaningful for the given culture, and tries to understand how and why people master the challenges entailed by these changes more or less successfully.

The ways in which people master these challenges can also affect relationships. To consider again the example of a mother entering her first job, she likely would ask more household duties from her husband, has to find daycare for her children, pursues new friends at the workplace, and has less time for former friends. These relationship changes result from the mother's active efforts at coping with the transition to a full-time job by trying to adjust her social environment to her needs and life goals.

Thus, two different kinds of relationship changes over the life course can be distinguished. Life-course transitions and life events push people toward normative relationship change, whereas their regulatory efforts pull their relationships to fit their needs and goals, resulting in regulatory relationship change. For example, entering a university pushes freshmen to establish new relationships with their roommates and other students, and their regulatory efforts pull these new relationships to fit their needs for social interaction. Because the needs and goals vary across people according to their personality, and regulation is more or less successful according to personal competencies, regulatory relationship change is personality-dependent. Some freshmen spend more time getting to know other students in cafes, clubs, and at social events, whereas others spend more time lonely in their room and in the library. These two kinds of changes appear to be the main reasons that personality effects on relationships are more easily observed during life transitions, such as the transition to university, work, or retirement, and during adaptation to life events, such as divorce or unemployment, rather than during periods of high environmental stability.

Normative Life-Course Transitions

Normative life-course transitions are experienced by most people at certain ages and are guided by culturally shared expectations about when and how a transition should occur. For example, even within Western cultures, it is expected that a man will leave his family of origin at a certain age that differs across cultures (e.g., around age 20 in Denmark, but in the late 20s in Italy). All life-course transitions involve changes in relationships that present several challenges. They threaten to limit the continuity of certain relationships (e.g., with classmates after graduation), transform the quality of important relationships (e.g., with parents after leaving home), draw on the individual's social resources (e.g., by a status loss after retirement), and often dispose the individual to an ambiguous, less predictable future of relationships.

In Western cultures, the most important life-course transitions relate to changes in family, education, and work. The most important family

transitions are the birth of a sibling, leaving the parental home, first marriage, first parenthood, and the last child moving away from home (the so-called *empty nest*). In contrast, transitions that are less age-graded or less common are life events such as divorce and widowhood. The most important transitions related to education and work are school entry, school-to-school transitions, entry into the labor market, and retirement. Again, unemployment is rather considered a life event. This section deals with normative and regulatory relationship changes during these transitions at a more general level; other entries in this encyclopedia discuss these specific transitions.

All transitions involve significant changes in the social environment. An important insight from studies of transitions is that changes in relationships during a transition are not only caused by the transition, but are rather *proactive*. People and their close social network partners anticipate many of these changes and react in advance to this anticipation, not only when the transition has occurred. For example, parents may prepare their first child for the birth of the second child to minimize envy; classmates who know that they will soon attend different schools will often deemphasize their relationship, whereas those who expect to continue in the same school will deepen their relationship; and couples often try to coordinate their retirement years before.

Also, although some relationship changes during the transition are directly due to the transition, others are regulatory changes. For example, new siblinghood implies a new sibling relationship, but new siblinghood often also affects relationships with parents and other siblings because of a new rival family member, and sometimes also with peers due to increased social competence developed as families manage these changes. Similarly, the loss of school friends after the transition to a university is a direct consequence of the transition, but it is more or less quickly compensated for by new peer relationships at college, including roommates; and retirement is experienced more often positively than negatively partly because of the new freedom to keep liked former colleagues in one's social network and to rid oneself of obligatory relationships with disliked colleagues.

Non-Normative Life Events

For a long time, psychologists have studied adaptations to positive relationship-related life events, such as falling in love, and to negative relationship-related life events, such as parental death, separation, divorce, and widowhood. Overall, the effects of such events seemed rather short lived. Data from a large representative German longitudinal study where year-to-year changes in life satisfaction were obtained from 5 years before the event until 5 years after the event revised this picture. Although married people reported overall slightly higher life satisfaction than nonmarried people, this effect was largely due to the fact that even 5 years before marriage, people who eventually married were happier than nonmarried people. Thus, happier people more often tend to marry than less happy people (partly because happier people are more attractive to others than less happy people). Marriage had only a slight additional effect that showed up mainly during the year of marriage and the year before and after; 5 years after marriage, married people were exactly as happy as 5 years before marriage.

In contrast, divorced people were already considerably less happy than married people 5 years before divorce; happiness was lowest 1 year before divorce and then increased but stabilized 4 years after divorce at a level that was clearly lower than the initial level 5 years before divorce. Thus, whereas the effect of marriage was only transitory, the effect of divorce was long lasting. Also, this study showed large differences in how people reacted to marriage and divorce; some became quite unhappy already in the year after marriage, and some became much happier directly after divorce. Similar, although less marked, changes in life satisfaction were found for unemployment.

These recent studies of life events suggest that cross-sectional studies comparing people who recently experienced a particular event with a control group that did not experience this event, and longitudinal studies beginning in the year of the event or shortly before, may lead to misleading conclusions because they ignore preselection into these groups or changes occurring years before the event. That is, cross-sectional studies may seem to show the effects of an event when these results more appropriately are due to differences between

people. Also, they raise questions about the rosy common belief that marriage makes people happier in the long run. More important than the event seems to be who is experiencing the event (*selection effect*) and how individuals master the event (*regulatory effect*).

Because of the preselection effects, critical life events often cannot be considered random events that are unrelated to the individual experiencing the event. Even becoming a lottery winner is not independent of one's personality because not everybody risks losing money in lotteries. Becoming incarcerated, married, or HIV positive are different life events that nevertheless are similar in the fact that all may to some degree be predictable from personality.

Life-Course Management

Theories of *life-course management* and *developmental regulation* address the ways in which individuals master the challenges entailed in normative life-course transitions and non-normative life events, including how people deal with these challenges (regulatory change). Socioemotional selectivity theory suggests that people adapt their social motives over the life course according to their perception of how much time they have left in life. Such motives also involve existing or future relationships. When people perceive time as expansive, they pursue future-oriented goals and motives, such as seeking new relationships with friends and colleagues or striving to establish a stable partnership. In contrast, when they perceive time as limited, such as in older age or when they confront a life-threatening illness, they tend to pay less attention to less meaningful and distant relationships and focus instead on close relationships that help fulfill belongingness and generativity needs, such as relationships with their partner, their children, and closer friends and relatives. These predictions have been well confirmed in research on age-related changes in social networks; whereas aging people by and large preserve the "core" of their social network, the overall size of the network shrinks due to the loss of less close, peripheral relationships.

Most theories of life-course management distinguish between two groups of strategies that people

use when they adapt to life-course transitions and non-normative life events: changing or stabilizing the external world versus changing or protecting the own internal states. For example, the *life-course theory of control* distinguishes *primary* and *secondary control strategies*. These control strategies operate in tandem when people try to master life-course transitions or critical life events that threaten valued relationships. For example, after moving into a new town, people may look for new local friends to compensate for the loss of friends at the earlier place. Also, they may intensify communication with close friends and relatives, particularly those who live in or close to the new town. Both are instances of primary control. In addition, people may invest less time in nonsocial leisure activities such as watching TV alone, try to cope with feelings of loneliness, and lower their standards for time spent with friends (e.g., by convincing themselves that, although present circumstances are difficult, the future will be better). These are secondary control strategies.

Studies of aging suggest that as people move into later adulthood, they shift from an *activation mode* focusing on building new relationships to a *protection mode* aimed at preserving existing relationships and from an other focus to a self-focus. For example, many studies with married couples in middle and later adulthood found that older couples were better at expressing mutual affection and avoiding conflictual issues.

Conclusion

A life-span perspective on relationships views relationship changes over individual development as a function of normative life-course transitions, non-normative life events, and individuals' attempts to master the relationship changes due to these transitions and events by both primary and secondary control strategies. In doing so, such a life-span perspective stresses the active role of individuals in controlling their own relationship development. Combined with a personality differences perspective, it appears that relationship changes in response to life-course transitions and life events may considerably vary according to individual control beliefs and competencies.

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See also Contextual Influences on Relationships; Convoy Model of Social Relations; Personality Traits, Effects on Relationships; Resilience; Vulnerability-Stress-Adaptation Model

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(“I like volunteering”), an inanimate object (“I like my car”), an experience (“I like thinking about the future”), or another individual (“I like my friend”). These varied forms of liking involve positivity toward the liked object, but what differentiates interpersonal liking from other types of liking? In other words, what does it mean to like another person? This entry explores definitions of *interpersonal liking*, its development, and individual differences in this process.

Definitions of Interpersonal Liking

One conceptualization of liking comes from social learning theory. In this perspective, liking another individual does not differ from liking an activity, object, or experience. Social learning theory states that all behaviors result from the pursuit of a “reward” or some positive outcome. Thus, just as one might pursue an action because it feels good, one likes another person because being with that person provides benefits of some sort. Individuals differ in their perceptions of the benefits offered by another person (i.e., what is rewarding to some may not be rewarding to others) and can feel rewarded by numerous properties related to the other, such as the person’s characteristics (sense of humor, physical attractiveness, status, or warmth), feeling liked in return, companionship, or access to tangible rewards or opportunities (money, transportation, networking). These rewards make the relationship appealing, and the individual comes to associate the other with positive feelings.

A second conceptualization of liking distinguishes liking from loving. Zick Rubin theorized that, although liking and loving are both attitudes toward another person involving positive emotions and positivity about that partner, liking does not involve physical attraction and desire, whereas love does. Rubin developed questionnaires to measure liking (e.g., “My partner is the sort of person that I would like to be”) and loving (e.g., “If I could never be with my partner, I would be miserable”), and researchers administer these items to determine an individual’s feelings toward another person. It is clear from such items that Rubin considers liking to be a less complex attitude than loving, one that does not involve the same degree of investment in the relationship.

LIKING

Individuals express liking for a variety of phenomena. They can like an action enacted or planned

Other theorists categorize liking as one form of love. For example, Robert Sternberg describes three components of love: passion—arousal and physical attraction; commitment—devotion to and faith in the relationship; and intimacy—feelings of warmth, understanding, and connection to another person. These components, alone and in combination (e.g., the presence of passion vs. the presence of passion *and* intimacy), produce seven types of love. One of these types of love, referred to as liking, occurs when individuals experience intimacy without passion or commitment. In this instance, people positively regard each other and feel close without necessarily experiencing attraction or feeling committed. Another type of love in Sternberg's model is companionate love. As with liking, companionate love involves the intimacy component, whereby an individual feels close to another person without experiencing passion, but companionate love also includes commitment. Companionate love, then, is a stronger form of liking involving a desire to continue the relationship long term.

As a whole, theories of interpersonal liking suggest that it is a state of pleasant feelings and connectedness directed toward another person perhaps because that individual offers something desirable. Thus, interpersonal liking bears some similarity to other forms of liking given that both involve rewarding experiences, but interpersonal liking goes beyond general liking—that is, a positive attitude toward something—in that it involves intimacy and closeness with another person.

Development of Liking

How do individuals come to like others around them? What factors draw people together? After an initial encounter, there must be qualities that attract one individual to another that help transform a one-time meeting into a potential relationship. In essence, the initial interaction must be positive and must foster the expectation of future rewarding interactions. Existing research has identified four principles of attraction that contribute to liking: similarity, proximity, physical attractiveness, and reciprocity of liking.

Similarity

On the whole, people tend to like those who are similar to them: people who have similar backgrounds, similar interests, similar values and attitudes, and similar dispositions. Why are such similarities attractive? Research suggests that sharing common interests and beliefs with another person is associated with the expectation of being liked by the other, which in turn suggests that interactions will be smooth and enjoyable. If Matt, who strongly identifies with his religion, meets Eric, who faithfully follows the same religion, it is easier for Matt to anticipate being accepted by Eric. Expecting to be liked, Matt will feel more comfortable with Eric, treating him in a sociable, friendly manner, making it easier for Eric to respond likewise. Thus, knowledge of similarity is likely to help interactions go well, and such pleasant interactions lead people to experience greater liking.

Similarity is also validating. Many values and interests can be ambiguous; individuals are often unsure whether the things that matter the most to them are acceptable or worthwhile. According to social comparison theory, people obtain information about the validity of their beliefs and opinions by comparing them with the beliefs and opinions of others, particularly similar and highly regarded others. Thus, being around others who hold similar positions can help people feel positively about themselves, and such rewarding interactions lead to liking.

Proximity and Familiarity

Proximity, or the physical presence of others, attracts people to one another and can contribute to greater liking. One study, examining friendships among individuals living in a college dormitory, found that those who lived next door to one another were more likely to become friends than those who lived on the same floor, but farther away. The principle of proximity suggests that when another person is frequently nearby, there are more opportunities to observe and interact with the individual. Proximity has its effect, therefore, by establishing familiarity. Merely being exposed to another person leads to a sense that the other is likable. For instance, research assistants in another study sat in on a large lecture class 0, 5,

10, or 15 times throughout one semester. Students in the class rated the research assistants who attended the most classes more positively and more desirable as friends presumably because they were more familiar with these assistants. Essentially, proximity gives individuals the opportunity to become familiar with others; as long as that familiarity occurs in a positive context (i.e., the individuals have reasonably common interests and values and their interactions are pleasant), feelings of comfort and liking are likely to result.

Although proximity and familiarity may increase liking, regular interaction is needed to maintain liking. Stated differently, in general, absence may *not* make the heart grow fonder. If two individuals do not spend time together, they lack the enjoyable interactions that foster liking. Another qualification is that proximity and familiarity do contribute to greater liking, but only if two individuals are initially favorably disposed toward each other. More time spent with partners who are experienced as unpleasant or with whom there is outright competition and hostility is likely to contribute to further dislike. Social psychologists explain this qualification by arguing that proximity makes the “dominant response”—that is, the most likely response in that situation—even more likely.

Physical Attractiveness

Physical attractiveness is a valued trait in a romantic partner. What may be more surprising is that physical attractiveness can also foster attraction among nonromantic friends. One reason is that good looks often lead to the impression that a person has other desirable qualities. Research on the “what is beautiful is good” stereotype suggests that people presume that attractive individuals are more socially competent, intelligent, moral, selfless, and successful. Given this expectation that beauty is linked to positive qualities, it is clear why people would want to develop relationships with attractive others—they anticipate satisfying and rewarding interactions.

Several studies suggest that in the social domain, attractive people may indeed possess more positive qualities such as greater social skills. It may be that the “what is beautiful is good” stereotype operates in the manner of a self-fulfilling prophecy: People’s expectations that an attractive person has good

social skills may evoke exactly the positive characteristics that they expect. In one influential study, men were shown a photograph of either an attractive or unattractive woman and were led to believe they would interact with that woman over an intercom system. Although the photograph was not actually of their partner, men who saw the attractive photograph were more friendly, warm, outgoing, and funny in their conversations with the woman than men who expected to interact with the unattractive woman. It may be, then, that attractive individuals exhibit positive qualities because others give them opportunity after opportunity to do so.

Although physical attractiveness is associated with characteristics that benefit social interactions, the appeal of attractiveness may go beyond this, especially when selecting a romantic partner. A primary goal of any living organism is to pass on its genes. In sexually reproducing species, individuals have choice when selecting mating partners. Reproductive success can be maximized by choosing partners with the highest quality genes. Some theorists suggest that the physical attractiveness is an indication of a potential partner’s “good genes.” According to this hypothesis, attractiveness provides a cue to an individual’s genetic fitness because poor genes show themselves in deformities and poor health, which are considered unattractive. Attractiveness, therefore, may be an advertisement of an individual’s genetic quality.

Finally, beauty may also contribute to liking because it is valued in most cultures. In part, individuals like attractive people because they are seen positively by society, and associating with valued others may allow individuals to bask in reflected positivity.

Reciprocity of Liking

As mentioned earlier, awareness of being liked by another person often leads to liking. In one dating study, only 3 percent of men reported a willingness to ask out an attractive woman if they did not know what her response would be, preferring instead to wait for indications that the attraction was mutual. Researchers, led by Mark Leary and Roy Baumeister, have theorized that humans have a need to belong—a desire to be included and valued by others. Perceiving that another person likes

the self connotes an opportunity to be included, which is desirable and leads the individual to reciprocate liking. According to this theory, because relationships are tied to feelings of self-worth, individuals are motivated to participate in satisfying close relationships that bring about positive self-evaluations. However, initiating and participating in relationships always carries some risk of rejection. New acquaintances may be rejecting, and friends may behave in ways that foster hurt feelings, intentionally or unintentionally. The pain of such negative interpersonal experiences, which in one important study was linked to activation in the same neural regions as physical pain, may induce people to distance themselves from the situation and seek out supportive others. Knowing that one is liked and accepted by others suggests that they will be attentive to one's needs, interested in one's experiences and perspectives, and willing to make the relationship a priority. Further, interacting with others who express liking for the self is enjoyable and thus positively reinforcing. Essentially, confidence about another person's liking creates expectations of gratifying future interactions, providing an incentive to like that individual in return.

These principles of attraction describe several common processes that contribute to the development of liking. Of course, they also suggest that there are individual differences in who is liked. Interactions that are experienced as rewarding by one individual may be viewed by another as dull or frustrating. People are motivated to self-enhance, to see the self positively. As a result, individuals want to associate with those who validate the self because such interactions make people feel good about themselves. Of course, validating interactions are also inherently pleasurable. Thus, although the processes associated with attraction and liking unfold in all relationships, the specific content of similarity, proximity and familiarity, physical attractiveness, and reciprocity of liking are unique to each dyad.

A Social Relations Analysis of Liking

David Kenny's Social Relations Model attempts to distinguish between the various contributors to liking—the actor, the target, and the relationship. When considering an individual's liking of another, the actor effect refers to how much the individual

likes all interaction partners (i.e., how much does Theresa like all people with whom she interacts?). The target effect assesses how likable the interaction partner is to people in general (i.e., how much is Andrew liked by all people with whom he interacts?). The relationship effect represents how much a partner is liked over and above these general tendencies, presumably reflecting the dyad's distinctive manner of relating to each other (i.e., over and above Theresa's liking for people in general and Andrew's likability, how much does Theresa like Andrew?). Kenny's research suggests that, although actor and target effects have some impact on liking, to a great extent, liking is due to characteristics unique to a given relationship. That is, although an individual may believe that he or she likes another because of that person's qualities or because he or she likes most people, liking is more attributable to a pair's characteristic pattern of interacting.

One of the more interesting questions to emerge from the Social Relations Model analysis of liking is whether people are aware of how much others like them. Several studies have shown that perceptions of liking are attributable to the different components of this model. That is, in terms of target effects, people do seem to have a reasonably accurate sense of how much others like them in general. But in terms of relationship effects—knowing how much a particular person likes the self—people tend to be much less accurate.

Liking and Self-Disclosure

When two people self-disclose to each other, they like each other more as personal disclosures communicate trust and interest in the other person. In addition, self-disclosure is also used by those who like each other to share information about the self and thereby draw closer. Although self-disclosure does strengthen closeness and intimacy, this process must be gradual, or at least proceed at a pace acceptable to both members of the dyad. If either individual discloses too much too soon, the other person is likely to feel that the disclosure is excessive and inappropriate, inhibiting the developing closeness. Similarly, if either individual discloses too little, the other individual may feel a lack of trust or interest in forming a relationship, which also diminishes liking.

Liking in Long-Term Romantic Relationships

Some basic form of liking is necessary for the formation of any type of relationship. Acquaintance and friendship relationships are based primarily on liking, whereas intimate romantic relationships are initially characterized by a great deal of passionate love and physical attraction. However, passionate love generally wanes as time passes, and couples' needs become sated and the partners habituate to each other. If romantic relationships are based only on arousal and desire, they are likely to deteriorate alongside the decreasing passion. In more successful romantic relationships, as passionate love peaks and begins to taper, companionate love tends to grow. Companionate love, which goes beyond the warmth, positivity, and caring associated with liking to also include commitment, is associated with long-term well-being in romantic relationships, including marriage. Although passionate love is a mechanism to get two romantic partners together, it is the affection and dedication associated with companionate love that keeps romantic relationships going long term.

Conclusion

The social world is replete with opportunities for interaction. However, given limited time and energy, individuals prefer others with whom they anticipate fulfilling experiences. The processes associated with liking allow individuals to differentiate between rewarding interaction partners and those who are less interesting or who are disliked. In effect, then, liking is the gatekeeper to forming and maintaining relationships.

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See also Belonging, Need for; Familiarity Principle of Attraction; Love, Typologies; Physical Attractiveness, Role in Relationships; Reciprocity of Liking; Similarity Principle of Attraction; Social Relations Model

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LISTENING

The average person does not actually speak for long periods in each day, and listening is the predominant interpersonal activity. It is crucially important in the formation, development, and maintenance of relationships. The child learns to listen before learning to speak, learns to speak before learning to read, and learns to read before learning to write. Listening is therefore a fundamental prerequisite skill on which other skills are predicated. Yet many relationship problems are caused by ineffective listening. Reading and writing skills have a low correlation, and the same probably holds for speaking and listening skills.

Indeed, we often listen with the intention of responding rather than with the intention of understanding. To respond appropriately, we need to give concerted attention to the speaker's communications. It is through listening that we accumulate the information and insights required for effective relational decision making. This entry examines listening in terms of its conceptualization, measurement, typologies, behavioral manifestations, and covert techniques.

Conceptualization and Measurement

The term *listen* is derived from two Anglo-Saxon words: *hylstan* (hearing) and *hlosnian* (wait in suspense). However, there is considerable debate about the exact meaning of the term. Different definitions emphasize either the covert cognitive aspect, or the overt behavioral dimension, associated with listening. Thus, some definitions focus on the cognitive auditory processes involved in sensing, storing, and interpreting oral messages. This perspective distinguishes hearing from listening. Hearing is perceived as a physical activity, whereas listening is a mental process. Just as most of us use our visual pathways to see but read with our brains, so we use our aural pathways to hear but listen with our brains. Similarly, although we do not have to learn how to see but have to learn to read, so too we do not need to learn how to hear but need to learn to listen. But cognitive understandings of aural information ignore non-verbal cues, which contribute significantly to the actual meaning of a message. For this reason, broader definitions conceptualize listening as an inclusive relational process in which the listener attempts to assimilate, understand, and retain both the verbal and nonverbal signals emitted by the speaker.

Listening begins when our senses register incoming stimuli. Our sensory register receives a large volume of data but holds this for a short time. Auditory data are held for up to 4 seconds, whereas visual data are held for just a few hundred milliseconds. For information to be retained, it has to be transferred to memory. Social data can be coded and stored in both episodic memory (remembering what people did) and semantic memory (remembering what they said). In working memory

(WM), both the memory/storage and attentional/processing functions combine to create meaning. People with greater WM capacities are better listeners because they can assimilate and process information swiftly and respond more appropriately. Research has shown a link between capacity for short-term listening (STL) and listening success. Good short-term listeners give more effective oral presentations, ask more questions in interviews, are more likely to secure promotion, and are rated as being better managers. However, although the importance of short-term memory for listening has been demonstrated, the exact nature of any causal relationship among listening ability, overt listening behavior, and STL is unclear. It is evident that there is more to listening than simply recall and more to recall than just listening. Further research is needed to tease out the exact nature of these relationships.

There are two broad categories of instruments used to measure listening: recall tests and perceptual instruments. Recall tests measure effectiveness based on the accuracy of message recall or comprehension. They involve presenting subjects with a filmed or audio sequence and requiring them to answer fixed-choice questions based on what has occurred. Although these tests may have high face validity, they have been criticized on four main grounds. First, they tend to measure retention or basic comprehension, rather than listening per se. Second, they conceptualize listening as a passive process in that, unlike actual social encounters, in these tests the listener is an observer who does not actively engage in the interaction. Third, they have been found to have low validity, with factor analysis tending to reveal that the only common factor is indeed memory. Fourth, these tests also to some extent measure literacy skills because they rely on reading and writing abilities.

Perceptual instruments involve either the completion of self-reports that measure one's perceptions of oneself or another as a listener or tests of ability to decode meaning from vocal or visual messages. Again, however, these are at least one step removed from real interactions. The former, self-report measures, offer a subjective insight into how respondents perceive themselves or others to have acted, as opposed to an objective record of how they actually performed. A problem with this type of measure is that self-report instruments

often have low reliability. Tests of decoding ability tend to focus on either vocalic messages (intonation, pitch, volume, etc.) or visual cues (facial expression, posture, etc.). These reveal that visual cues are more accurately decoded than aural ones, and that females are better at decoding nonverbal information than males. A difficulty in extrapolating these findings to human relationships is that, although there are instances in which single-system decoding may be required (e.g., the telephone), in most circumstances these cues are combined during listening.

Thus, there are difficulties with both types of measurement. To compound matters, correlations between different types of assessment have been low, indicating that these may assess different aspects of the listening process.

Typologies, Behavioral Manifestations, and Covert Techniques

There are five main types of listening. *Appreciative listening* occurs when we select messages from which we will gain pleasure, such as when attending a concert. *Comprehension listening* involves attempting to understand what others are telling us. *Evaluative listening* moves beyond comprehension to delineate the central propositions being put forward and assess the supporting evidence. *Empathic listening* occurs when we listen to someone who needs to talk and be understood and involves trying to see the world from the frame of the speaker. It is therefore at the heart of helping or counseling contexts. Finally, in *dialogic listening*, meaning is jointly generated and shaped through interaction, and for this reason it is also known as relational listening. The term *dialogue* is a combination of the Greek words *dia* ("through") and *logos* ("meaning" or "understanding"). Here, listening is transactional because those involved search for mutually agreed understandings that are beneficial for both parties. This is crucial in negotiations of all types, where for effective outcomes the goals and needs of each side must be jointly explored.

A distinction is also made between *active* and *passive* listening. It is possible to listen passively without indicating that we are paying attention. In contrast, active listening involves responding

in such a way as to show that we are attending. In terms of interpersonal relationships, it is important to listen actively. Although verbal responses are the acid test of successful listening, if accompanying nonverbal behaviors are not displayed by the listener, the speaker will infer a lack of interest.

A central verbal indicator of active listening is response development, where the listener follows on and builds on what the speaker has said. Although basic reinforcers (e.g., "That's excellent") can be useful in the short term, these are often employed in pseudolistening, where the listener is not really paying attention, and so can quickly lose value. For reinforcers to be fully effective, reasons should be given ("That's excellent. You have shown real courage in confronting him . . ."). Two other potent forms of verbal following are, first, probing questions, which follow up specific issues raised by the speaker with related questions, and, second, reflecting, where the listener summarizes in his or her own words the essence of what the speaker has just said. It is difficult to listen, assimilate what is being said, and immediately reflect this back using different terminology. The ability to do so is evidence of careful listening. Another listening indicator is reference to past statements made by the speaker, and in particular intermittent summaries of the main issues raised. During discussion, the speaker should avoid noncoherent topic shifts, which are abrupt changes of conversation that are not explained. Rather, coherent topic shifts should be negotiated, with disjunct markers used to signal the topic change (e.g., "That has been useful. . . . Can we now move on to discuss . . .").

The two most prevalent manifestations of active nonverbal listening are head nods and guggles ("Mmm-hmm," "Uh-huh"). This is well-known by TV producers, who cut separately recorded interviewer nods and guggles into interviewee responses to portray a natural conversation. Another crucial nonverbal listening indicator is eye contact, which conveys a desire to attend and participate. However, cultural expertise is required here because, although in Western society listeners look more at speakers than vice versa, in some cultures, this is not the pattern, and direct gaze may be viewed as disrespectful or challenging. Other nonverbal listening indicators are relevant facial expressions (e.g., showing concern), appropriate paralanguage (e.g., interested tone of voice), attentive posture (e.g., forward lean

on a chair), and sympathetic communication (e.g., mirroring the speaker's posture, facial expressions, and paralanguage).

Although the average speech rate is between 125 and 175 words per minute, the average thought rate (for processing information) is between 400 and 800 words per minute. This means that when listening, we have spare thought capacity, which needs to be used positively or unrelated mental processes can intervene (e.g., daydreaming). Because there are simply too many stimuli to attend to in any situation, we are equipped with a selective perception filter, so that certain information is consciously perceived and other material ignored. Thus, we usually filter out stimuli such as the ticking of a clock, hum of air conditioning, or weight of our arms on the chair. Effective listeners actively scan for important information, whereas poor listeners filter much of it out. Indeed, on average, we have forgotten about half of what we hear immediately after hearing it. This is because we are busy doing other things. When we listen, we not only evaluate the speaker's message, but plan a response, rehearse, and then execute it. It is important to ensure that the evaluating, planning, and rehearsing processes, which mediate between listening and speaking, do not actually interfere with the listening process. For example, we may decide what we are going to say before the speaker has finished and so stop listening.

A range of techniques can be employed to heighten receptivity. Information received may be organized into main themes and a chronological sequence. It can also be visualized by creating mental pictures of what the speaker is saying. Intrapersonal dialogue, or self-talk, also facilitates listening. This encompasses perspective taking (attempting to see the world as the speaker sees it), covert self-coaching ("My mind is beginning to wander. I must concentrate more"), self-reinforcement ("I'm listening well and understand her position"), and self-questions ("How does this relate to what she said earlier?").

Another problem in listening is that we assimilate information so as to make it fit with our mental set. Our previous experiences, attitudes, and values influence our expectations. We also evaluate others based on their appearance, initial statements, or their responses during previous encounters. These influence the way the speaker is

heard, in that statements may be interpreted in such a way as to fit with prior expectations. When attempting to interpret the motives and goals of the speaker, listeners need to be cognizant of their own possible preconceptions and biases.

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See also Communication, Nonverbal; Communication Skills; Empathy; Perspective Taking; Rapport; Responsiveness

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LONELINESS

The most broadly accepted definition of *loneliness* is the distress that results from discrepancies between ideal and perceived social relationships. This so-called cognitive discrepancy perspective makes it clear that loneliness is not synonymous with being alone, nor does being with others guarantee protection from feelings of loneliness. Rather, loneliness is the distressing feeling that occurs when one's social relationships are perceived as being less satisfying than what is desired. This entry describes how loneliness is conceived and measured; how loneliness is mentally represented;

how loneliness influences thoughts, feelings, and behaviors; and the consequences of loneliness for health and well-being.

Conceptualizations

Despite general agreement over its definition, loneliness is conceived in a number of ways. One theory of loneliness holds that deficiencies in specific provisions of social relationships contribute to specific types of lonely feelings. For instance, lack of engagement in a social network is associated with feelings of social loneliness such as aimlessness, boredom, and exclusion. In contrast, the absence of a reliable attachment figure (e.g., spouse) is associated with feelings of emotional loneliness, such as anxiety, desolation, and insecurity. More recent studies have shown that these types of lonely feelings are not uniquely associated with certain relationships, however. Marriage, for example, serves a broad social integrative function that diminishes feelings of both social and emotional loneliness, especially for women.

Another theory holds that loneliness arises from social skill deficits and personality traits that impair the formation and maintenance of social relationships. Social skills research has shown that loneliness is associated with more self-focus, poorer partner attention skills, a lack of self-disclosure to friends (especially among females), and less participation in organized groups (especially among males). Personality research has shown that loneliness is associated with shyness, neuroticism, and depressive symptoms, as well as low self-esteem, pessimism, low conscientiousness, and disagreeableness. Associations among these characteristics have sometimes led to conceptual confusion between loneliness and depressed affect, poor social support, introversion, and/or neuroticism. Research indicates, however, that loneliness, although related, is independent of these characteristics both conceptually and operationally (i.e., the measurement tools for each of these characteristics are relatively specific for the corresponding traits). Moreover, the effects of loneliness on physical health and physiology are generally not explained by the behavioral and personality characteristics with which loneliness is associated, indicating that loneliness may be a unique psychosocial

risk factor whose effects are distinguishable from some combination of poor social support, depression, and personality traits.

Loneliness is aversive, but that is not necessarily a bad thing. An evolutionary conceptualization of loneliness holds that the aversive feelings are adaptive because they motivate the repair or replacement of social connections. Human offspring are born to the longest period of near total dependency of any species. Simple reproduction, therefore, is not sufficient to ensure that one's genes make it into the gene pool. For one's genes to make it to the gene pool, these offspring must survive to reproduce. Social connections and the behaviors they engender (e.g., cooperation, altruism, alliances) enhance the survival of the parents; consequently, their children are more likely to survive to reproduce.

In early human history, hunter-gatherers whose genetic predisposition encouraged social/family "togetherness" and the offering of food and protection to mother and child would have increased offspring survival odds, whereas hunter-gatherers who felt no compunction about ignoring social/family bonds would have reduced the survival odds of their offspring. The latter may have survived to have another family, however, suggesting that no single genetic predisposition is superior. The consequences of such an evolutionary scenario would be heritable individual differences in loneliness, and adoption and twin studies among children and adults support this view. Approximately 48 percent of the variability in loneliness levels can be explained by inherited tendencies to experience loneliness.

The genes underlying loneliness do not act alone. Interactions with the environment bring the expression of an individual's genes to the fore. The genetic biases that account for people's differing sensitivity to the social pain of isolation or rejection, and/or their differing propensity to extract social "nutrients" from the environment, help to determine whether a given social context will dampen or intensify a tendency to feel lonely.

Some social circumstances are fairly uniformly associated with an increased tendency toward loneliness. Marriage is associated with the lowest levels of loneliness; loneliness is greater among those who have experienced divorce and widowhood. Situational factors that influence the availability of social opportunities are also associated

with loneliness (e.g., geographic relocation). Social relationship quality is a more potent predictor of loneliness than the existence or quantity of social contacts, however. Relationships that offer security, comfort, trust, and pleasure, even if interactions are relatively infrequent, are much more effective at preventing feelings of loneliness than are more friends or more frequent interactions that fail to meet these standards. Even in marriage, the quality of the relationship determines the degree of protection against loneliness.

Measurement

Lonely feelings are typically measured using a variety of items that assess the degree to which respondents endorse thoughts and feelings characteristic of loneliness (e.g., “I feel alone,” “I lack companionship,” “I do not feel part of a group of friends”). The result is a continuum in which the intensity and/or frequency of lonely feelings can range from very low (i.e., equivalent to feelings of social connectedness) to very high. On average, lonely feelings are low to moderate in the general population, with only a relatively small percentage of individuals experiencing intense lonely feelings at any given time. When asked simply whether they are currently feeling lonely, approximately 20 percent of the population will respond affirmatively.

Social Cognition

Mental Representations

An axiom in the study of human relationships is that we are highly social animals. A sense of social connectedness is as vital to our survival as food and drink, yet is so taken for granted that only the absence of that sense has been assigned a unique term. This suggests that “not lonely” is the normal or default state required to maintain a healthy and balanced life and that loneliness is the problematic state. Indeed, people’s mental representations of their sociality conform to the importance of social bonds at every level of human endeavor.

Studies of loneliness have shown that mental representations of our connections with others are characterized by individual, relational, and collective

dimensions. These dimensions correspond to individual, relational, and collective selves posited by theories of the self. At the individual level, feelings of isolation and low self-worth are precluded when people feel comfortable with themselves and their fit in a social world. At the relational level, feelings of interpersonal connectedness are fostered in close dyadic relationships. At the collective level, feelings of group identification and cohesion satisfy a need for belonging. This three-dimensional representation of loneliness holds in young adults and across gender and racial/ethnic lines in middle-age adults, suggesting a universality to this representational structure of the social self.

Mental Processes and Behaviors

Loneliness can be experienced acutely, as a temporary state that resolves when life circumstances resolve (e.g., new friends are made in a new community), and chronically, as a trait-like characteristic that results from an interaction between life circumstances and a genetic bias to experience feelings of isolation. Once loneliness is triggered, it generates a defensive form of thinking—a “lonely” social cognition—that can make every social molehill look like a mountain. Lonely people tend to be more anxious, pessimistic, and fearful of negative evaluation than people who feel good about their social lives, and they are therefore more likely to act and relate to others in ways that are anxious, negative, and self-protective, which leads paradoxically to self-defeating behaviors. For instance, lonely and nonlonely individuals were equally likely to cooperate with a stranger at the outset and during the early trials of a prisoner’s dilemma game in which the stranger was playing a tit-for-tat strategy (i.e., cooperation met with cooperation, betrayal with betrayal). This strategy resulted in increased cooperation across trials among nonlonely subjects, but not among lonely subjects. Similarly, self-reports showed that, relative to nonlonely individuals, lonely individuals were less trusting of others and believed that they were less trusted by others. In essence, lonely individuals exercised self-protective behaviors that prevented them from enjoying the positive, cooperative interactions that were theirs to be had.

Not only do the lonely contribute to their own negative reality, but others begin to view them

more negatively and begin to act accordingly. One study showed that individuals told that an opposite gender partner they were about to meet was lonely subsequently rated that partner as being less sociable. The individuals primed to have these expectations also behaved toward their partners in a less sociable manner than they did toward partners whom they expected to be nonlonely. Once this negative feedback loop starts rolling, the cycle of defensive behavior and negative social results spins even further downhill. The lonely not only react more intensely to everyday hassles (e.g., misplacing or losing things), they experience less of an uplift from everyday perks (e.g., meeting one's responsibilities) than the nonlonely. In essence, lonely individuals inhabit an inhospitable social orbit that repels others or elicits their negative responses. Even when they succeed in eliciting nurturing support from a friend or loved one, they tend to perceive the exchange as less than fulfilling.

Social rejection is a potent cause of loneliness, and the lonely tend to have a heightened sensitivity to cues of social rejection and acceptance in their environment. For instance, after being presented with autobiographical information (i.e., ostensible diary entries) about a number of individuals, lonely participants remembered a greater proportion of information related to interpersonal or collective social ties than did nonlonely participants. It made no difference whether the detail was emotionally positive or negative. In another study, participants asked to "relive" a rejection experience, a procedure that increases feelings of loneliness, showed greater attention to emotional vocal tone (i.e., a cue for social rejection or acceptance) in a subsequent task than did participants asked to relive more neutral experiences.

Greater attention to social cues does not ensure greater social skills, however. Lonely individuals are less accurate than nonlonely people at decoding facial and postural expressions of emotion, for instance. A lack of correspondence between attention and accuracy in responses to social cues has also been demonstrated in a brain-imaging study of lonely and nonlonely young adults. When presented with equally arousing positive and negative pictures of scenes and objects (nonsocial stimuli) and people (social stimuli), activation in a set of brain regions often associated with visual attention and perspective taking varied in response to

negative social (in contrast to matched nonsocial) pictures. Relative to the nonlonely, lonely individuals showed greater visual cortical activation (consistent with greater attention to the negative social than nonsocial pictures) and less activation of the temporo-parietal junction (consistent with less attention devoted to the other person's perspective). Another set of brain regions, associated with reward systems (i.e., ventral striatum), was found to be down-regulated in lonely, compared with nonlonely individuals when viewing positive social (in contrast to matched nonsocial) pictures—results consistent with the idea that lonely individuals derive less pleasure than nonlonely individuals from viewing positive social circumstances. This latter result may bear on the finding that lonely individuals find positive social interactions during the course of a normal day less satisfying than nonlonely individuals.

So although people may become lonely because of a genetic disposition coupled with an unfortunate situation, they remain lonely because of the manner in which they and others think. One might expect that a lonely person, hungry to fulfill unmet social needs, would be accepting of a new acquaintance. However, when confronted with an opportunity to form a social connection, studies show that the lonely are actually far less accepting of potential new friends than are the nonlonely. Similarly, in other studies, lonely students were less responsive to their classmates during class discussions and provided less appropriate and less effective feedback than nonlonely students. Lonely undergraduates also held more negative perceptions of their roommates than did the nonlonely, and this perceptual divide widened as one moved from roommates to suite mates to floor mates to dorm mates.

Time also plays a role in constructing negative "realities." Researchers asked participants to interact with a friend, and to rate the quality of the relationship and the communication (a) immediately, (b) after watching a videotape of the same social exchange, (c) a few weeks later after being reminded of the interaction, and (d) after again watching the videotape. At all four measurement points, lonely individuals rated relationship quality more negatively than did nonlonely individuals. Interestingly, the further in time they were removed from the social exchange, the more negatively they

rated it. Thus, the more time that passed, the more the objective reality succumbed to the “reality” constructed by the lonely individual’s negative social cognition.

The Loneliness Continuum Revisited

When loneliness is considered on a continuum that ranges from *not at all* to *very*, it is easy to assume that social cognitive and behavioral characteristics differ in degree commensurate with the degree of loneliness. However, individuals who experience few or no feelings of loneliness are characterized by a unique and adaptive profile that is not simply the opposite of the profile of highly lonely individuals. This was evident in a study of three groups of young adults selected from a sample of more than 2,500 undergraduate students to represent loneliness scores in the bottom 20 percent (low loneliness), middle 20 percent (average loneliness), and top 20 percent (high loneliness). Individuals low in loneliness differed from individuals average or high in loneliness on four of five personality dimensions (more outgoing, agreeable, conscientious, and non-neurotic) and scored higher in optimism, positive mood, social skills, self-esteem, and social support and lower in anger, anxiety, shyness, fear of negative evaluation, and negativity. However, individuals average or high in loneliness were indistinguishable on these scales.

These results do not mean that those who are low in loneliness possess characteristics that render them immune to ever feeling lonely. Rather, when individuals feel socially connected, they express a constellation of states and dispositions that enriches their lives not only quantitatively, but also qualitatively relative to individuals who are average or high in loneliness. That is, there seems to be something special about being and feeling socially connected. This interpretation is supported by data from a hypnosis study in which young adults were made to feel lonely and then socially connected (or vice versa, in a counterbalanced order) by recalling a time when they felt rejected and as if they didn’t belong, or accepted and as if they did belong. Measures of affect, social factors, and even personality traits mirrored and tracked the acute changes in loneliness induced by the hypnotic manipulation.

Participants induced to feel socially connected, compared with lonely, reported significantly less negative mood; higher self-esteem and optimism; better social skills, social support, and sociability; greater extraversion and agreeableness; and less shyness, anxiety, anger, fear of negative evaluation, and neuroticism. This experimental study suggests that loneliness has features of a central trait—central in the sense that it influences how individuals construe themselves and others, and, by extension, how others view and act toward these individuals. Thus, although objective social circumstances (e.g., bereavement, ostracism) can modify feelings of loneliness, subjective social factors operate to keep people in a lonely or socially connected state of being. Whereas lonely individuals think about and behave toward others in a way that tends to reinforce a isolated existence, socially connected individuals hold a more favorable view of others that in turn tends to reinforce their being perceived and treated positively.

Health Consequences

As this profile reveals, when loneliness takes over someone’s life, they become trapped in a feedback loop of negative expectations, interpretations, and interactions. The challenge is reframing and redirecting social perceptions so that a sense of meaningful social connectedness can be established or recovered. Fortunately, the same feedback loop that allows individuals to construct a negative, subjective reality can be redirected to construct a better objective reality. This could be particularly important given the health consequences of loneliness.

Loneliness has been associated with alterations in the functioning of the cardiovascular, endocrine, and immune systems. A recent theoretical model of the correlates and consequences of loneliness posits that age-related declines in physiological resilience are accelerated by chronic loneliness. Accordingly, in younger adults, loneliness has been associated with early markers of disease processes (e.g., subtle alterations in blood pressure control mechanisms), whereas in older adults, loneliness has been associated with frank disease (e.g., elevated blood pressure) and dysregulation across multiple physiological systems (e.g., impaired immune functioning and

elevated levels of stress hormones). Clearly, the costs of loneliness are too great to ignore.

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See also Attachment Theory; Belonging, Need for; Self-Monitoring and Relationships; Social Isolation; Trust

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LONELINESS, CHILDREN

Researchers generally agree that loneliness involves an awareness that one's social and personal relationships are deficient and that this awareness is accompanied by emotions of sadness, emptiness, or longing. In the 1980s, researchers became interested in studying children's cognitive representations of their peer relations and their emotional reactions to relationship difficulties. For example, scholars examined whether children who have difficulty with peers as indicated by objective markers, such as how well liked they are, come to hold negative expectations of others and come to feel lonely, socially anxious, or depressed. Because loneliness stems from dissatisfaction with social relationships, the study of loneliness was a natural line of inquiry. This entry focuses on how children understand and experience loneliness, the influence of family and peer relationships on loneliness, and the role of social-cognitive factors in children's experience of loneliness.

Children's Experiences of Loneliness

When elementary school-age children are asked about their experiences of loneliness, they describe it as “feeling left out,” “feeling unneeded,” “being sad,” and feeling “like you don't have any friends.” Interestingly, even children as young as 5 to 7 years old can report feeling lonely and think of loneliness as consisting of being alone and feeling sad. Still, at this age level, children's understanding of loneliness is considered rudimentary because when asked whether it is possible to be lonely when playing with others, only a small percentage of children this young report that it is possible.

With regard to the formal measurement of loneliness, there is general consensus that loneliness is a subjective, personal experience that is best measured by self-report, rather than by inference from observational or psychophysiological measures. Accordingly, researchers have used questionnaires (multi-item formal scales with excellent internal reliability) to measure loneliness. Most measures contain some items that ask directly about loneliness, but the content of scales is often diverse, with many items assessing perceptions of social support,

self-efficacy, perceived acceptance by peers, or perceived participation in friendship, rather than loneliness per se. New efforts are being made to create highly reliable measures for children that restrict item content to feelings of loneliness. This solves the problem of overlapping content that can result when loneliness is studied in relation to factors such as social support or participation in friendship.

There is evidence that children's feelings of loneliness are moderately stable even over a fairly extended time period (e.g., correlations of .55 over 1 year). Although there is a need for more cross-sectional and longitudinal research, it appears that youth experience more loneliness during middle school than during the elementary school years. Furthermore, there are marked differences in loneliness as a function of developmental problems. Children who suffer from developmental disabilities, such as mental retardation, learning disabilities, or autism, generally report higher levels of loneliness than regular-education students. However, with regard to gender, studies of children in kindergarten through the sixth grade do not show reliable gender differences in rates of loneliness.

Associations Between Loneliness and Children's Family Relationships

Children's relationships with their family may affect how often and how intensely children feel lonely. Research in this area has mainly focused on parent-child interaction style. Degree of maternal warmth and degree of interpersonal control appear to be important predictors of children's loneliness. For example, mothers who tend to give advice about problems to their children in a controlling way and with little warmth have children with increased levels of loneliness.

Insecure attachment to parents early in life may be a risk factor for future loneliness. Longitudinal research has compared the loneliness of children who had different types of attachment patterns during infancy. Attachment was assessed using the Strange Situation, a laboratory paradigm in which the infant's reaction is observed when separated from the mother, when reunited with the mother, and when a stranger appears. Attachment theorists believe that infants who are securely attached to their mothers explore the environment when their

mothers are present, show signs of distress when separated from their mothers, and are comforted on the return of their mothers. Research has found that the loneliest children are those who had insecure-ambivalent attachments to their mother in infancy, meaning that they showed distress when separated from their mother, but were not comforted on reunion. This research suggests that early family relationships may provide an important foundation for how children feel later on in other types of relationships.

Associations Between Loneliness and Children's Peer Relations

Most research on children's loneliness has focused on the association between peer relations and feelings of loneliness at school. The aspects of children's peer relations most widely studied are: (a) peer acceptance, (b) peer victimization, and (c) friendship. Although these constructs are intercorrelated, research has demonstrated that they are distinct dimensions. For example, approximately 30 percent of children who are well liked by their peer group do not have a friend, and, conversely, approximately 50 percent of children who are poorly accepted by their peers have at least one friend. This kind of distinctiveness makes it possible to study the separate contributions of peer acceptance, peer victimization, and friendship to loneliness.

Peer Acceptance

Peer acceptance is the degree to which children are liked by their peer group as a whole. This is typically measured by using either a rating-scale sociometric measure on which children rate how much they like to play with each of their classmates or positive and negative sociometric nomination measures on which children indicate their three most-liked and three least-liked classmates. Research has consistently shown that children who are sociometrically rejected by their classmates report higher levels of loneliness than youth who are better accepted. This finding holds from preschool through high school and is seen in both Eastern and Western cultures. Short-term longitudinal research suggests that peer rejection leads to loneliness, not the other way around.

Of note, there is considerable variability in how much loneliness low-accepted children report. This variability is partially associated with differences in behavioral style. Whereas some peer-rejected youth exhibit aggressive behavior, others tend to exhibit a more withdrawn or submissive style. In elementary school, aggressive-rejected children report increased levels of loneliness compared with average-accepted children, but in middle school they do not. Submissive-rejected children, by contrast, consistently report feeling more lonely than their better-accepted peers. Submissive-rejected children may be at particular risk for loneliness because they receive more overt negative treatment from peers than do aggressive-rejected children. Although peers may not like aggressive-rejected children, they may be too intimidated by them to give these youth negative feedback about their behavior or how they are viewed. Furthermore, aggressive-rejected children are less likely to notice the negative feedback they receive from peers, a kind of self-protective bias that could guard against loneliness. Finally, aggressive-rejected children may feel less lonely in middle school because changing classes each hour makes for a larger pool of available peers and thereby affords them a greater opportunity to affiliate with similarly aggressive schoolmates.

Peer Victimization

Peer victimization can be assessed through direct observation, self-report, peer report, or teacher report. Victimization can take several forms, including verbal insults, social exclusion, negative gossiping, and physical aggression. Approximately 1 in 10 children are repeatedly victimized by their peers. Children who are the chronic targets of peer victimization experience increased levels of loneliness. As with peer rejection, it appears that peer victimization leads to loneliness, not the reverse. More important, once peer harassment stops, feelings of loneliness decrease.

Peer victimization is linked with loneliness in both Western and Eastern cultures. Interestingly, when investigating ethnic group differences within ethnically diverse schools, victimized children who are members of the ethnic majority at their school have been found to report the highest levels of

loneliness, victimized children who are members of the ethnic minority report the second highest levels of loneliness, and nonvictimized children report the least loneliness. One reason that victimized children who are members of the ethnic majority might report the most loneliness is that the victimization may lead them to feel disconnected from their own ethnic group.

Normative perceptions of a child's ethnic group also appear to be important to consider. For example, research has shown that when a victimized child is a member of an ethnic group that is perceived to be aggressive, that child experiences elevated levels of loneliness. It has been proposed that these youth are seen as "social misfits" by other members of their ethnic group and that perhaps these victimized children blame themselves for not fitting in better, an attribution that leads to poor adjustment.

Friendship

Friendship is defined as a close dyadic relationship in which there is a high degree of mutual liking and attachment, as well as a shared history. Loneliness has been studied in relation to two aspects of children's friendships: number of friends (e.g., mutual sociometric friendship nominations) and quality of their best friendships (e.g., reports by the child's best friend about specific qualitative features of the friendship). Children with friends experience less loneliness than children without friends, but the sheer number of friends does not typically make a significant difference. Interestingly, even children whose friends participate in delinquent behavior, such as stealing and drug use, experience less loneliness than children who are friendless. Furthermore, there is evidence that children who cycle through making and losing friends are as lonely as children who make no friends.

Children who are rejected by their peers and who do not have any friends experience significantly more loneliness than children who are rejected by their peers but have a friend. This finding has important implications for intervention work with children who have peer difficulties. If a child can develop a friendship with just one other child, his or her level of loneliness will likely decrease even if the child continues to be disliked by the broader peer group.

The quality of children's friendships is also related to loneliness. Features such as companionship, helping, validation and caring, intimate disclosure, conflict, and ease of conflict resolution predict loneliness above and beyond the prediction that can be made from overall peer acceptance. Children with higher quality friendships report significantly less loneliness than children with poorer quality friendships. The degree of association between specific friendship features and loneliness has been found to be similar for boys and girls, suggesting that boys and girls may have fairly similar needs with regard to what they look for in a friendship.

Social-Cognitive Factors Associated With Children's Loneliness

A small but growing body of literature exists on lonely children's social-cognitive processes. Research on locus of control has focused on the types of attributions that children make for their successes and failures in social situations, and particularly whether they blame themselves or others for social difficulties. Although lonely children are more likely to view their social successes as due to unstable factors that are outside of their control, they tend to perceive their social failures as due to stable characteristics of themselves, such as seeing themselves as difficult for others to get along with and acting in ways that bother other children.

Rejection sensitivity is another type of social-cognitive process that has been explored in relation to children's loneliness. Rejection sensitivity is the tendency to anxiously or angrily expect rejection by others. Youth who are highly rejection sensitive are not only more likely to behave in hostile ways toward their social partners, but are also at increased risk for internalizing problems, including loneliness.

Further research on the social-cognitive processes associated with loneliness may help to explain why some children who are well liked by their peers and have friends nonetheless feel lonely. It may be that children who hold stringent expectations of their social partners are especially susceptible to experiencing high degrees of loneliness. Conflicts and disappointments in relationships are virtually inevitable; as a result, children who

believe that friends should never break commitments or in other ways let each other down may be at increased risk for loneliness.

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See also Belonging, Need for; Children's Peer Groups; Friendships in Childhood; Loneliness; Need Fulfillment in Relationships

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LONELINESS, INTERVENTIONS

Loneliness is a subjective, negative, and unwelcome feeling of not having a close companion, desirable friends, or social contacts. It is characterized by negative feelings such as not belonging, being left out, boredom, sadness, depression, and anxiety.

Loneliness and social isolation are closely associated but also distinct, with *social isolation* defined as an objective state that can be measured by the number of contacts and interactions between individuals and their wider social network. This entry focuses on loneliness and the types of interventions that are known to be effective in preventing and alleviating loneliness. Because of the close relationship between loneliness and social isolation, some of the interventions will, by default, target both.

Conceptualization of Loneliness

Humans are inherently social beings, needing both supportive social networks and intimate social relationships. Most people have an intuitive notion of loneliness and describe it in different ways. Common to all such descriptions is the subjectivity of the feeling and that it is for the most part an unpleasant and distressing experience. The determining factor is how people feel about or respond to loneliness, rather than in the physical sense of the experience.

An important distinction with regards to the development of interventions is the duration of the experience. Transient loneliness relates to the common everyday swings of mood, which are unlikely to require intervention. Situational loneliness follows a change in life circumstances, such as becoming widowed or moving to an unfamiliar area. Interventions at this stage can be effective in both preventing and alleviating loneliness. Chronic loneliness is an ongoing enduring experience of loneliness, where the nature and quality of the individual's social networks affect their ability to deal with their loneliness. Finally, the term *aleness* is sometimes used to express a serious, long-term, chronic experience of loneliness associated with long spells of lack of any meaningful contact with the external environment. Interventions targeting these two chronic conditions are essential to ensure people's health, quality of life, and life satisfaction.

Factors Associated With Loneliness

For the purpose of developing effective interventions, several aspects of loneliness need to be considered: demographic characteristics such as age, gender, culture, and living alone; people's

perceptions of personal control, coping, and feelings of dependency; the experience of major life events, such as job loss or retirement, loss of friends, relatives and companions, change of residence, and health problems; and personal resources, such as mental health (particularly depression), disability, and decreased mobility. Finally, the stigma of loneliness leads to underreporting of loneliness. Men and older people, in particular, are reluctant to admit feelings of loneliness because of the stigma of what is seen as a social failure and not being able to cope.

Interventions to Alleviate and Prevent Loneliness

A vast array of interventions has been developed over time to alleviate and prevent loneliness in vulnerable groups, ranging from hi-tech Internet or phone-based services to small low-cost self-help groups. Some of these activities and services are theory- and/or evidence-based, whereas others have evolved through practitioners' experience and local knowledge. Interventions intended to alleviate loneliness could be said to have three broad goals: to help lonely individuals establish satisfying interpersonal relationships; to prevent loneliness from evolving into more serious health problems, such as depression or suicide; and to prevent loneliness from occurring in the first place. The majority of these interventions fall into four, sometimes overlapping categories: social support/social activity; education; service provision; and problem solving, as either group or one-to-one interventions.

Social Support and Social Activity

Research has demonstrated that the quality rather than the quantity of social support is of greater importance in alleviating loneliness and reducing social isolation. For example, older people may have frequent contact with family, but the family is not, contrary to what many services seem to assume, the main source of emotional support. However, contacts with adult children are frequently the main source of instrumental support. Long-term, old friends provide support in times of transition (e.g., retirement and bereavement by

providing continuity and an acceptance of aging). New friends, in contrast, are frequently sought through group activities, with the emphasis on shared enjoyable activity rather than on reciprocal support.

Education and Problem Solving

Group-based social support interventions for older people with mental health problems, widows, women living alone, and caregivers are often effective in reducing social isolation and loneliness and in increasing self-esteem and morale. Most interventions include some form of structured activity, such as peer- and professionally led educational programs, self-help support, directed group discussion, or supported social activation (e.g., providing widows with skills to adjust to an independent life and improve their life skills competencies). Groups meet a variety of needs such as enjoyment, activity, and social integration. Membership in a group is a strategy for dealing with loneliness. Participant-planned and participant-led activities seem to improve effectiveness. Some interventions are intended to help the individual identify activities and tasks that can be enjoyed alone. Older men are more likely to participate in task-focused activities than in what they perceive as social support or social network activities. Many interventions use indirect approaches, which are not perceived as social network activities or intended to reduce social isolation and loneliness. Walking and exercise groups are known to improve physical and mental health and reduce loneliness, and there is some evidence to suggest that activities such as gardening projects, healthy eating groups, art, music, and dance are effective, although further evaluation is still required.

It is frequently assumed that if people participate in an activity, it demonstrates that it is acceptable and attractive to them. However, research shows that some older people will make do with activities and services that do not meet their social activity or social support needs simply because there are no other options. Expectations of services and activities vary among individuals, but also among socioeconomic groups, cultures, genders, and generations. It is well known that in all age groups people from higher socioeconomic groups have better access to and participate to a greater degree in relevant services and activities.

Ironically, those who are truly isolated and lonely are the least likely to join a social support or activity group.

Similar activities have been proposed for school children, young people at high risk of dropout, violence, drug and alcohol use, bullying, and other health risk behaviors and first-year college students. In a review of school-based activities to reduce loneliness among children, Evangelia Galanaki and Helen Vassilopoulou identified seven categories of interventions that would help children to deal with their loneliness: (1) identification, understanding, acceptance, and expression of loneliness; (2) social skills training and social problem solving; (3) creating a positive social environment in the classroom and the playground by, for example, changing the physical layout of the environment or establishing buddy and peer support; (4) enhancement of self-esteem; (5) cognitive-behavioral modification; (6) development of coping strategies; and (7) development of solitude skills.

For college students coping with transition and loss, relationship support and friendship development have been suggested as ways of reducing loneliness, especially in the first year. Research has shown an association among loneliness, mental health, and resilience in young people, particularly in vulnerable groups such as the homeless, same-sex attracted young people, young parents, and obese children. However, little is currently known about the effectiveness of interventions intended to enhance resilience in preventing or alleviating loneliness. Preconditions for successful social network and social support development are that the activity is provided regularly, that participants wish to socialize and participate, and that there is someone who leads and takes responsibility.

Use of Technology

The use of technology, such as the Internet or telephone networks to reduce social isolation and loneliness across age groups, has increasingly been shown to be effective. There are indications that telephone and Internet support groups may be effective in reducing loneliness among housebound older people, caregivers, older people living with HIV/AIDS, and people in congregate housing. Research has shown that e-mail and the Internet are used for different purposes: E-mail is mostly

used for social contact, and thereby to reduce loneliness, whereas the Internet is used for practical purposes, such as information and simply to pass the time. It would also seem that mobile technology such as cell phones or social networking sites might help to decrease individuals' feelings of loneliness. However, little is currently known about *how* different groups utilize cell phones or Web sites for this purpose (e.g., texting vs. voice calls, perceptions of purpose of Internet communication). The impact and effectiveness of telephone buddy services and telephone support groups are ambiguous.

For older isolated and housebound older people, telephone befriending and support groups provide the means to have social contacts and to reduce their isolation and loneliness. Some research has also shown that people who choose not to join groups like the anonymity of the telephone group. However, the association between loneliness and telephone interventions remains unclear.

Volunteering

Volunteering is frequently put forward as an effective way of increasing socialization and maintaining mental well-being in later life. Volunteering undoubtedly has beneficial effects mainly because of the social aspects of the activity and because it can give a sense of worth. It may also be that the reciprocity of volunteering adds to a sense of well-being, in that the mutual benefits of providing and receiving support are effective in giving a sense of social support. Intergenerational activities and home visiting have been mentioned specifically in relation to older people, but other voluntary activities may have similar effects.

Qualitative research has shown that older people respond favorably to home visiting because it provides someone with whom to share interests and worries, as well as practical help, social support, and companionship. The importance of reciprocity is emphasized, which may be more likely when the visitor/caller and the recipient are of the same generation, share a common culture and social background, and have common interests. Befriending is therefore of value to both the (older) volunteer and the older person receiving the service.

Indirect Activities

Many widely provided services and activities that are not directly intended to affect loneliness have not been evaluated or evaluated adequately despite anecdotal evidence of their effectiveness in alleviating loneliness. For example, results from research regarding the influence of companion animals have to date been inconclusive mainly due to flaws in the research. Likewise, the impact of the physical and social external environments in terms of interventions has not been evaluated. For example it has been suggested that the provision of adequate public transport and accessible, safe social venues (parks, libraries, Internet cafes, garden centers, and shopping malls) would reduce social isolation and loneliness. It has even been suggested that hairdressers could provide lay support for socially isolated people who might not access other services.

Finally, not everyone wants to participate in groups or have a large social network. Some people choose to be alone and to live alone. It is important for others, including service providers, to recognize and accept the individual's right to this decision because, although they are alone, they are not necessarily lonely.

Mima Cattan

See also Loneliness; Loneliness, Children; Loss; Resilience; Social Isolation; Social Support, Nature of; Social Support Interventions

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LONG-DISTANCE RELATIONSHIPS

Long-distance relationships (LDRs) are defined here as occurring among individuals who have an expectation for a continued close connection and their communication opportunities are limited, in the views of the relational participants, due to geographic separation. Long-distance (LD) status has been ascribed based on relational participants' reports of the miles between them, of their residence in different cities, of the number of nights a week they spend apart, their inability to see each other every day if they so desire, or simply if they consider themselves to be in an LDR. LDRs are of interest because they exist and generally thrive in contradiction to assumptions concerning necessity of frequent face-to-face interaction for the maintenance of close relational bonds. Although a large body of research exists on noncustodial fathers and the effects of parental absence on children, such parent-child LDRs will not be covered within this entry. This entry concerns the types of and reasons for LDRs, as well as interaction opportunities, societal support, maintenance, and reunions.

Types of LDRs and Reasons for Their Occurrence

LDRs may occur between marital partners, committed nonmarital partners, the children of such

partners (or ex-partners), extended family members, and friends. The number of LD marriages (or families) is unknown; outside of the military, LD families are not officially recognized.

LD marital relationships occur primarily due to educational or career pursuits, employment demands, military deployment, or incarceration. Military deployment and incarceration account for most LD romantic involvements. In 2005, approximately 60 percent of deployed military personnel were married and/or had children. As of 2000, federal, state, and local prisons held approximately 2 million individuals, the majority of which had children and/or romantic partners.

A distinction is often made between dual-career, dual-residence (DCDR) LD couples and single-career, single-residence LD couples. DCDR couples live apart due to difficulty finding career opportunities in the same location. Estimates indicate that about 1 million married couples are DCDR couples. The number of academics and corporate executives in LDRs is estimated to be higher than that of the general population. An LD, yet single residence, couple or family occurs when one member of the couple (usually the male) is away for extended periods of time due to his work demands, but a separate residence is not maintained. Rather, the traveling individual generally stays in hotels, barracks, company quarters, and the like. Separations might be for routine, relatively short durations, such as weekly travel for business purposes, or for months or years, such as off-shore oil workers.

Nonmarital romantic LDRs exist and occur for the same reasons. Estimates indicate that up to 50 percent of college students will be involved in an LDR. Committed nonmarital LDRs exist beyond college students. Two, committed, career-oriented individuals may cohabit and then become LD for career reasons.

Although most romantic partners share the expectation that they will share a residence, Irene Levine and Jan Trost have identified a couple type labeled *living apart together* (LATs) who are romantically involved, might be heterosexual or homosexual, might or might not be married, might or might not have children, expect a continued romantic involvement, and have no desire to share a residence or necessarily live in the same city. These individuals are sometimes apart due to the same reasons listed previously. Some such couples

are formed later in life and desire to retain two residences in order to maintain proximity to children or grandchildren.

LDRs occur in other forms. They often occur between friends. Laura Stafford has coined the term *cross-residential relationships* to reflect nonromantic family relationships as a type of LDR because a lack of shared residence places restrictions on interaction. Noncustodial parents have more restrictions on their interactions than do custodial parents. When including friendships and cross-residential relationships as forms of LDRs, it is likely that nearly everyone in the United States is in at least one.

Societal Support, Interaction Opportunities, Maintenance, and Reunions

Friendships, Sibships, and Extended Family

Some types of LDRs are expected in Western cultures. It is normative for adult children and their parents, extended family members (e.g., grandparents), adult friends, and adult siblings not to share a residence, and they are sometimes questioned if they do. Nor are they expected to live in geographic proximity. Among nonromantically involved family members and friends, research has largely addressed the strength of ties or the ability of the relationship to meet needs because it is assumed that family or friends who live apart and do not interact frequently cannot be as close as those who do. Participants in such relationships have been found to maintain close relational bonds and positive affect and to meet emotional needs regardless of frequency of interaction or geographic proximity, although proximity is linked to the ability to meet some instrumental needs.

Although LD friendships do not seem to be contingent on frequency of interaction, the type of interaction engaged with proximal friends is different than that of distal friends, but the emotional closeness appears to be similar. As individuals become older, close friendship is defined less by interaction and more by the feeling that the other would “be there” if needed. Mary Rholving found that LD friendships may remain dormant for many years. Nonetheless, the individuals feel close, and if they do interact, they often seem to be able to simply pick up where they left off.

As siblings become adults, they typically engage in less contact with each other than during their childhood. Adult sibships share similarities with adult friendships. Some become dormant. Into middle age and especially as individuals become elderly, siblings take on increased meaning regardless of proximity and contact. Feelings of attachment and the perception of the willingness of a sibling to mobilize during a time of need seem to define successful adult sibships.

Grandparents who live in proximity of their adult grandchildren engage in more frequent interaction than those who do not, yet there is no association between feelings of emotional closeness or personal involvement and frequency of contact between young adults and their grandparents. To what extent this might hold true for younger children is unknown.

Romantic LDRs

The assumption is that a marital couple (and their young children) should live together. Recognized exceptions include the male’s career or military deployment or divorce. Other reasons for cross-residential or LDRs among family members are often met with skepticism.

Scholarly study of military LDRs began with WWII. At that time, interaction opportunities meant the often delayed exchange of letters. Similar to early research, recent research has found that vague positive and supportive letters help maintain ties. Interaction opportunities have increased with the advancement of new communication technologies. However, whether such contact is beneficial for the relationship or for the military operation is undetermined. Concerns that a soldier’s contact with family members might distract her or him from the task at hand have been raised. Individuals sometimes report feeling more depressed, lonely, or helpless after interactions. For the family members at home, stressors include managing the day-to-day roles that the deployed individuals filled, concerns for safety, and difficulty gaining access to information about deployed family members. Economic impact often occurs when reservists are called into duty, leaving a more lucrative financial situation. Military families do have institutionalized support unavailable to most other LDR forms. Societal support is generally

high for military families, although the popularity of a particular war seems to be associated to some degree with support.

Partners must cope with not only the separation, but also the reunion (and often another separation). The most successful families fill in the missing partners' roles during the absence and retain the missing member psychologically and symbolically. Upon reunion, the roles filled by other family members or friends are returned to the previously absent partner. On departure, the family restructures again. Preparing returning military personnel for potential issues encountered with reunion seems helpful. Divorce appears somewhat more likely for military personnel returning from deployment as compared with the general population; this is more so the case for individuals who have seen active combat.

Families separated due to the incarceration of one or more members face perhaps the most stressors and challenges; they encounter extremely limited communication of any form. Some families forbid children from seeing an imprisoned parent. Relationships that are maintained are often done so through few, if any, letters or phone calls. Relationships are maintained cognitively as individuals reminisce about relational partners or family members and look forward to reunions. Sometimes pictures or other reminders play a role in these cognitions. Family members are often stigmatized, invoke little sympathy or societal support, share concerns for safety, have difficulty gaining access to information, and have few resources. Families of incarcerated individuals no longer receive any financial support from the absent member, who was often the primary monetary earner. Pending many factors, marriages and other romantic involvements, and often times active child relationships, do deteriorate during this time. The maintenance of family relationships and successful reunions with those families on release appears to aid in rehabilitation and reintegration into society and decreases recidivism.

The 1970s saw the rise of DCDR marriages or "commuter couples." Their interaction opportunities are likely the greatest of all other romantic LDR types. Flexible work schedules and monetary resources contribute to the success of the LD arrangement. If children are involved, the parent

with the children sometimes feels stressed and overwhelmed, whereas the parent living apart from the child reports missing the day-to-day interaction. DCDR couples report some benefits of the arrangement, such as the ability to segment work and family and higher quality time when they are together. Participants indicate that their relationships are sometimes met with skepticism as to their commitment to the marriage. Research has not examined the long-term viability of such relationships or permanent reunions.

LD dating relationships have been found to be as or more stable than proximal dating relationships. It is this point that most relational scholars have found the most puzzling. LDRs have less face-to-face time. New technologies and unlimited cell phone plans allow students the opportunity for virtually unlimited mediated interaction. Yet they do not seem to engage in more mediated communication than proximal partners. LDRs have been argued to be maintained in part through idealization. A large proportion of everyday talk appears to be intimacy focused.

Student LDRs are thought to be stressful. The extent to which this is the case has been questioned. Like DCDR married couples, LDRs have reported some benefits of an LDR, including the ability to segment work (or school) and the relationship, enjoyment of autonomy, and feeling that their limited time together is qualitatively better. Generally, college student LDRs have less monetary support than DCDR couples. When LDR partners relocate to permanent geographic proximity, the probability of relational dissolution increases; extreme idealization during separation is associated with relational demise upon reunion. Of course, some report few, if any, difficulties moving to the same location.

Conclusion

Most types of LDRs are successful at maintaining close positive bonds during separation (with the exception of incarceration). Relational maintenance mechanisms other than interaction occur. LDRs may supplement their lack of face-to-face maintenance with cognitive maintenance efforts, such as idealization, romanticized beliefs, positive ruminations, anticipation of future meetings,

imagined interactions, and symbolic or ritualistic inclusion. The strength of the relationship prior to separation, the length of time separated, the time between face-to-face visits, and many other factors that vary even within the same type of LDRs surely impact these relationships; however, little research exists. Despite maintenance during separation, reunions bring more questions about relational stability. Although not studied among DCDR couples, military personnel college dating relationships and relationships that survive incarceration are at risk on reunion.

Many forms of LD families (e.g., relationships among immigrants or migrant workers and their families) have yet to be the focus of significant study. Although the violation of norms for living arrangements and interactions may be the primary reason for study among Western relational scholars, LD family relationships are not considered atypical for many cultures.

Laura Stafford

See also Adulthood, Sibling Relationships in; Extended Families; Families, Definitions and Typologies; Families, Demographic Trends; Friendships in Late Adulthood; Maintaining Relationships; Military and Relationships; Single-Parent Families; Stress and Relationships

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LONGITUDINAL STUDIES OF MARITAL SATISFACTION AND DISSOLUTION

More than 90 percent of Americans marry at least once. Although the divorce rate has been slowing since the early 1980s, nearly half of all marriages end in divorce or permanent separation—and many people remain in unhappy marriages. Understanding how marriages evolve from the optimistic “I do” to the disillusioned “I want a divorce” is important because marital distress and divorce are associated with significant economic, mental health, and physical health problems among adults and with emotional and behavioral problems among children.

For more than 70 years, scientists have sought to explain why some marriages are more satisfying than others and why some marriages dissolve. Marital satisfaction is a spouse's appraisal of how happy he or she is in the marriage. Marital dissolution refers to whether the couple remains married versus gets separated or divorced. The majority of studies in this field is cross-sectional or conducted at a single point in time. Cross-sectional studies are limited in explaining variability in marital satisfaction and dissolution because they cannot identify factors that cause marital decline. For example, when marital satisfaction is measured at the same time as poor communication, it is not possible to say which is the cause and which is the consequence—or whether a third variable, such as stressful events outside the marriage, caused both.

Longitudinal studies, which assess marriages two or more times, are therefore necessary to identify how marriages change and deteriorate. Longitudinal studies are valuable for addressing a fascinating puzzle about human social behavior, and they are critical for informing interventions that can prevent adverse marital and family outcomes.

Conceptual Approaches to the Study of Marital Satisfaction and Dissolution

To understand how different marriages result in different outcomes, scientists from diverse disciplines have focused on a variety of hypothesized causes, from the broad social and political structure (macroanalytic perspective) to the specific individual characteristics of a spouse (microanalytic perspective). For example, demographers focused on social and political forces have examined divorce rates in relation to World War II, no-fault divorce laws, women's workforce participation, and gender imbalance in the population. To examine marital satisfaction and divorce, sociologists have examined spouses' sociodemographic characteristics such as age at marriage, race, income, education, premarital cohabitation, gender roles, and attitudes toward divorce. Psychologists focused on spouses' behaviors and thoughts have examined communication skills, cognitive appraisals of relationship events, commitment, spouses' personality characteristics and family background, relationship violence, alcohol consumption, the transition to parenthood, and depressive symptoms.

The different disciplines that examine marriage all have theories—that is, reasoned explanations—for why marriages succeed or fail. This entry highlights psychological theories because they focus on behavioral and cognitive components of marriage that can be changed or improved through intervention to relieve marital distress, a significant source of human suffering. There are various psychological theories of marriage; the three theories highlighted here get at the diverse factors that impinge on marriage—behavior in the here and now, family relationships in the past, and stressors outside the marriage. Behavioral models focus on how spouses talk to each other (i.e., the content of their words and the emotional tone with which they are

delivered) when trying to resolve a marital problem (e.g., money, household management) or providing support to one another. Attachment theory focuses on how adult romantic relationships are affected by relationships in childhood, such as the emotional connection with a mother or the quality of the parents' marriage. Crisis theory focuses on how marital outcomes result from a stressful event outside of the marriage, perceptions of the crisis, resources, and coping responses. Each of these perspectives specifies what is likely to be an important aspect of how marriages succeed or fail. Yet there is a growing realization that marital outcomes are multiply determined, suggesting that the most comprehensive approach to understanding marital success or failure will result from examining the interplay among multiple aspects of marriage, rather than just one domain or a string of variables examined in isolation. Thus, informative longitudinal studies will be those recognizing that the outcome of a given marriage is the dynamic product of individual characteristics of the spouse (e.g., history of parental divorce, personality)—how spouses interact with each other (e.g., how they express understanding, resolve disagreements, and allocate chores) as they encounter a broader context of stressful circumstances (e.g., illness, job lay off, dangerous neighborhoods), all within a particular historical cohort. For some couples, the seeds of marital demise will be present in the early months of marriage, even during the newlywed period when satisfaction is at its highest point, whereas for other couples problems emerge later as the product of individual vulnerabilities (e.g., depressed mood, parental divorce), interpersonal deficits (e.g., poor communication skills), and contextual influences (e.g., stressful circumstances).

Factors That Predict Marital Satisfaction and Dissolution

Although numerous variables have been used in longitudinal studies to predict changes in marriage, only a subset of these have replicated across studies. Based on Benjamin Karney and Thomas Bradbury's review of 115 longitudinal studies of marriage that were conducted from the 1940s to the 1990s, two broad observations summarize this subset of replicated variables. First, a given variable

(e.g., expressions of strong negative emotion) typically has the same effect on dissatisfaction as it does on dissolution, with one notable exception: The presence of children tends to increase dissatisfaction while reducing the likelihood of dissolution. Second, interpersonal variables—that is, the interactions between spouses, such as conflict resolution behavior and sexual satisfaction—are stronger predictors of change in satisfaction and stability than external stressors, spouses' psychological characteristics, and spouses' demographic characteristics. Based on similar results across a number of studies, we can be reasonably certain that spouses' marital satisfaction is higher and divorce is less likely when spouses evidence the following: display more positive and less negative behavior when resolving marital conflicts, are sexually satisfied, are older at the time of marriage (ages 25 and up), have more education, did not cohabit before marriage, had a happy childhood, exhibit less neuroticism, are not depressed, report less stress, and do not live in poverty. It should be noted that these results are based primarily on studies of White middle-class spouses and may not hold for more diverse populations.

More compelling is research that captures generative processes in more complex ways. For example, evidence suggests that newlyweds go on to achieve higher marital adjustment (i.e., higher marital satisfaction, fewer depressive symptoms) when spouses report more negative life events *and* have more adaptive communication skills, but adjustment declines when more negative events are combined with poorer communication skills. Thus, negative events are not uniformly damaging to marriage, but their effect depends on the skill with which couples communicate or approach conflict resolution. Studies suggest that newlyweds' physical aggression predicts divorce 4 years later, whereas poorer conflict-resolution skills predict lower satisfaction. Thus, some variables have a stronger effect on divorce, and some have a stronger effect on marital satisfaction. Last, John Gottman showed that, over 14 years of marriage, higher rates of negative emotional expressions during conflict resolution predict divorce in the first 7 years of the study, but lower rates of positive emotional expressions predict divorce in subsequent 7 years. It appears that heated fighting corrodes marriages quickly and that emotional detachment becomes

more salient and damaging after marriages pass through the intense early childrearing years.

Karney and Bradbury's review of 115 longitudinal studies of marriage yielded a long list of variables, studied largely in isolation from each other, that predict satisfaction and stability. These studies give us limited information on how marriages are transformed over time. They also yield important lessons about how the next generation of longitudinal studies can be more effective. The typical longitudinal study of marriage samples a heterogeneous group of 500 to 600 spouses two times and examines a circumscribed set of predictors as main effects. A number of changes can yield stronger research designs to yield more comprehensive information about how marriages evolve.

Longitudinal Studies of Marriage: The Next Generation

If the goal is to understand how marriages change, both gradually and abruptly, then the "perfect" study would be to follow thousands of couples over 25 years with daily measures. Clearly, the perfect study is not so perfect in terms of the burden on the participants, the burden on the researcher, and the expense. Short of perching in a couple's living room observing them day in and day out, there are ways that longitudinal studies of marriage can be improved conceptually and methodologically to capture more of the complexity of marital development. We have already noted the importance of comprehensive, theory-driven research as a strategy for refining future studies. Moreover, studies that use two times of measurement to assess couples with varying lengths of marriage and have a limited focus on a single arena are of limited value. The following three suggestions for improving longitudinal research on marriage represent an illustrative, but not exhaustive, list of tactics likely to achieve greater precision in predicting when and explaining how marriages develop and deteriorate.

First, comprehensive understanding of marriage will be achieved by integrating multiple arenas relevant to both spouses, including marital communication skills, individual characteristics the spouse brings to the marriage, and stressful events and circumstances outside the marriage. Considering

that communication is the route through which most marital experiences unfold, and through which most couples will try to improve their relationship, a strong theoretical case can be made for assigning communication a central role. However, contrary to some claims made in the literature, simple models ascribing primary importance to communication processes are unlikely to be particularly powerful if only because communication is shaped by characteristics of the individual spouses and their development through adulthood, by their prior history together, and by the environments that couples inhabit.

Second, basic demographic characteristics about marriage tell us which couples we should study to maximize the probability of observing variability in adverse marital outcomes. Half of couples divorce within the first 7 years of marriage, and a significant proportion of those divorces occur in the first 4 years. By the 10th anniversary, marital satisfaction is fairly stable, and the risk of divorce is relatively low. Because a greater risk in divorce occurs in the early years of marriage, there is unique value to beginning a longitudinal study of divorce with newlywed couples to observe how couples go from being satisfied to dissatisfied. Studies that include couples with heterogeneous lengths of marriage run the risk of not observing change because satisfaction fluctuates less as marriages progress. Also, studies that examine couples with longer marriages will miss couples who already divorced. Whereas studying newlyweds increases the likelihood of capturing changes in marital satisfaction and divorce, studying other key marital transitions will also likely capture changes in satisfaction. For example, a replicated finding is that the transition to parenthood shows declines in marital satisfaction during that time. Investigation of other transitions, such as the transition of children to school, to the empty nest, and to retirement, are also likely to capture changes in marital dynamics and satisfaction and will fulfill the need to study marriages in different contexts.

Third, understanding different patterns of marital satisfaction over time requires more than two assessments, which yield an oversimplified linear view of change in marital satisfaction. Two assessments of marital satisfaction only allow researchers to say that a given marriage improved, declined, or stayed the same. Three or more assessments, say

every 4 to 6 months, can begin to capture the arc of, and fluctuations in, marital satisfaction that cannot be estimated with two measurements. More assessments also mean that researchers can ask interesting questions about what variables predict initial levels of satisfaction versus the rate of change over time. For example, one replicated finding is that the personality characteristic of neuroticism is related to overall levels of satisfaction, but not to change of marital satisfaction over time, whereas marital problem-solving skills are related to change in satisfaction over time, but not to initial levels.

Understanding marriage requires research designs that capture the core phenomena of two people, over time, responding to one another and their circumstances and personal histories. Research designs have evolved greatly and away from looking at one spouse at a single point in time without regard to context. The newest era of longitudinal designs is helping us to see and represent the complexity in marriage, and no doubt that continued refinement of longitudinal designs will allow us to penetrate this important relationship even further still.

Catherine L. Cohan and Thomas N. Bradbury

See also Divorce, Prevalence and Trends; Early Years of Marriage Project; Marital Satisfaction and Quality; Marital Stability, Prediction of; Processes of Adaptation in Intimate Relationships (PAIR) Project

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Loss

Loss is a central concept in the social and behavioral sciences and is relevant to a vast array of phenomena, including chronic illness, death and dying, relationship dissolution, injuries of various types, and assaults on the self (e.g., rape). Loss is a general concept that subsumes more specific concepts such as trauma and stress. Trauma refers to extreme psychological and physiological reactions to loss situations, such as those involving violence or the death of close others. Stress refers to an unpleasant state of emotional and physiological arousal that people experience in situations that they perceive as dangerous or threatening to their well-being. Loss or anticipated loss of something valuable is the key underlying condition in the experience both of trauma and stress.

Loss may be defined first as a reduction in a person's resources that involves a degree of emotional involvement. For example, people may not feel loss when they lose a drinking buddy with whom they talk about sports. However, the loss of a drinking buddy with whom they discuss intimate aspects of their marriage may be perceived as emotionally debilitating and as a major loss. In addition to the reduction of resources, a second and perhaps more basic part of the experience of loss is that of missing something. For example, a high school girl falls madly in love with a popular male classmate,

only to discover within a few months that he has many girlfriends who he is attempting to juggle. The girl may feel that something that was a part of her life is gone. Her great expectations are dashed, her hopes are lost, and her plans are ruined. Loss is a central, common experience in all human relationships. The present entry discusses characteristics of loss and its relevance to relationships.

Objective and Subjective Qualities

Loss may have both a subjective and an objective quality. Subjectively, a person's own attribution of meaning to a situation is critical to her or his response to the situation and coping with negative consequences. For example, some people may minimize the loss of a home to a tornado, focusing on the fact that no people were killed or hurt. Others may stress the importance of this loss, considering practical hassles, the loss of keepsakes, and the loss of a place containing many positive memories. These are subjective features of the experience of loss.

There also are important objective aspects to the experience of loss. When a person has lost mental functions in a brain injury or disease, including memory, the person may not necessarily perceive her or his situation as a major loss. An outsider, such as a neuropsychologist, however, may readily conclude that a major loss has occurred. Thus, it is essential to consider both subjective and possible objective markers of loss when considering whether a person has experienced a loss of some magnitude.

Fields Involved in the Study of Loss

The study of loss usually flows from work in many other subfields in the social and behavioral sciences, including: death and dying, traumatology, suicidology, dissolution and divorce, stress and coping, aging, violence and war, chronic disease, life-threatening accidents and injuries, homelessness, and economic hardship. Within these subfields, the concept of loss often is treated as an implicit underlying condition for the phenomenon under study. As an illustration, mental illness and substance abuse often are cited as central factors in a person's progression toward homelessness.

However, the earlier causal condition in that progression may have been the person's reactions to a divorce and romantic loss, and loss experiences in the family of origin and in the process of growing up and forming relationship bonds.

Loss and Adaptation

One of the most important concepts in the study of loss pertains to how people cope, and a key approach to coping is that of account-making, which often involves storytelling to a trusted confidant about one's loss and its implications, or emotional expression. Behind these approaches are ideas that emphasize the feelings of control, acceptance, and hope that are engendered by forming and expressing aspects of one's account, and the notion that the expression of pain nullifies the inability to take some constructive action associated with the loss that has led to the pain. By "opening up," whether sharing directly with others or simply writing in a diary, individuals can start the process of allaying the pain. In addition, creating an account may also start the process of doing something effective about the pain, such as seeking the advice or support of a caring other.

A popular but perhaps dubious idea is that in adjusting to loss it is important to achieve "closure." Closure does not occur in the sense that people stop thinking about, feeling about, or behaving in reference to major losses. People would have to lose their memory for closure to be a reality. Instead, a more effective perspective about loss and closure is to recognize, respond to (including learning the lessons of a loss), and remember losses. The goal of these activities is to achieve an acceptance of the loss and of the new realities for which adaptation is required. Survivors of loss need to adjust and continue on with life's important tasks while incorporating major losses into their identities and honoring and respecting the lessons of loss.

This active approach to grieving and adjustment may be stymied by a tendency to ruminate excessively about the loss and its consequences. Rumination, in the form of persistent commentary about the loss, also may cause supportive others to withdraw. Grieving people need to recognize what these untoward social effects of rumination may be and work toward a settled acceptance of the loss.

Research on people's ranking of types of losses suggests that major losses are perceived as relative. They are relative to other losses that a person has experienced and to losses experienced by others. By viewing losses on relative continua, people are better able to attribute meaning to them and adjust. As an example, a young person experiencing the end of a first love may feel suicidal in the wake of this loss. Later, when encountering another loss in love, this same person, now with more relationship experience, may be better able to handle the pain and know how to grieve and find support from caring others. Critical to long-term adjustment is learning the lessons of major losses. What, for example, has a person learned about how to make future close relationships stronger or be more careful before entering into them?

Relativity also occurs as people learn to view their losses in the context of human loss and that many types of loss (e.g., the sudden unexpected death of a child) are more devastating than others in their impact on our coping and meaning-making.

Major losses have cumulative effects. Whether in terms of psychology, physiology, or sociology, the impacts of major losses tend to accumulate over time. As with the prior example of relativity and relationship loss, a person may become cynical after several big disappointments in his or her love life. The person may turn to drinking or other forms of substance abuse. As a further consequence of this chain of events, the person may lose a good job, become financially destitute, and have to rely on family for help in future difficult circumstances. All told, the impacts over time may pile up and affect numerous dimensions of an individual's life. The idea of a pile up of losses is related to the cumulative impact principle. It is not uncommon in studying the ingredients of suicide to find that, just before committing suicide, a person may have experienced multiple major losses (e.g., the loss of a relationship, the loss of a job, a pet's death, a loss of health, an insult by a coworker). Learning to deal with each major loss separately and effectively, and recognizing that there will be relief at some point, is part of the developmental progression in becoming a thoughtful, mature person.

Major losses often contribute to new aspects of identity. When a couple has been married many years and one member dies, the surviving spouse

may have a major adjustment to make in terms of her or his identity because that person is no longer the husband or wife of a cherished partner. Rather, the person's identity is now that of a widow or widower, maybe reaching out as a single person searching for some new sanctuary for heart and mind. Developing an approach that both recognizes (and memorializes) the value of a past loved one, but that also recognizes the imperative to form a new identity and new relationships, seems to be central to effective adjustment.

Major losses involve adaptations related to a sense of control. Just as the idea of "missing something" is a core feature of loss, the perception of a loss of control is critical to most loss situations. Whether a person loses a relationship, a valued possession, an athletic skill, or an optimistic attitude about life, each loss reflects a feeling that he or she cannot control some part of life that previously was under control. People want and need a sense of control, and major loss reduces the feeling of control.

Loss in Relationships

Loss in the domain of relationships concerns dissolution and divorce, death of close others, and various forms of psychological injury, especially including infidelity and sexual assault. With the latter types of psychological injury, a person may feel that there has been a significant loss of trust in another person and possibly in people whom that person represents. All of the ideas and principles that have been discussed as germane to the general sense of loss also pertain to loss in the arena of close, personal relationships, both romantic and familial. People sometimes experience pileups of these losses (e.g., the death of a close other, such as a child, followed closely a divorce), the loss of control over key features of their lives (e.g., the marital or parental identity around which much life activity is structured), and the need to create new identities. If a person lives a long life, he or she may even have a history of these loss sequences in the realm of close relationships. People also usually cope best with relationship loss by developing accounts, confiding, and being open about their feelings of loss and pain.

A particularly important area of work that links loss and the endings of close relationships is referred

to as "children of divorce." This vibrant area of work focuses on both negative and positive effects for a child (including adolescents and people in their 20s) being in a family that experiences one or more divorces. Negative effects may include difficulties in interpersonal relations, schoolwork, employment, psychological and physical health issues, and confidence and trust in others. Positive effects may include growth as a person and in a family situation, becoming more mature and responsible about life's important missions, and gaining valuable perspective about the vices and virtues of close, romantic relationships. Although the negative effects of divorce are major and daunting for most children, research suggests that young people are better off when parents in highly conflicted or cold marriages end the marriages and do their best to take care of their children in their postdivorce, binuclear families.

Study of Loss as a Valuable Perspective

As has been documented in many literatures in the social and behavioral sciences, the effects of loss are pervasive. They occur in the dissolutions of or difficulties in close relationships, in post-traumatic stress disorders, in chronic grief reactions, in the loss of valued possessions, in becoming unemployed, in becoming homeless, in the loss of bodily functions after injuries or disease, and in aging.

A better appreciation of the aspects and dynamics of loss will continue to be one of the most important steps in the understanding of the human condition, both by the general public and by scholars of the social and behavioral sciences.

John H. Harvey and Brian G. Pauwels

See also Attribution Processes in Relationships; Closeness; Depression and Relationships; Dissolution of Relationships, Coping and Aftermath; Divorce, Children and; Divorce, Effects on Adults

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LOVE, COMPANIONATE AND PASSIONATE

Most people eagerly seek out love and believe that forming a successful love relationship is essential for their personal happiness. Although each individual is likely to experience various types of love and enter into a number of different kinds of love relationship over the course of his or her lifetime, scientists have tended to focus on two varieties of love that commonly occur in long-term romantic relationships. These two important types of love—stable, affectionate, *companionate love* and exciting, intense, *passionate love*—are linked with several significant personal, interpersonal, and societal outcomes, including marriage and long-term pair bonding, sex and reproduction, and social support. This entry discusses how companionate and passionate love are commonly defined and measured, reviews existing research about each type of love, and explores current steps scientists are taking to further our understanding of both love varieties.

Companionate Love

Definition and Measurement

Companionate love refers to a variety of love that is durable, fairly slow to develop, and characterized

by interdependence and feelings of affection, intimacy, and commitment. Various described as affectionate love, friendship-based love, attachment, and conjugal love, companionate love reflects the abiding affection, trust, and tenderness we feel for people with whom our lives are deeply interwoven and connected. Because it requires time to develop fully, this kind of love is often seen between close friends or romantic partners who have been together for a long time.

To study any variety of love, scientists must have a way of accurately measuring it. Researchers typically measure companionate love using self-report methods, which involve asking people to respond to questions about their feelings for a specific other person (e.g., a friend, dating partner, or spouse). There are two basic self-report methods available to scientists—single-item measures and multi-item scales. Single-item measures typically ask respondents to report on the amount of companionate love they experience for their partner (“How much warm, caring, affectionate love do you feel for your partner?”). These kinds of global single-item measures are easy to use and appear to be relatively valid. However, many researchers choose to use multi-item scales that have been developed specifically to measure the various elements of companionate love. On these scales, people answer a series of questions about how much intimacy, affection, respect, trust, commitment, and so on that they feel for their partner, and the researcher sums up their responses and calculates a total companionate love score.

Research

Research provides evidence that companionate love is an almost uniformly positive experience. For example, when people are asked to think about companionate love and identify its important features, they specify positive feelings like “trust,” “caring,” “respect,” “tolerance,” “loyalty,” “supportiveness,” and “friendship.” In addition, most men and women mention “trust,” “mutual respect,” “communication,” “sharing,” “honesty,” “affection,” and other positive emotions and experiences when describing the qualities and characteristics that they believe are important in a companionate love relationship. Similarly, when asked how they can tell the difference between loving (as opposed

to being in love with or merely liking) someone, the majority of people point to deeper levels of trust and tolerance as being characteristic of the state of loving another.

Research conducted with dating couples substantiates these findings and reveals that positive emotions are strongly associated with the amount of companionate love that the couples experience. Specifically, the greater the amount of companionate love that partners feel for each other, the more trust, liking, and respect they have for each other, the more contented they are with each other and with their relationship, and the more satisfying they find their relationship to be. In addition, companionate lovers tend to feel high degrees of emotional intimacy and warmth. They also report stronger feelings of sexual intimacy than do people who love less companionately; that is, the higher a couple's companionate love scores, the more the partners indicate being able to communicate openly and honestly with each other about sexuality. Thus, feelings of intimacy—emotional and sexual—are a hallmark of the companionate love experience.

Scientists also have found evidence that companionate love is strong and durable. Not only do companionate lovers report feeling extremely committed to each other and desirous of maintaining their relationships, but levels of companionate love tend to remain stable over time. In other words, it often makes no difference how long a couple has been together—the partners generally continue to report feeling the same high level of affectionate, companionate love for each other. Thus, companionate love appears to be relatively impervious to the effects of time. Indeed, companionate love may even grow stronger over time because it is based on intimacy processes (such as caring and attachment) that require time to develop fully. The ability to withstand—and perhaps grow stronger over—the passage of time is one feature that distinguishes companionate love from other, more fragile varieties of love, including passionate love.

Current Directions

Recently, researchers have begun to explore the biochemistry of companionate love. Two peptide hormones have come under scrutiny—oxytocin and vasopressin. These substances are released as neurotransmitters (peptides) in the brain and as

hormones from the pituitary gland, and they have multiple biological functions involving the kidneys and the cardiovascular and reproductive systems. For example, vasopressin increases blood pressure and facilitates the flow of blood through the kidneys, and oxytocin acts on smooth muscle cells and stimulates uterine contractions during childbirth and the release of milk during lactation. These hormones are associated with reproductive and caregiving behavior in nonhuman mammals. In addition, decreased oxytocin levels (along with other alterations in the endocrine oxytocin and vasopressin systems) have been observed in children diagnosed with autism, a developmental disorder characterized by severe social impairment and the inability to form interpersonal connections and lasting emotional attachments. Based on these two lines of evidence, some scientists have hypothesized that oxytocin and vasopressin are involved in the ability to form deep attachments to others and to experience feelings of affection, intimacy, and companionate love. As of yet, however, this supposition has not been thoroughly tested and therefore remains speculative.

Passionate Love

Definition and Measurement

Passionate love (also known as erotic love, romantic love, or the state of being “in love with” another person) is a much more fragile, sexualized, and emotionally intense experience than companionate love. In addition, passionate love tends to occur fairly rapidly (people can and do fall in love “at first sight”), and people who are passionately in love often idealize the loved one and become mentally preoccupied with thoughts of the partner and the relationship. Physiological arousal and its associated bodily sensations (such as racing pulse, heightened breathing, and “butterflies” in the stomach) represent another feature of passionate love. This variety of love also generally produces an exclusive focus on one particular individual; that is, it is unusual (although not impossible) for someone to fall in love with two people at once.

Passionate love has received much more scientific attention than have other varieties of love, including companionate love, for a number of reasons. First, passionate love appears to be a universal—and

universally sought-after—human experience. By young adulthood, most men and women report having been in love at least once, and researchers have found evidence that passionate love is actively sought and experienced by people living in all cultures all around the world. Second, passionate love has become an essential part of marriage in many human societies. Most people say they will not get married if they are not in love with their intended partner. Third, the absence or loss of passionate love seems to be a factor in relationship termination. Many people end their marriages or leave their romantic relationships when they fall “out of love” with their partners.

Like companionate love, passionate love can be measured using global, single-item, self-report measures (“How deeply are you in love with your partner?” or “How much passionate love do you currently feel for your partner?”) or multi-item scales that are designed to capture the important emotional, behavioral, and cognitive or mental features of the passionate love experience. A number of multi-item scales have been developed. The Passionate Love Scale constructed by social scientists Elaine Hatfield and Susan Sprecher represents one of the most complete and commonly used measures of passionate love currently available. The items were developed based on a review of previous theory about love, existing measurement scales, and in-depth personal interviews with couples, and they reflect the various components of the passionate love experience, including physiological arousal (“Sometimes my body trembles with excitement at the sight of _____”), emotional intensity and turbulence (“Since I’ve been involved with _____, my emotions have been on a roller coaster”), idealization of the beloved (“For me, _____ is the perfect romantic partner”), cognitive preoccupation (“_____ always seems to be on my mind”), and sexual attraction (“I possess a powerful attraction for _____”).

Research

Research reveals that passionate love is a highly emotional experience. However, whether the emotions associated with it are positive or negative depends to some extent on whether the love is reciprocated. *Required* (reciprocated) passionate love is an almost uniformly positive experience.

Men and women who are asked to identify the essential features of passionate love tend to cite many more positive emotional experiences—including happiness, joy or rapture, closeness, warmth, giddiness, and tenderness—than negative ones. Similarly, partners who are in love with one another report feeling positive emotions to a greater degree than negative emotions. In fact, jealousy appears to be the only negative emotion that is consistently associated with the experience of required passionate love; most people believe that jealousy is a natural part of being in love, and people who are passionately in love also tend to report feeling or having felt jealous at one time or another in their relationships. *Unrequited* or unreciprocated passionate love has many of the same positive emotional features as required passionate love, but at the same time it is a much more intensely negative experience. For example, people who have been in love with someone who did not return their affection generally report that the experience was emotionally painful and that it caused them to feel disappointment, suffering, jealousy, anger (usually directed at the loved one’s chosen partner), and a sense of frustration. In addition to these unpleasant feelings, however, unrequited lovers also tend to experience many pleasant emotions, including happiness, excitement, the blissful anticipation of seeing the beloved, and sheer elation at the state of being in love. Thus, passionate love—regardless of whether it is required—is a deeply emotional kind of love.

Scientists also have found evidence that passionate love has a relatively brief life span. Although feelings of passionate love initially may increase as a couple progresses from earlier to later courtship stages (e.g., as they move from casual dating to steady dating or engagement), research generally reveals that passionate love declines over longer periods of time in most romantic relationships. In fact, several investigations have found a strong negative correlation between the number of months that a couple has been dating and the amount of passionate love they report feeling for one another; specifically, the longer a couple has been together, the lower their passionate love scores. Among married couples, levels of passionate love tend to decline both over time and after major relationship transitions. For example, couples who make the transition from being childless to becoming parents

may experience a decrease in their levels of passionate love (although levels may rise once children leave home). Although passionate love is clearly more fragile than companionate love, it is important to keep in mind that these results do not imply that passionate love is completely lacking between partners involved in long-term romantic relationships. Rather, these findings simply provide evidence that the intense feelings and sensations characteristic of the first stages of “falling in love” tend to gradually stabilize over time.

Passionate love is also a more sexual kind of love than is companionate love. In fact, sexuality appears to be one of the hallmarks of the passionate love experience. People who are more passionately in love report experiencing higher levels of sexual excitement when thinking about their partners and also engaging in more frequent sexual activities with those partners than do people who are less passionately in love. In addition, interviews conducted with couples who are in love reveal that sexual activities, including hugging, “petting,” and “making love” or engaging in intercourse, represent one of the primary ways in which many of them express and communicate their feelings of passionate love. The motivational component of sexuality—sexual desire or sexual attraction—has a particularly strong association with passionate love. Research indicates that people consider sexual desire to be one of the essential features of passionate love; moreover, they believe that dating partners who are very sexually attracted to one another are more likely to be passionately in love than are dating partners who do not desire each other sexually. This belief appears to be accurate. Most men and women report experiencing sexual desire for the people with whom they are passionately in love, and the more passionately in love they are, the greater their feelings of sexual attraction. In summary, there is solid evidence that passionate love is a sexualized experience that is strongly associated with feelings of sexual desire or attraction for the partner, tends to result in the occurrence of sexual activity, and appears to be linked with sexual excitement.

Current Directions

Just as they have with companionate love, scientists have begun to explore the biochemistry of

passion with a particular emphasis on neurotransmitters (electrochemical messages released by neurons or the cells of the nervous system). Although a number of different types of neurotransmitters exist, the monoamines (in particular, serotonin, dopamine, and norepinephrine) have received the most attention due to their strong relationship with mood and generalized arousal. Several scholars have speculated that passionate love is associated with high levels of dopamine and norepinephrine and low levels of serotonin because of similarities between the experience of being in love and the action of those particular monoamines. For example, people who are passionately in love often report feelings of euphoria and exhilaration coupled with heightened energy, loss of appetite, and sleeplessness. These same experiences are associated with increased concentrations of dopamine in the brain. Similarly, people who are in love report focusing on specific events or objects associated with the beloved and remembering and musing over things that the beloved said or did. Increased levels of dopamine are associated with heightened attention, and increased levels of norepinephrine are associated with enhanced memory for new stimuli. In addition, people in the throes of passionate love often report thinking about the loved one obsessively, and low levels of serotonin are implicated in the type of intrusive thinking that is associated with obsessive-compulsive disorder.

The similarities between the experience of being in love and the psychophysiological effects of dopamine and the other monoamines may be coincidental. However, one research study demonstrated that a group of healthy people who were in the early phases of “falling in love” had approximately the same level of serotonin as did a group of people who had been diagnosed with obsessive-compulsive disorder. In addition, the serotonin levels of both of these groups of people were significantly lower than those of a control group of healthy individuals who were not currently in love. Researchers also have discovered that people who are passionately in love show increased activity in dopamine-rich areas of their brains when they gaze at a photo of their beloved. Although additional research is needed, these findings certainly suggest that the experience of passionate love may be associated with brain neurochemistry.

Conclusion

Virtually all theorists who have written about the topic of love agree that love is intricately associated with the quality of human life, that different varieties of love exist, and that at a minimum there are two commonly experienced types of love—a passionate variety that is intense, emotional, fragile, and sexually charged, and a companionate variety that is durable, stable, and infused with warmth, intimacy, affection, and trust. These theoretical suppositions are largely supported by empirical research on people's beliefs and conceptions of love and their reports of their ongoing experiences in romantic relationships. Of course, it is important to recognize that other types of love also exist and are experienced by men and women over the course of their lifetimes, ranging from the vague liking felt for casual acquaintances to the intense devotion often experienced for family members, children, and beloved pets. An important task for future researchers is to determine the unique features and consequences of these other important varieties of love.

Pamela C. Regan

See also Biological Systems for Courtship, Mating, Reproduction, and Parenting; Compassionate Love; Falling in Love; Intimacy; Love, Typologies; Lust; Marriage, Expectations About; Romanticism

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LOVE, PROTOTYPE APPROACH

What is love? This question, posed in Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, is one that also has intrigued social scientists. In recent decades, many definitions and theories of love have been generated. In addition, research has been conducted to illuminate how ordinary people understand this concept. The purpose of this entry is to describe how ordinary people think about love (in general, as well as specific kinds of love), address whether women and men hold different views of love, and briefly discuss relationship implications of people's conceptions of love.

Most of the research on ordinary people's conceptions of love has been conducted from a prototype perspective. According to Eleanor Rosch, the founder of prototype theory, many of the concepts that are used in everyday language lack explicit, precise definitions. Instead, such concepts are

organized around their clearest cases, or best examples, which Rosch referred to as *prototypes*. For example, when asked to list types of fruit, most people mention apples and oranges—these are the prototypical cases. Figs and papayas are considered less prototypical. Tomatoes and avocados lie at the periphery of the concept and shade into the neighboring category of vegetables. Rosch demonstrated that the organization of concepts in terms of prototypes influences how people process information. For example, people are faster to confirm that a robin is a kind of bird than that a chicken is a kind of bird.

Other researchers subsequently explored whether more abstract concepts, such as love, might also be structured as prototypes, such that some kinds of love are seen as more representative of the concept than others. In one series of studies, people were asked to list the attributes or features of the concept of love. Features such as honesty, trust, and caring were listed with the highest frequency. Characteristics such as dependency, sexual passion, and physical attraction were listed relatively infrequently. In all, there were 68 features listed by more than one participant, suggesting that ordinary people have rich, complex knowledge of this concept. In follow-up research, other people rated these features in terms of prototypicality (goodness of example). Features such as trust, caring, and intimacy were considered central to love. These features map onto what social psychologists refer to as companionate love—a kind of love characterized by friendly affection and deep attachment to someone. Features such as sexual passion, gazing at the other, and heart rate increases received the lowest ratings. These features map onto social psychologists' definitions of passionate love. This prototype structure was confirmed using a variety of methods. For example, there was evidence that prototypical features of love, such as trust and caring, were more likely to be recalled in memory tests than were nonprototypical features, such as physical attraction and sexual passion.

The initial studies on the prototype of love were conducted in British Columbia, Canada. In subsequent studies, other researchers tested whether similar findings would be obtained on the East Coast of Canada and on the West Coast of the United States, using university students and

members of the public as participants. There was a remarkable degree of consistency across studies. Five features of love were listed frequently and received the highest prototypicality ratings in each of these data sets: trust, caring, honesty, friendship, and respect. The feature, intimacy, also received high ratings in each data set. Thus, at least within North America, among university students and nonstudents alike, there appears to be consensus that it is the companionate features of love that are seen as capturing the true meaning of the concept. Passionate features are seen as part of the concept, but on the periphery.

Prototypes of Specific Types of Love

The next development in prototype analyses of love was to focus on types of love, rather than the concept of love in general. The most extensive prototype analyses have been conducted on romantic love, "being in love," and compassionate (altruistic) love. Other varieties of love, such as familial kinds of love (e.g., maternal love, brotherly love), friendship love, platonic love, and sexual love, have received more limited attention. These investigations have revealed that the features of the different varieties of love tend to overlap with the features listed for the concept of love in general. More specifically, features that are prototypical of love also are generated for specific kinds of love and rated as high in prototypicality. For example, features such as trust, caring, and honesty—which are central to love in general—are also rated as highly prototypical of romantic love. In addition, people list features such as candlelit dinners, going for walks, and kissing, but these are considered nonprototypical. Similarly, for the concept of compassionate love, features such as trust, caring, and honesty are regarded as prototypical. People also generate features such as make sacrifices for the other and put the other ahead of self, but these are regarded as nonprototypical.

Other research in this vein has examined which kinds of love are considered most prototypical of the concept of love in general and which are considered nonprototypical. Similar to the findings for features of love (discussed earlier), companionate kinds of love, such as familial love and friendship love, receive the highest prototypicality

ratings. Passionate kinds of love, such as romantic love, passionate love, and sexual love, are considered nonprototypical. Thus, research on the features of love and research on types of love point to the same conclusion—namely, that ordinary people regard companionate love as the essence of love; passionate love is considered less central.

Gender Differences/Similarities in Prototypes of Love

Do women and men hold different conceptions of love? Research has been conducted in which women and men are presented with descriptions of various prototypes of love (portraying companionate and passionate kinds of love) and are asked to rate how well these prototypes reflect their own view of love. Consistent with research on love experiences, men are more likely to think about love in terms of passion and romance than are women. Women are more likely to think about love in terms of its companionate varieties (e.g., familial love, friendship love, affection). However, these gender differences are not large—both women and men rate the companionate love prototypes highest (although women's ratings are higher than men's), and both women and men rate the passionate love prototypes the lowest (although men's ratings are higher than women's). Based on these findings, it has been concluded that women and men actually are more similar in their conceptions of love.

Relational Implications

So far, the relational implications of people's conceptions of love have not received extensive attention. However, the limited research to date suggests that people who conceptualize love in terms of its prototypical cases (i.e., a companionate conception of love) report greater relationship satisfaction as well as greater love and liking for their partner than those who think about love in terms of its nonprototypical cases (i.e., a passionate conception of love). Further, thinking about love in terms of its prototypical, rather than nonprototypical, cases is associated with relationship longevity.

In conclusion, the answer to the question "What is love?" is that, in the minds of ordinary people, love is a multifaceted, complex concept. At its core are companionate features such as trust, caring, and honesty. Passionate features such as romance and sexual attraction also are part of the concept, but reside on the periphery.

Beverley Fehr

See also Falling in Love; Ideals About Relationships; Intimacy; Love, Companionate and Passionate; Love, Typologies; Sex and Love

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LOVE, TYPOLOGIES

If one or more types of love or any similar construct can be described in a systematic way, we can say that it forms a *typology* or categorization. In fact, there are many types of love, and this entry deals with how these various types are organized into typologies, primarily typologies of romantic love. A typology of romantic love is a description that divides love into two or more qualitative categories. Each category of a typology has its own verbal description, and the category may have properties that can be measured. The differences between the categories can in most cases not only be given verbal descriptions, but also quantitative descriptions. Thus, categories within a typology may be discriminated from one another and therefore compared with each other. Further, typologies may be compared with other typologies.

During the past few decades, several typologies of romantic love have been developed. The first relevant social-psychological scientific work distinguished loving from liking. The next approach proposed two types of romantic love: passionate and companionate. From the 1970s to the present, typologies in most cases became more complex, with each new one generally proposing several categories.

It may be helpful to contrast a typology of love with a process theory of love. As an example of the latter, Arthur and Elaine Aron proposed that people have a basic need to grow or expand the self. As life's journey proceeds, self-expansion may include such things as obtaining physical possessions, attaining occupational success, and forming close relationships. For example, falling in love provides a pleasurable, rapid expansion of the boundaries of self. As two people fall in love, they each metaphorically expand the self to include the other, creating a new entity called "us." The self-expansion theory, as applied to romantic love, is quite versatile in generating testable predictions. It is a theory about the process of change in the self in response to love or how love *proceeds*. A typology of love is rather about types or categories of love or what love *is*.

The following are some of the most researched typologies of love. The concluding section of the entry provides some comparisons of the typologies, as well as a few applications of the typologies to couples in real life.

Passionate and Companionate Love

Most people can relate to the idea of falling head over heels in love. In this state, the lover is at first totally absorbed with the loved one. Thoughts of the beloved intrude frequently, the heart may race at the sight of the loved one, and the couple attempts to be together as much as possible. This describes in capsule form the concept of passionate love. Additionally, there is usually sexual desire and perhaps intense love-making. However, it is possible to fall passionately in love with and have sexual desire for someone without the other person's awareness. Such a state is called *unrequited love*. A passionate love affair requires some reciprocity on the part of both persons. Lust is a

strong sexual "wanting," but it is typically not equated with love, even passionate love.

The first flush of falling in love cannot endure forever. Eventually the intensity must cool because other areas of life require attention. It is common for a relationship to evolve into companionate love, the type of love that involves strong affection, trust, and closeness. This state is also called *friendship love*.

Both types of love are readily recognized within our cultures. Early theorizing viewed passionate love as coming first. If a relationship endured, passionate love evolved into companionate love. More recent thinking and research has shown that one type of love does not have to succeed another; couples can have both types of love at the same time. There are research data indicating that young couples want friendship with their partner as well as strong passion. Relatively strong passion may be maintained indefinitely for many couples across the years.

A balanced mix of friendship and passion appears to be the modern ideal. People want to "love" their partners (friendship) and be "in love" with them at the same time (passion). Theorists now agree that the early hot embers of passion need not inevitably cool into quiet, unexciting companionate love. It is possible to have both passion and friendship and maintain both over time.

Love Styles

At first thought, the passionate/companionate typology appears to exhaust the possibilities for romantic love. Such is not the case. One typology proposed six different types (or styles) of romantic love. These love styles may be considered as attitudinal categories of romantic love. The Love Attitudes Scales developed by Clyde and Susan Hendrick measure how much of each love style a person possesses, and each person is given a score on all six styles. Usually, one or two styles will be dominant, so that person can be assigned to one or two love categories.

The six love styles have interesting names and characteristics. The *eros* style is similar to passionate love. An eros lover has definite preferences for a partner's physical characteristics and may fall in love at first sight. Eros desires deep and rapid intimacy,

both emotional and physical. In contrast, the *ludus* style treats love as a game to be played for fun, preferably with more than one partner at a time. Commitment and deep intimacy are avoided. Ludus has no preferred physical type. At its best, ludus is a playful love style with no intent to harm a partner emotionally. The *storge* style is closest to companionate love. Storge is friendship love: steady, reliable, and trustworthy. The intensity of eros and the detachment of ludus are missing from storgic love. The *pragma* style is practical love. A pragma lover looks for a desired list of traits in a partner and is content when a match is found. Perhaps computer dating and mating (with a shopping list of qualities desired in a partner) most aptly describes pragmatic love. The *mania* style encompasses both possessiveness and dependence. The manic lover alternates between emotional highs and lows and is possessive, jealous, and prone to dramatic breakups and reconciliations. Manic love is both ecstatic and painful. The *agape* style represents “gift” love. Agapic love is freely bestowed and asks nothing in return. The agapic lover is focused on the welfare of the partner. In the real world, there are few pure cases of agape because enduring love between partners depends strongly on reciprocity in word and deed, rather than love flowing in just one direction. However, our last typology will be an enlarged version of agape named compassionate love. It includes both romantic love and love of “humanity.”

Much research supports the validity of the typology as a set of six different approaches to romantic love. There are gender differences in some of the styles. Men typically score higher on both ludic and agapic love than women, and women score higher than men on storgic and pragmatic love. Eros is associated positively with relationship satisfaction, and ludus is negatively associated with relationship satisfaction.

Prototypes of Love

A prototype is the best example or best set of defining features of some concept. A prototype is not rigidly fixed in definition and will usually have fuzzy boundaries. This approach examines people’s mental *representations* of an object, such as love, instead of studying the object directly. Several researchers have taken a prototype

approach to the study of love. Early work attempted to distinguish between features of love and features of commitment. This research tradition has people list the characteristics of love that occur to them. Results have revealed features of both passionate and companionate love, and companionate love was clearly rated as most typical of the meaning of love. Features named consistently included caring, trust, respect, honesty, and friendship. In fact, passion and sexuality were ranked quite low on the list of defining features.

This research concerned “love in general.” Later research explored a prototype analysis of romantic love. Results showed that passion and sexual attraction were now listed as central features, but these features still ranked below such features as trust, happiness, and honesty, along with the companionate features.

Why does passion seem relatively less central in prototype research? More than 60 attributes of love have been named with some frequency. Other researchers performed a complex statistical analysis of these many features and discovered the 60-plus attributes could be sorted into three dimensions: passion, intimacy, and commitment. However, the features that defined intimacy were rated as more central to the meaning of love than the features that defined passion or commitment. The research suggests that intimacy is intrinsically more important than passion in defining love.

The methods used to study prototypes of love consistently show that companionate love is the most general type of love. This outcome makes sense because companionate love applies to all sorts of relationships (e.g., parents, children, friends). However, this approach basically reduces romantic love to companionship plus passion. There may be something about the method used in these studies that reduces the apparent power and importance of passion. Other theorists have argued that passionate love is universal across all cultures. It may be that when people are asked to make a list of the features of love, they are reluctant to list passion or lust at the top, although these might on occasion occur to them right away. It is clear that companionship is also a central component of romantic love, and it may be universal as well. In fact, throughout history, people in some cultures have gone through a betrothal period during which a couple becomes acquainted, perhaps developing

some companionate/friendship features before physically consummating their marriage. Prototype research reduces the relative importance of passionate love. The relative importance of passionate and companionate love features will be clarified by further research.

Love Triangles

The previous section noted that the prototypes research approach uncovered three basic components of love: intimacy, passion, and commitment. Another researcher, Robert Sternberg, working independently of the prototype tradition, proposed the same three components. If one visualizes a triangle with the three vertices labeled intimacy, passion, and commitment, one can immediately visualize a “triangular theory of love.” One interesting aspect of this approach is that the three dimensions can be mixed in different amounts, and each mixture yields a different type of love.

This conception can best be understood by assuming that a given component is either completely present or completely absent. The mix of present/absent yields a typology of eight kinds of love:

1. Nonlove: absence of all three components
2. Liking: intimacy without passion or commitment
3. Infatuated love: passion without intimacy or commitment
4. Empty love: commitment without intimacy or passion
5. Fatuous love: passion and commitment (no intimacy)
6. Companionate love: intimacy and commitment (no passion)
7. Romantic love: intimacy and passion (no commitment)
8. Consummate love: presence of all three components

Perhaps most people would say that only the last three types (6, 7, and 8) represent “real love.” Further, when companionate love overlaps romantic love, all three components occur, yielding consummate love. As noted earlier, there is evidence that couples want both friendship and passion (or

companionate and romantic love, in the terminology of the triangular typology). Thus, most serious couples want consummate love. Because intimacy is high for liking (type 2) and for the three types of “real love,” it is easy to see that intimacy underlies a wide range of close relationships. The prototype research tradition suggested that intimacy and commitment may be more important than passion for a loving relationship. A *romantic* loving relationship is incomplete without passion, but passion alone is only infatuation. Even passion with commitment but no intimacy is merely “fatuous love” (type 5). In this way, the seemingly simple eightfold typology, composed of three basic elements, can account for a wide range of the types of love relationships.

Compassionate Love

Compassionate love is a single type of love. It is most similar to the love style of agape, but is much broader in scope. The scholars who proposed this type of love viewed it as an attitude toward several types of other people: a romantic partner or friend, close others generally (e.g., family), and strangers or all of humanity. Compassionate love is focused on care and concern for another and is oriented toward empathic understanding, supporting, and helping the other, especially in times of need.

The broad range of persons encompassed by this type of love required three slightly different types of rating scales: one for close others, another for strangers or humanity in general, and the third specifically for friends or a romantic partner.

Research showed that compassionate love is a viable category of love. This type of love was related positively to empathy, helpfulness, social support, volunteer activities, and religiosity, depending on who was rated. For example, when a specific romantic partner or friend was the focus, only social support was associated with compassionate love. When the focus was close others or strangers/humanity, social support, volunteerism, and religiosity were all related to this type of love.

Other interesting results were found. Women were higher than men on compassionate love. The average love ratings were higher for close others and romantic partner/friends than for strangers/humanity, and the highest compassion score was for a romantic partner.

As the world moves toward becoming a “global village,” the concept of compassionate love acquires an urgency for full understanding and implementation. The research data indicate that people show more compassion for specific and close others than for strangers. Much more research is needed, but one application is clear. Somehow, people must learn to extend compassionate love more fully to strangers and humanity generally. Quite simply, human survival may depend on it.

Typologies in Real Life

The typologies described in this entry offer several different ways to view romantic love. Love may be companionate, passionate, or both. Or love styles may be passionate, companionate, game-playing, practical, possessive and dependent, or giving. The prototypic kind of love may be companionate, with passion included when love is of the romantic variety. Love may be composed of intimacy, passion, and commitment and may reveal itself in eight different guises. Or love may be an outpouring of attention and support to a romantic partner, close others, or humanity as a whole.

These different views of love are really more similar than they are different. Two guiding themes that appear in most of the love typologies are “passion” and “companionship.” Research has shown that young couples in the Western world describe their love partner as their “best friend” and that for older couples both passionate and companionate love are highly related to satisfaction with their relationships. Other research that compared several of the most frequently used measures of love found that, indeed, when these measures were analyzed together, the most dominant themes that emerged were passion (accompanied by intimacy and similar constructs) and caring (also accompanied by intimacy and an absence of negativity).

Does this mean that there are really only two types of love after all, passionate and companionate? Probably not! Given the complexity of our human species, and the many ways in which such factors as gender, age, race/ethnicity, culture, socioeconomic status, and a myriad of other factors affect the emotions, thoughts, and actions of a romantic couple, it is unlikely that one or two or six or eight types of love could capture love’s infinite variety.

For example, suppose that a married couple has young children, and both parents have demanding jobs. These parents want to work hard and parent well, and they view themselves as a team. They are each other’s best friends, and they both participate wholeheartedly in their companionate marriage. Two other people, each reconciled to being alone because they had not yet found the “right person,” find themselves together in the most emotionally intense and physically exciting relationship they have ever experienced. They thought passion would forever elude them, but it did not. Yet another couple has experienced both passionate and companionate love in their few years together, but a life-threatening illness in one of the partners has required them to reach into their deepest reserves of caring and compassion so as to comfort and console each other as they face the biggest obstacle their relationship has ever encountered. Their evident agapic love for each other inspires the people who know them. Another couple, older and partners for many years, decide that they will no longer buy presents for each other except under unusual circumstances. They both dislike shopping and don’t want to distress themselves or each other by doing that. They have also agreed to take the money they would have spent on presents and contribute it to a charity they both regard highly. Are these partners companionate, agapic, compassionate, or some combination of these or other types of love? Each couple portrays a somewhat different picture of love, yet each set of partners is connected by a bond that can best be called love.

The love typologies presented are representative of ideas about love, but are certainly not exhaustive of the ways in which love may be expressed. At some level, love is shown by what is *not* expressed as much as by what *is* expressed. For example, closeness without negativity, as noted previously, is important in love. So also is the absence of game-playing, exploitation, and disrespect. Indeed, love and respect have been put forth as key qualities that romantic partners seek from one another. Love may be necessary but not sufficient for a romantic relationship to endure, yet few of us would want to be in such a relationship without love. Humans seek connection, and love is one of connection’s most profound forms.

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See also Compassionate Love; Falling in Love; Love, Companionate and Passionate; Love, Prototype Approach; Respect; Romanticism; Sex and Love

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LOVE, UNRECIPROCATED

Most people believe that love is one of the most significant events that a human being can experience. Thus, it is not surprising that the majority of men and women spend a good portion of their adolescence and adulthood seeking a partner with whom to fall in love and form a long-term, committed relationship. The eagerness with which many people search for love is certainly understandable when one considers the growing amount of scientific evidence indicating that love is associated with a variety of positive outcomes. For example, partners in love relationships report feeling intimacy, contentment, and satisfaction; experiencing passion, joy, and excitement; and providing and receiving significant levels of emotional and social support from one another. All of these experiences, in turn, can enhance and promote the partners' psychological and physical

well-being. Love between two people whose feelings are mutual and reciprocated—that is, who love or are in love with each other—can be a fulfilling and rewarding experience. But what if one person loves another who does not return his or her feelings? What if the object of one's affection spurns one's romantic overtures? This entry considers the topic of *unreciprocated love*, with an emphasis on defining the experience and considering its frequency and consequences.

Definition

Unreciprocated love (also known as *unrequited love*) refers to romantic love that is not mutual or shared by two people; it is defined as the experience of loving or feeling strong romantic attraction toward another person who does not return that particular feeling. Scholars who study this phenomenon point out that it is not necessary for people who are the objects of unreciprocated love to be actively hostile toward or openly rejecting of their lovelorn admirers; sometimes they may feel quite affectionate toward those individuals or the two may share a long history of friendship. The objects of affection may even have experienced some initial attraction to their admirers or were involved in a romantic relationship with them; however, at some point, their feelings changed or failed to develop into the deeper passion felt by their would-be suitors. The key issue is that, regardless of their personal history or the current state of their relationship, the objects of unreciprocated love do not feel the way their admirers do—they do not feel the same kind of passionate attraction, longing, and intense desire for intimacy that their admirers feel for them.

How Common Is Unreciprocated Love?

There is little research that can provide a definitive answer to the question of how often unreciprocated love occurs. This is partly due to the fact that some people are likely to experience unreciprocated love fairly frequently, whereas others may never experience it at all. However, studies generally indicate that most men and women (close to 95 percent) have found themselves on both sides of unreciprocated love—that is, they have loved in

vain and have been loved in vain by another—by the time they reach their late teens or early 20s. Thus, unreciprocated love appears to be a common life event. Interestingly, women report having been in the “rejector” role more often than men, and men report having been in the “would-be lover” role more often than women. Some researchers speculate that this may stem from the fact that men tend to fall in love more readily than women (and therefore find themselves more frequently in the position of would-be lover), whereas women tend to fall out of love more readily than men (and consequently find themselves more often in the role of rejector).

Consequences of Unreciprocated Love

Although folk wisdom (actually, Victorian poet Alfred Tennyson) tells us that “it is better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all,” the reality is that unreciprocated love can be, and often is, an extremely unpleasant experience for both the unrequited lover and the object of his or her affection. Autobiographical accounts provided by would-be lovers and rejectors reveal that negative emotion is the most common consequence of unreciprocated love. For example, would-be lovers often report that their unreciprocated passion caused them to feel intense pain, suffering, heartbreak, and disappointment. Additionally, they report having experienced extreme bouts of jealousy and anger, which were often directed at their beloved’s chosen partner. Frustration and fears of rejection are also common consequences of loving another person in vain. However, unreciprocated love is not an entirely unpleasant experience for the lovelorn suitor. In addition to the unpleasant emotions they experience, unrequited lovers also report a variety of pleasant emotional outcomes. For example, happiness, excitement, the blissful anticipation of seeing the beloved, sheer elation at the state of being in love, and other positive emotions are commonly reported by most would-be suitors. Many also look back on their unreciprocated love experiences with fondness and an appreciation for the opportunity they had to experience passion and other intense emotions.

Rejectors, however, do not usually experience positive outcomes. Although some rejectors report

feeling flattered by the attention of their admirers, most report feeling annoyance at having to endure unwanted advances, discomfort and guilt at having to deliver rejection messages, and a host of other negative emotions, including anger, frustration, and resentment. The intensity of these negative reactions depends in part on the behavior of the would-be lover. For example, a person dealing with an extremely persistent suitor who continues in his or her pursuit despite repeated requests to cease is far more likely to experience rage, hostility, disgust, and other strong negative emotions than is a person whose unwanted suitor is content to love unobtrusively from afar.

In summary, unreciprocated love is a common occurrence that primarily produces emotional distress. Unfortunately, there is no easy way to recover quickly from the experience of unreciprocated love. Time is perhaps the only cure.

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See also Attraction, Sexual; Falling in Love; Love, Companionate and Passionate; Lust

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LUST

Lust (also called *sexual desire*, *sexual interest*, or *sexual attraction*) is the motivational component of human sexuality. Lust is experienced as an interest in sexual activities, a drive to seek out sexual objects, or a wish, need, or craving for sexual

contact. Although people can feel and express a variety of sexual responses within their interpersonal relationships, lust appears to play an especially important role in the attraction process and in the early stages of romantic relationships, particularly as people fall in love. This entry distinguishes lust from other related sexual responses, examines its origins and correlates, and explores its consequences in ongoing, romantic relationships.

Conceptualization and Measurement

The experience of lust is presumed to be distinct from other sexual responses, including *sexual arousal* (which involves physiological arousal, genital excitement, and the subjective awareness of genital and physiological arousal), *sexual activity* (which consists of overt sexual behaviors, such as masturbation, “petting,” or intercourse), and *sexual feelings* that are associated with these responses (such as satisfaction, fulfillment, and pleasure). Of course, these sexual responses frequently co-occur and thus are experienced relatively simultaneously. For example, the sight of an attractive person may cause an individual to feel an urge to engage in sexual activities with that person and to fantasize about what sex with that person might be like; these lustful feelings may subsequently produce physiological arousal and genital excitement. The subjective awareness of this sexual arousal may, in turn, increase the desire to engage in sex with the other person and may result in actual sexual behavior. After orgasm or sexual satiation, the individual’s body will return to its prearoused state, and sexual desire also may decrease. Thus, the interrelationship among desire, arousal, and activity is complex; each response can influence the others, and they may co-occur. Researchers nonetheless consider each experience to be a separate component of the human sexual response cycle.

Lust or sexual desire varies along at least two dimensions. The first dimension is quantitative and concerns the magnitude of the desire that is experienced. Both the intensity and the frequency with which lust is experienced can vary within one individual over time. For example, a person may experience sexual desire on numerous occasions one week, only to feel no desire at all the following

week; similarly, he or she may possess a powerful sexual urge at one point in time and then a much less-intense sexual need at another. In addition, people differ in the chronic amount of lust that they experience; some individuals generally have a low level of sexual appetite, whereas others habitually experience high levels of desire.

The second dimension along which sexual desire varies is qualitative and concerns the specificity of the desired sexual goal and sexual object. A person in the throes of lust may wish to engage in a specific sexual activity (e.g., intercourse) with a specific other individual (e.g., the partner). Alternately, he or she may simply have an urge to engage in some form of sexual activity with an unspecified partner; in this situation, both the sexual goal and the sexual object are diffuse rather than specific.

Because lust is a subjective, internal experience, rather than an overt physical or behavioral event, scientists generally measure it with self-report methods. These involve asking people to respond to questions about their feelings in general or for a specific other person (e.g., a dating partner or spouse). People might rate their overall level or amount of desire (“How much sexual desire or lust do you experience?”), the frequency of their sexual urges (“How often do you experience sexual desire or lust?”), or the intensity or degree of their sexual attraction to their romantic partner (“How intensely do you desire ____ sexually?” or “How sexually attracted are you to ____?”).

Causes and Correlates

Research indicates that lust is associated with a variety of factors. Some of these factors involve the partner or the desired object. Certain partner characteristics appear to excite desire more than others. For example, most people consider an attractive appearance, good overall personality, sense of humor, kind disposition, self-confidence, and intelligence to be particularly sexually appealing attributes for someone to possess. In addition, individuals with symmetrical facial features, an average body weight, and a sex-typical distribution of body fat or “shape” (for women, an hour-glass shape; for men, a straighter shape) are typically considered sexually desirable.

Although variables associated with the partner are undoubtedly important, the majority of researchers interested in understanding the dynamics of lust have focused on person or individual-level factors. For example, men and women with serious physical illnesses, including cancer, diabetes, and Parkinson's disease, typically report decreases in their overall level of sexual interest following the onset of their illness, and their desire levels are usually lower than those reported by healthy adults. Depression and other forms of major mental illness are also associated with decreased desire, as is excessive and chronic use of alcohol and other recreational drugs. Another person factor that is related to the ability to experience lust is age. Although most healthy older adults continue to experience desire and other sexual responses, research reveals that both men and women report a decline in their level of sexual interest with advancing age.

One of the most important individual-level factors that scientists have identified is the hormone *testosterone* (an androgen, or masculinizing hormone, that is synthesized primarily in the testes and the adrenal cortex, and to a lesser extent in the ovaries). A growing body of research reveals that the ability to experience lust is associated with the action of this particular hormone. For example, levels of testosterone are positively correlated with self-reported levels of sexual desire and frequency of sexual thoughts in healthy adults. That is, the higher the level of active testosterone in a person's bloodstream, the more sexual desire he or she reports experiencing and the more often he or she indicates having sexual thoughts. In addition, people who have undergone surgical procedures (such as removal of the adrenal glands) that result in a sudden decrease in their levels of testosterone report decreased feelings of sexual desire. Similarly, treatment with synthetic steroids that suppress the synthesis of testosterone produces diminished sexual desire. This result has been observed in three groups of individuals: male sex offenders who are treated with the anti-androgenic substances cyproterone acetate or medroxyprogesterone, cancer patients who receive anti-androgenic treatment in combination with surgical castration as part of their therapeutic regimen, and people who are given androgen antagonists to treat androgen-dependent hair and skin problems such as acne,

alopecia, hirsutism, and seborrhea. In all three groups, treatment often is associated with a reduction in sexual desire, fantasies, and urges. Finally, the administration of testosterone has been noted to result in an increase in the strength and frequency of sexual desire among men and women complaining of diminished sexual interest, men with hypogonadism or eugonadism (medical conditions that result in abnormally low levels of testosterone), and women with androgen deficiency syndrome (an androgen deficiency caused by chemotherapy, hysterectomy [removal of the uterus], or oophorectomy [removal of the ovaries]). These findings suggest that some minimum level of testosterone is necessary for the experience of lust.

Are Men or Women More Lustful?

Biological sex or gender is another individual-level factor that appears to be associated with the experience of sexual desire. Certainly the question of whether men or women are the more "lustful" sex has long interested scientists. Current research suggests the following conclusions. First, both sexes, particularly in adolescence and young adulthood, feel sexual desire fairly frequently. Second, men typically report experiencing sexual desire more often than do women. Third, when asked to rate their level or amount (as opposed to frequency) of desire, men tend to report a greater amount than do women. Thus, although lust is a common experience for both sexes, at first glance, men appear to be more lustful than women. However, women experience greater variation in hormone levels than do men and, as a result, are particularly prone to fluctuations in desire. For example, many women report increases and decreases in their feelings of sexual interest as their bodies go through the various phases of the menstrual cycle. Pregnancy, menopause, and other hormonally mediated life events may also alter a woman's levels of sexual desire. Consequently, in any given span of time, there will be occasions when a woman's intensity or frequency of desire exceeds that of her male counterpart. There will also be times when his desire exceeds hers and times when the two experience roughly equal frequencies or levels. Thus, the question of which sex is more lustful is a difficult one and can only be answered by future

research that examines the pattern of men's and women's levels of desire over time.

Relational Consequences

Lust appears to play a key role in the process of romantic attraction and relationship development. Feelings of sexual desire for another individual may propel a person to initiate interpersonal contact, thus leading to the beginning of a romantic relationship. Intense sexual attraction also is associated with, and may even produce, feelings of passionate love. In fact, most people believe that sexual desire is part and parcel of the state of being in love. For example, when asked to describe the difference between "being in love with" and "loving" a romantic partner, the majority of men and women spontaneously mention sexual desire as creating the essential difference between the two experiences (and as being much more reflective of the state of being in love than of loving). Similarly, when asked to identify the basic features or ingredients of passionate love, most people list sexual desire or lust (along with other positive experiences). Moreover, dating partners who report a high level of sexual attraction for each other tend also to report being passionately in love, whereas partners with lower levels of desire for one another are correspondingly less "in love" (although they may like or love each other a great deal).

Although sexual attraction is often present during the initial stages of a romantic relationship, particularly when the partners are falling in love with one another, it may not remain at the same high level throughout the entire relationship. Over time, partners commonly experience decreased sexual desire for each other. Because the ability to experience lustful feelings is associated with the partners' physical and mental health, age, hormonal variations, and other factors (including the loss of novelty that occurs as partners become habituated to each other), a reduction in their sexual desire is to some extent inevitable and does not necessarily mean that their relationship is dysfunctional. However, a sudden dramatic loss of desire or a sustained feeling of sexual repulsion

for the partner may sometimes indicate that some degree of emotional conflict or interpersonal difficulty exists in a couple's relationship. If that is the case, treatment administered by a qualified therapist may prove beneficial. Clinical research suggests that the most effective treatment programs for sexual desire problems are those that combine traditional cognitive-behavioral techniques that target the low-desire partner (such as sexual fantasy exercises and cognitive restructuring) with techniques that target the interpersonal dynamics between the partners, including training in verbal communication skills, emotional communication, and sexual intimacy.

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See also Attraction, Sexual; Falling in Love; Love, Companionate and Passionate; Marriage and Sex; Sex and Love; Sexual Dysfunctions

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M

MAINTAINING RELATIONSHIPS

Scholars often have insights about how people maintain their close relationships, as many entries in this volume indicate. However, the purposeful, direct examination of various factors that specifically address how people maintain their relationships is a recent enterprise. Still, a substantial number of scholars have now converged on behaviors directly relevant to the domain of relationship maintenance.

This entry focuses on research that has directly sought to reveal how people maintain their close relationships—emphasizing both stability and quality. First, *relational maintenance* is defined. Next, two metaphors that several scholars have used to portray maintenance processes—centripetal force and centrifugal force—are described. This entry concludes by observing that maintenance processes occur at several levels, from the individual to the cultural.

Defining Relational Maintenance

Five definitions of *relational maintenance* have been offered in the literature. (1) Perhaps the most obvious definition concerns *stability*, or *how people keep the relationship intact*. Here, relationship maintenance refers to those behaviors that keep a couple together over time—the longer, the better. (2) A second definition involves sustaining desired features of the relationship. From this view, it is not

enough to have a stable relationship; *relationship maintenance means retaining a high-quality involvement*. Accordingly, relational maintenance refers to engaging in actions that promote important relationship features, such as satisfaction, commitment, trust, love, and so forth. (3) Third, relationship maintenance refers to *how people repair their close involvements that have been somehow damaged*. In this sense, maintenance behaviors are reactive; people do not engage in maintenance until the relationship needs repair. (4) Fourth, relational maintenance concerns *keeping a relationship in a specified condition*. That is, a particular type of relationship and level of intimacy are maintained. For instance, platonic friends engage in maintenance behaviors to keep the friendship as nonsexual. (5) Finally, from a dialectical perspective, *relational maintenance refers to how partners adapt to change that is inherent in relationships*. In other words, relationships do not have a static status quo; rather, relational partners experience ebbs and flows of various tensions that need to be managed for the relationship to be sustained.

Researchers tend to adopt one definition in preference to others. However, these definitions are probably more mutually informative than mutually exclusive. That is, relational maintenance most likely occurs in all forms but at different times. At a minimum, people need to keep their relationships in existence, and at times, that is the critical goal. But in addition, people work at maintaining important characteristics of the relationship—as one that involves commitment, trust, and so forth. And when partners have a

falling out, they then need to repair the damage done. During periods when both parties are content, they work at sustaining those times of continuity, although the status quo of relationships is not static but involves change.

Forces That Push and Pull on Relationships

Some people believe that relationships are easy to get into but difficult to get out of, whereas other individuals hold that people must work to maintain their relationships or they will fall apart. The idea that relationships are hard to leave invites a *centripetal* analogy, and the idea that relationships fall apart unless some force holds them together suggests a *centrifugal force* at work. Research shows that both centripetal and centrifugal forces function to maintain close involvements, such that one should leverage the forces that keep relationships intact and combat the forces that pull relationships apart.

Emphasizing Centripetal Forces

One clear centripetal force concerns the barriers that people face when they attempt to dissolve a relationship. Both internal barriers and external barriers have been examined. One internal barrier concerns how individual identities are constructed in the partner's presence. The extent to which one's identity connects to the relationship is a centripetal force that keeps people together. Such personal identities can become so enmeshed that people cannot imagine their lives without their partners, for example, what to do in the evenings or on weekends. Also, external barriers keep partners together; for example, financial interdependence, legal constraints, societal norms, and children represent obstacles to leaving one's partner.

Another centripetal force, communication, maintains relationships. Mundane, predictable, and routine interactions define and perpetuate relationships. According to Steve Duck, talk—in and of itself—conveys a symbolic vision of the relationship that promotes its continuance every time partners engage in it. Accordingly, mundane communication patterns solidify the relational system such that altering communicative patterns requires no small effort. Communication patterns also establish

expectations about how each person should behave in relation to the partner. Communication patterns refer to repeated exchanges of messages, for instance, in the ways partners greet each other after a day at work (“Hi Honey, how was your day?” / “Not bad, you know, the usual craziness”). Once patterns establish expectations, alternative behaviors appear unusual and perhaps inappropriate (“Hi Honey, how was your day?” / “Why do you ask?” / “What?”).

Combating Centrifugal Forces

Recall that a centrifugal analogy implies that relationships tend to break apart unless people do something to keep the relationship together. In this view, maintenance behaviors represent the “do something” actions that people undertake to keep the relationship intact and of high quality. For example, Laura Stafford and Dan Canary's Relational Maintenance Strategy Measure (RMSM) comprises five strategies that have been found to predict relational stability and quality. First, *Positivity* refers to conscious attempts to make interactions positive and upbeat, including acting cheerful, being spontaneous, performing favors for the partner, and so forth. *Openness* involves direct discussion about the relationship, including talk about its history, rules made, and self-disclosure. *Assurances* concern showing support for the partner, comforting the partner, and stressing one's commitment. *Social Networks* refer to relying on friends and family to support the relationship (e.g., having dinner every Sunday at the in-laws), involving network members to solve relational problems, and the like. Finally, *Sharing Tasks* concern performing one's responsibilities (e.g., doing household chores). Although people can use each strategy alone or in combination with others, these five strategies are moderately and positively associated. For example, positivity might be used to increase partner rewards and one's likability, whereas in a different interaction, openness could be used to increase time spent together. Moreover, researchers have expanded the original five RMSM strategies, including such behaviors as *Joint Activities* (e.g., spend time together) and *Not Flirting* (to maintain a platonic relationship) among others.

In one important program of research, Caryl Rusbult has identified variations in how people

respond to their partners during troubled times, or *tendencies to accommodate*. Tendencies to accommodate are the product of two dimensions: passive versus active and constructive versus destructive. Active and destructive behaviors involve *Exit*, which includes threats to leave the partner or actually leaving. *Voice* is an active and constructive strategy that involves discussing the problem without hostility. *Loyalty* constitutes a passive and constructive tendency that entails acquiescence to the partner; for example, conceding to the partner's point of view. Finally, *Neglect* is a passive and destructive approach that involves indirect and negative behaviors (e.g., no kiss goodnight).

These tendencies to accommodate the partner are predicted by one's personal commitment to the relationship, which is itself constituted of three factors: satisfaction, where one experiences positive outcomes from the relationship and the partner meets or exceeds one's expectations; comparison level of alternatives, where one's partner is seen as superior to other potential partners and activities (including being alone); and investments of time and resources into the relationship. Moreover, the three factors that promote commitment affect the tendencies to accommodate. For instance, voice behaviors most likely occur when satisfaction, investment, and alternatives are high, whereas loyalty is preferred when satisfaction and investments are high, but one has few alternatives.

Combining Centripetal and Centrifugal Analogies

Responding to both centripetal and centrifugal factors helps maintain relationships. Research suggests that centripetal factors and behaviors are more relevant to relational stability, whereas centrifugal forces and behaviors work to maintain the quality and important characteristics of the relationship (e.g., satisfaction, commitment, liking). Stated differently, relationships remain intact when barriers and communication patterns appear consistent and strong. However, maintaining relationship quality requires efforts at being positive, showing one's commitment, engaging in one's fair share of responsibilities, and so on.

As mentioned, several scholars have adopted a dialectical perspective on relational maintenance. This perspective holds that change is inherent in relationships, such that attempts to maintain a

stable status quo are impossible. Change occurs because people experience recurring dialectical tensions that result from poles of experience that contradict each other but exist in tandem with each other. Common dialectical poles include *autonomy/connection*, *openness/closedness*, and *predictability/novelty*. From this perspective, then, to maintain their relationships partners must balance competing forces of wanting to hold an individual identity with wanting to be interdependent with one's partner (autonomy/connection), of desiring to disclose one's concerns and beliefs while retaining privacy boundaries (openness/closedness), and of needing to have a sense of continuity while enjoying new experiences (predictability/novelty).

Adopting a dialectical perspective that attends to both centripetal and centrifugal forces, researchers have reported several responses to dialectical tensions. These responses involve *denial* (reject the existence of a tension), *disorientation* (partners ignore attempts to actively manage tensions), *spiraling inversion* (partners respond to first one, then the other pole), *segmentation* (partitioning the relationship by topic or activity), *balance* (compromise is achieved by partially fulfilling the demands of each pole), *integration* (both poles are responded to simultaneously), *recalibration* (a temporary synthesis of the contradiction such that opposing forces are no longer seen as opposites), and *reaffirmation* (a celebration of the stimulation that contradictory tensions provide). Alternate lists of dialectical responses exist.

Levels of Relational Maintenance Activity

Maintaining relationships occurs at different levels. First, at the individual level, certain cognitions help keep the person in the relationship. Second, at the dyadic level, partners engage in the maintenance routines and strategies that were discussed previously. Next, social networks can promote relational stability and quality. Finally, the broader culture indicates appropriate behavior for people in close involvements.

Individual Level: The Role of Cognitions

How people think about their partners and their relationship can promote relational stability

and quality. Generally speaking, holding positive thoughts about one's partner leads to perceptions of the partner that reinforce one's positive bias. For instance, highly idealized people remain in their relationships through times of trouble more than do people who are less idealized; and over time, idealized partners experience increases in satisfaction and decreases in ambivalence about the relationship. Moreover, individuals sometimes use tactics that increase ambiguity when a potential relational threat arises. For example, when one's partner has a lunch date with a former lover, one would not use the term *date* but instead call it a *meeting* to increase the ambiguity of the event and thereby reduce its relational consequences.

Other specific cognitions serve maintenance functions. For instance, Rusbult has identified cognitions that reflect people's commitment to their partners. The first is *deciding to remain* in the relationship, a fundamental decision that is pivotal to other thoughts and behaviors. Second, *perceived relational superiority* references the belief that one's relationship is better than all other relationships. Third, the *derogation of alternatives* involves devaluating attractive alternatives, thereby promoting the partner's comparative relational worth. Finally, a *willingness to sacrifice* one's personal interests for the relationship involves focusing on the partner's welfare more than on one's own. If one acts on a willingness to sacrifice, then this cognitive maintenance activity becomes behavioral. Regardless, willingness to sacrifice remains an individual level behavior that can be performed independently of the partner.

Dyadic Level: The Role of Maintenance Behaviors

At the dyadic level, people enact routines and strategies with each other to maintain their relationships (as discussed earlier). Researchers have found strong support for the effects of these behaviors. For example, the five RMSM strategies have accounted for as much as 80 percent of the variance in commitment and other indicators of relational quality. Also, people who do not engage in the RMSM behaviors are more likely to terminate their relationships than are people who use maintenance strategies. Moreover, the research shows that these maintenance strategies affect relational outcomes differentially. For example, commitment

to one's partner is most strongly predicted by use of assurances, whereas liking the partner is most strongly predicted by positivity.

Importantly, the effects of maintenance strategies on relational features are short-lived. One panel study found that the strong associations between maintenance behaviors and relational quality have a short half-life. Accordingly, dyadic maintenance behaviors need to be continually used so they will affect relational quality. Cooking dinner or saying "I love you" once a week will not be effective for most people; rather, one needs to engage in maintenance behaviors continually for them to be effective.

Social Network Level: The Relevance of Friends and Family

Social networks play an important role in the stability and quality of romantic relationships. Research indicates that social networks can facilitate or inhibit the stability of dating relationships. That is, one's social network system can promote relational stability and satisfaction in intended ways or in ways that boomerang. If the relationship is satisfying, support from network members as well as lack of support from them can each function in different ways to strengthen the relationship. In other words, people interpret both positive and negative evaluations of their relationships in ways that support their selection of partners. However, if the relationship is dissatisfying, then social network disapproval of the relationship works against the stability of the relationship. Research shows that if one is seriously thinking about ending a romantic involvement, then friends and family members who endorse the termination help to speed up the termination.

This research is sometimes counterintuitive. In one study, perceptions of the *partner's* parental support and friendship support of the relationship promoted relational stability, but one's own parental support did not add to relational stability. Instead, friendship support in combination with *disapproval* from one's parents promoted relational stability. Researchers have offered two alternative explanations for this so-called Romeo and Juliet effect: (1) people engage in psychological reactance when a parent disapproves of the relationship; and (2) parental disapproval motivates

partners to discuss relational troubles they have that are raised by family members, and this problem-solving interaction works to strengthen the relationship.

Culture and Relational Maintenance

Relationships do not exist in a vacuum. Rather, the cultural context affects whether and how relationships are maintained. Little research has examined the manner in which culture affects relational maintenance processes. Still, the evidence suggests that maintenance strategies are more salient and important in cultures where people have latitude in selecting mates and where individual expression is valued. When people can determine who their partners are and when the culture endorses the direct expression of ideas, then people assume more responsibility for developing their romantic relationships and maintaining them with explicit and direct messages.

For example, Korean values regarding relationships are largely based on Confucian principles. Koreans have reported less use of explicit and direct relational maintenance behaviors than have U.S. participants. The decreased use of such maintenance behaviors by Koreans probably reflects their cultural values and traditions. For instance, the Confucian concept *eur-ri* (pronounced *oo-ree*) presumes a long-term, obligatory association. As long as people perceive that their partners engage in *eur-ri*, then they should remain in the relationship regardless of their satisfaction levels. Also, Koreans tend to be less direct in attempting to appease their partners. Rather, Koreans prefer the practice of *noon-chi*, which roughly means that one should anticipate what the partner wants and behave accordingly. Instead of asking whether one's partner wants a second cup of coffee, for example, one should pour the second cup when appropriate. Such cultural principles make the use of explicit and direct maintenance behaviors moot and the use of indirect and implicit maintenance behaviors, such as *noon-chi*, important.

In individualistic cultures, people tend to maximize their personal rewards by selecting partners they find rewarding. In such cultures, social exchange factors, such as equity, become salient when deciding how much effort to put into maintaining the relationship. Studies have shown that

people in Western cultures engage in more direct efforts to maintain their relationships when they are treated fairly. However, in East Asia, where people do not attempt to maximize their personal rewards, people enact fewer direct maintenance behaviors. Also, maintenance behaviors in East Asia do not depend on how fairly people believe they are treated. Instead, maintenance behaviors tend to be used to the extent one finds the relationship personally rewarding, regardless of fairness.

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See also Cognitive Processes in Relationships; Commitment, Theories and Typologies; Connectedness, Tension With Autonomy; Idealization; Investment Model; Marital Satisfaction and Quality; Repairing Relationships

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MARITAL SATISFACTION, ASSESSMENT OF

During the last 60 years, marital satisfaction—or the related constructs of marital adjustment and marital quality—have been the target outcome variables for almost all marital research and couple therapies. These have been assessed via epidemiological research, treatment outcome research, and basic marital research and are the field's measures of whether couples are happy and whether our couple therapies are working. Marital satisfaction and adjustment are strongly associated with the 50 percent divorce rate in the United States, individual distress (e.g., depression, anxiety, and alcohol abuse), physical health, and children's well-being. This entry reviews various terms used to describe marital satisfaction, examines ways of assessing marital satisfaction and adjustment, reviews the reliability and validity of the most widely used measures, and concludes with an overview of emerging efforts to standardize the assessment of marital satisfaction and related constructs.

Terminology

For as long as marital satisfaction has been assessed, there has also been considerable confusion and controversy regarding the differences among

the terms *marital satisfaction*, *marital adjustment*, and *marital quality*. Marital satisfaction refers to global marital sentiment or marital happiness as a unitary construct. Marital adjustment is broader in scope, and includes a consideration of marital processes such as conflict management skills and marital outcomes such as marital satisfaction. Marital quality refers to marital processes alone, such as the quality of a couple's conflict management skills, supportive transactions, sexual relations, or emotional intimacy. Additionally, several terms have been used to describe low marital satisfaction or adjustment, including *marital discord*, *marital dissatisfaction*, *marital distress*, and *marital dysfunction*. Low marital satisfaction is also distinguished from marital dissolution, which refers to separation or divorce.

Ways of Assessing Marital Satisfaction and Related Constructs

Historically, marital satisfaction and adjustment have been assessed by administering questionnaires to husbands and wives and then calculating sum scores for spouses (or couples) based on their responses. Scores are typically placed on a continuum from low to high satisfaction. Starting in the 1950s, marital adjustment was assessed with omnibus measures in which spouses evaluated multiple aspects of their marriage, such as the amount of disagreement across different areas of conflict, global evaluations of the marriage, and frequency of sexual relations. Harvey Locke and Karl Wallace's Marital Adjustment Test (MAT) and Graham Spanier's Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS) are two widely used measures of marital adjustment.

In the 1980s, researchers and clinicians also began assessing marital satisfaction with shorter, unidimensional measures of global sentiment toward one's marriage. Robert Norton's Quality of Marriage Index (QMI) and Walter Schumm and colleagues' Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale (KMSS) are widely used measures of global marital satisfaction. Researchers and clinicians also began to assess marital satisfaction using a semantic differential approach, a way of quantifying spouses' evaluations of their marriage by having them rate their perceptions on scales between two opposite

adjectives (e.g., satisfied to dissatisfied, good to bad). Charles Osgood and colleagues, and Ted Huston and Anita Vangelisti, have developed and validated versions of semantic differential measures to assess marital satisfaction.

Since the mid-1990s, there has been a move toward assessing marital satisfaction and adjustment with multidimensional approaches. For example, Frank Fincham and Kenneth Linfield developed the Positive and Negative Quality in Marriage Scale (PANQIMS), on which spouses evaluate the positive and negative qualities of their partner and marriage, yielding scores for two distinct aspects of marital satisfaction. Global measures collapse these two domains, making it impossible to determine whether it is lack of positive or high levels of negative evaluation that reduces marital happiness. Alternatively, the PANQIMS allows spouses to be categorized as happy (high positive and low negative marital quality), distressed (low positive and high negative), ambivalent (high on both positive and negative marital quality), or indifferent (low on both positive and negative marital quality). Douglas Snyder's Marital Satisfaction Inventory (MSI) is a multidimensional measure of marital adjustment that differentiates among levels and sources of distress. Dimensions include assessments of family of origin conflict, sexual satisfaction, and problem-solving communication strategies.

Reliability and Validity of Commonly Used Measures

Marital adjustment. The MAT is a 15-item self-report measure of overall relationship functioning, with questions about couples' relationship satisfaction, activities, and levels of agreement on issues such as demonstrations of affection and philosophy of life. Yielding scores from 2 to 158, the MAT is typically the instrument against which other marital assessments are validated. The MAT demonstrates adequate cross-sectional reliability (split half = .90) and discriminates between non-distressed spouses and spouses with documented marital problems. The DAS is a 32-item self-report measure of relationship distress with a variety of response formats. An overall score of relationship

distress is obtained from items assessing dyadic differences, interpersonal tensions, dyadic satisfaction, dyadic cohesion, and consensus on matters important to dyadic functioning. The DAS is internally consistent and stable over brief intervals, with reliability estimates ranging from .58 to .96. Total DAS scores converge substantially with other marital adjustment measures, discriminate between distressed and nondistressed couples, and identify couples who are likely to divorce.

Marital satisfaction. The KMSS is a 3-item measure of marital satisfaction that demonstrates good concurrent validity, correlating at .83 with the DAS, and good discriminant validity when compared with measures of life satisfaction. The KMSS also demonstrates good criterion validity, distinguishing women living with their partners from women who are separated, and good test-retest reliability and internal consistency. The QMI is a 6-item measure that demonstrates good convergent validity, correlating above .80 with the DAS, good discriminant validity when compared with measures of individual psychopathology, and strong internal consistency, with estimates above .90 across several studies.

Multidimensional measures. The PANQIMS is a 6-item scale with strong internal consistency (estimates above .87) on each dimension. It also demonstrates good convergent validity when compared with the MAT, and good incremental validity, explaining significant variance over the effects of the MAT. The MSI is a 150-item self-report measure with 10 scales assessing specific dimensions of relationship functioning. Internal consistency for the individual scales ranges from .70 to .93, and test-retest reliability coefficients range from .74 to .88. The MSI scales correlate with the MAT and DAS, and with a broad range of affective and behavioral components of marital interaction.

Emerging Efforts to Standardize Assessment

In the last few years, researchers and clinicians have begun to move beyond self-report questionnaires of marital satisfaction, adjustment, or quality. Semistructured interviews have been developed

to conduct multidimensional assessments of these important constructs. For example, Richard Heyman and colleagues developed a structured interview to provide a diagnostic measure of relationship distress. Erika Lawrence and colleagues developed a multidimensional interview to assess marital quality across five key relationship domains, including emotional intimacy, interpartner support, sexual relations, interpartner respect and control, and communication and conflict management. There is also an emerging, conceptually framed, empirically derived, integrated effort to develop a standardized assessment protocol for assessing marital satisfaction and adjustment. This protocol will include assessments of cognitive, affective, behavioral, interpersonal, and structural or developmental domains, and will include self- and partner-report questionnaires, clinical interviews, and analog behavioral observations.

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See also Assessment of Couples; Marital Satisfaction and Quality; Questionnaires, Design and Use of, in Relationship Research; Satisfaction in Relationships

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MARITAL SATISFACTION AND QUALITY

Marital satisfaction (also called *marital quality* or *marital happiness*) typically refers to the subjective

attitude that individuals have toward their marital relationship. Marital quality may be used synonymously with marital satisfaction, but it also has been used to refer to marital adjustment (see later) or to refer to marital satisfaction in conjunction with marital conflict. Marital happiness is typically used synonymously with marital satisfaction.

The marital relationship occupies a privileged status among adults in our society, and as Peter Berger and Hansfried Kellner noted, it is a primary means through which individuals construct and maintain social reality. Satisfaction in the marital relationship is of interest to those who study interpersonal relationships because of its centrality to the meaning-making process in the lives of many adults and because satisfaction in this key relationship is shaped by and shapes aspects of other human relationships (e.g., parent–child). This entry provides an overview of the debate regarding the conceptualization and measurement of marital satisfaction and a summary of the investigation into causes and correlates of marital satisfaction.

Conceptualization and Measurement

Marital satisfaction is perhaps one of the most frequently studied variables in marital research. Despite the wealth of literature examining this construct, there is a continuing lack of consensus among marital researchers about how to conceptualize and measure marital satisfaction, as well as an absence of a unifying theoretical approach to studying this construct. During the past several decades, scholars have engaged in lively debates about how to conceptualize marital satisfaction. There have been two major approaches: looking at the relationship itself (examining patterns of interaction, such as the amount and type of communication and conflict) and looking at individual feelings of the spouses (subjective judgments of satisfaction or happiness). According to those scholars who focus on the interactions in the relationship, rather than on the subjective evaluations made by individuals in the relationship, marital satisfaction is an interpersonal characteristic. Proponents of this approach treat marital satisfaction as a process, the outcome of which is determined by interaction patterns between spouses. Scholars who take this approach, which was dominant during the 1970s,

generally favor the terms *marital adjustment* or *marital quality*, although some do use the term *marital satisfaction* as well. These scholars also view marital satisfaction as a multidimensional construct. Multidimensional measures of marital satisfaction typically assess a number of specific types of interactions between spouses (e.g., time spent together/companionship, conflict, and communication). In addition to measuring reported behavioral characteristics of the dyad, some multidimensional measures also include global subjective evaluations of the relationship (such as happiness, satisfaction, or distress). These items are then typically summed. Frequently employed multidimensional measures of marital satisfaction are the Locke-Wallace Marital Adjustment Test (LWMAT), the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS), and the Marital Satisfaction Inventory (MSI).

During the 1980s, the interpersonal approach to the study of marital satisfaction or marital quality, and the multidimensional measures used by those who adhered to this approach, came under severe attack. Criticisms can be grouped into two general categories. First, many multidimensional measures, such as the LWMAT and the DAS, were criticized for combining scales assessing objective reports of interaction, which are dyadic measures, with subjective evaluations of the relationship, which are individual measures. This is problematic because it combines two different units of analysis. Additionally, it combines two different types of reports (objective and subjective). This presents serious threats to the validity of such scales. Second, multidimensional measures were criticized because the components that are frequently included may actually be determinants of subjective evaluations of marital satisfaction. These factors, such as communication or couple interaction, also could be considered as independent variables that might influence marital satisfaction. Critics pointed out that by including both evaluative judgments about marital quality and reports of specific behaviors and general interaction patterns, multidimensional measures also may inflate associations between marital satisfaction and self-report measures of interpersonal processes in marriage. This is particularly problematic when dealing with cross-sectional data. The criticisms of multidimensional measures raised in the 1970s led many researchers to conclude that scales assessing

different dimensions of marital quality should not be summed up and to develop new measures.

In response to the criticisms of the interpersonal and multidimensional approach to conceptualizing marital satisfaction, scholars began to take an intrapersonal and unidimensional approach in the 1980s. This approach also was prompted by the fact that many of the large nationally representative data sets that were available in the 1980s contained only unidimensional measures of marital quality. According to the intrapersonal approach, marital satisfaction should be conceived of as reflecting a person's subjective evaluation of the marital relationship, rather than the reported quality of interaction between two spouses. Scholars who take this approach typically employ the terms *marital satisfaction*, *marital happiness*, or *marital quality*, rather than *marital adjustment*.

Scholars who take the intrapersonal approach to marital satisfaction most often use unidimensional, global evaluative assessments of the relationship. Unidimensional measures take the individual (rather than the dyad) as the unit of analysis and are subjective reports of attitudes (rather than objective reports of behaviors). Frequently used unidimensional measures include the Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale (KMSS), the Marital Satisfaction Scale (MSS), and the Quality of Marriage Index (QMI).

Although unidimensional measures have not suffered the same degree of criticism as multidimensional measures of marital quality, two major shortcomings have been identified. First, unidimensional measures are criticized for being subject to considerable social desirability response bias. There have been some attempts to measure the extent to which these measures are contaminated by social desirability response bias and to control for it, but there is not yet agreement about the best way to do that. A second criticism of global measures is that they tend to be significantly skewed toward a positive evaluation. This makes analysis of the dependent variable difficult because there is often little variance.

During the 1990s, the lack of consensus regarding how to conceptualize and measure marital satisfaction persisted. At this time, many scholars began to employ the term *marital quality*. Some researchers used this term interchangeably with *marital satisfaction* or *marital happiness*. However, other

scholars began to use *marital quality* in a broader sense and included multiple measures (e.g., both marital satisfaction and marital conflict), but treated them as separate dimensions rather than creating a summary index as earlier scholars had done. Frank Fincham and colleagues suggest that marital quality contains separate positive and negative dimensions. Drawing on recent research in the areas of attitudes and affect, they argue that people may feel both positively and negatively about their marriages and that these feelings may change independently over time. These scholars use the terms *positive marital quality* (PMQ) and *negative marital quality* (NMQ) to distinguish between these two dimensions and create a fourfold typology of marital quality: satisfied (high PMQ and low NMQ), ambivalent (high PMQ and high NMQ), indifferent (low PMQ and low NMQ), and distressed or dissatisfied (low PMQ and high NMQ). It remains to be seen whether this two-dimensional approach will be widely adopted by marital researchers, though. The debate regarding how to conceptualize and measure this important construct has not been resolved.

Disagreement regarding how to conceptualize and measure marital quality and the diversity of academic disciplines represented among those who study marital satisfaction, have both contributed to the failure of scholars to develop a guiding theoretical perspective while studying marital satisfaction. Early theoretical attempts consisted primarily of drawing propositions from existing, general theories, such as Attachment, Social Exchange, or Role Theories, or of developing middle-range theories, such as Robert Lewis and Graham Spanier's Exchange Theory of Marital Quality. In the 1980s, marital quality research tended to be atheoretical, as scholars struggled to resolve the controversies surrounding how to measure and conceptualize marital satisfaction. In the 1990s, scholars began to expand their areas of inquiry beyond individual and interpersonal factors that may influence marital satisfaction to take a more ecological approach, considering the contexts in which individual and interpersonal processes occur as well.

Causes and Correlates of Marital Satisfaction

The investigation of determinants of marital satisfaction and marital quality has occupied a central

place in marital research for many decades. However, over time, the focus of such research has changed. In the 1940s, much of the work investigated how personality characteristics might influence marital satisfaction. In the 1950s, scholars shifted their attention to interactional styles, which spurred the development of the multi-dimensional measures of marital satisfaction (or marital adjustment) described earlier. The movement of women out of the home and into the workplace shaped the work of scholars in the 1980s and 1990s, when factors such as role conflict, the division of household labor, women's employment, and power were widely investigated for their relationship to marital satisfaction. Conflict resolution and violence also emerged as factors investigated during this time.

More recently, scholars have begun to take a more complicated approach to understanding the factors that may be related to marital satisfaction by trying to identify both mediating and moderating variables. A moderating variable is a variable upon which a relationship between an independent and dependent variable is contingent. For instance, the link between marital satisfaction and certain factors, such as conflict and sexual satisfaction, appears to be contingent on the gender of the spouse. Other factors, such as race/ethnicity, age, and relationship stage also have been considered as possible moderators. Recent research also has attempted to understand the role of mediating, or intervening variables, on marital satisfaction. For instance, depression may lead to more negativity in relationships (a mediating variable), thereby impacting marital satisfaction indirectly.

Because of the vast number of studies into the causes and correlates of marital satisfaction and marital quality, it is impossible to summarize all their findings. However, several excellent reviews have set out to accomplish this task. Each decade since 1970, the *Journal of Marriage and the Family* has published such a review, offering an overview of findings from the previous decade. This entry offers only a brief introduction to some of the key findings regarding causes and correlates of marital satisfaction.

One of the most intensely studied topics in marital satisfaction research has been the influence of children, family stage, and duration of the marriage on marital satisfaction. In a review of studies

conducted during the 1960s, scholars reported that one of the most surprising findings of that decade was that children appear to detract from the marital quality of their parents. The transition to parenthood continued to be a popular topic of study during the 1970s. Several cross-sectional studies identified a curvilinear relationship between family stage and marital satisfaction, whereby the average quality is higher in the preparental and postparental stages. The most common interpretation of this finding was that it reflected the addition of children to the family, their maturation, and their departure. However, longitudinal studies have suggested that changes often attributed to the transition to parenthood are duration-of-marriage effects instead. Some of these studies suggest that rather than being curvilinear, marital quality declines sharply during the first few years of marriage and then tapers off more slowly. The impact of children on marital satisfaction continues to be a topic of inquiry among scholars. A recent meta-analytic review of research into the link between parenthood and marital satisfaction concluded that parents report lower satisfaction than do non-parents, that the effect of parenthood is stronger for women than for men, that this effect is particularly strong for women with infants, and that the effect is stronger for more recent generations. The number of children and levels of satisfaction were also negatively correlated. This review offered support for the notion that children are linked to lower levels of satisfaction because of role conflict and restricted freedom.

The link between premarital cohabitation and marital satisfaction also has been the subject of a great deal of investigation in recent decades. A negative relationship between cohabitation and marital quality has been established, but it is unclear whether it is the living together or the type of people who tend to live together before marriage that is responsible for this effect. Research on remarriage also has increased sharply in the past 20 years and much of it has focused on marital satisfaction. This research indicates that the average marital satisfaction is slightly greater in first marriages than in remarriages after divorce. It also appears that the average satisfaction in remarriages is somewhat higher for men than for women.

Wives' employment, spouses' gender role attitudes, the division of household labor, and perceived

equality also have received a great deal of attention recently. It seems that congruency between spouses' attitudes toward gender roles, as well as congruency between attitudes and behaviors, are related to marital satisfaction. A shared division of household labor and perceived fairness of the division of household labor also seem to enhance marital satisfaction, especially for wives.

Thomas Bradbury and colleagues organized their review of marital quality research conducted in the 1990s around two themes: interpersonal processes and sociocultural contexts within which marriages operate. These authors stated that research conducted during the 1980s and 1990s supported the conclusion that spouses' attributions (or causal statements) for marital events are linked to marital satisfaction. Spouses that employ maladaptive attributions for negative partner behaviors have lower levels of marital satisfaction and use more negative behaviors during marital problem-solving discussions. Maladaptive attributions emphasize stable, internal, global characteristics rather than temporary, situational, specific characteristics. For instance, a wife who attributes her husband's late arrival to dinner as reflective of a stable personality characteristic, such as thoughtlessness or a lack of organization, rather than to a temporary, situational issue, such as heavy traffic or a busy day at work, is more likely to engage in negative behaviors during problem-solving discussions. The 1990s also saw a dramatic surge in research on the affective, or emotional, dimension of marital interaction. Although this research has demonstrated that affect is linked to marital quality, the exact nature of the relationship is not clear yet. For instance, some studies show that negative affect is harmful to marital quality, but other studies suggest that it enhances marital quality. Interaction patterns (especially the demand-withdraw pattern), physiology (e.g., the degree of physical arousal during marital interaction), social support, and violence also were identified as factors that are linked to marital satisfaction. In the latter half of their review, Thomas Bradbury and colleagues focus on contextual factors that are linked to marital quality. In particular, they discuss ways in which children, spouses' background and characteristics, life stressors and transitions, and neighborhood characteristics are related to marital quality.

The importance of understanding and measuring marital satisfaction and its influences stems primarily from the assumption that it is a key determinant of other important marital outcomes, such as marital stability (divorce and separation). Early marital researchers often assumed that marital satisfaction was predictive of marital stability. However, it became clear that given a certain level of marital satisfaction, some marriages would end in divorce and some would not. Spanier and Lewis identified four types of marriages: high quality/high stability, high quality/low stability, low quality/high stability, and low quality/low stability. Following the work of these scholars, several researchers have tried to identify factors that may moderate the relationship between marital quality and marital stability. External pressures (e.g., social pressure to remain married) and alternative attractions (e.g., availability of other mates) have been the focus of several studies.

Studies also show that marital satisfaction is positively related to other measures of individual well-being (e.g., life satisfaction, physical health). In the 1980s, some studies used marital satisfaction as an independent variable to predict the global well-being of married people, illustrating a strong positive link between the two. Although there has been some debate regarding the causal direction between these two variables, recent longitudinal research suggests that low marital quality is linked with lower levels of overall happiness, life satisfaction, self-esteem, and overall physical health. The authors of these studies suggest that marital satisfaction is a predictor of individual general well-being (rather than the other way around). Additionally, findings indicate that one spouse's marital satisfaction is linked to the well-being of the other spouse as well as the children's well-being.

Finally, in recent years, scholars have begun to examine how the concepts and findings from research on marital satisfaction might relate to the study of satisfaction within nonmarital relationships, such as unmarried heterosexual couples or same-sex couples. Thus far, it seems that many of the concepts and findings derived from studies of marital satisfaction also can be applied to satisfaction within other types of committed sexual relationships.

In conclusion, despite the continuing debate about how to conceptualize and measure marital

satisfaction and the difficulties constructing a unifying theory of marital satisfaction, a great deal has been discovered about what factors are linked to marital satisfaction. As scholars continue to explore moderators and mediators of these links, and to engage in longitudinal research identifying the directions of effects, our understanding of this important component of human relationships will become even clearer.

Lindsay Custer

See also Happiness and Relationships; Longitudinal Studies of Marital Satisfaction and Dissolution; Marital Satisfaction, Assessment of; Satisfaction in Relationships

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MARITAL STABILITY, PREDICTION OF

Studies predicting marital dissolution generally assess couples within a few months of marriage

and then follow them over the next 2 to 14 years, assessing their relationship status throughout the study. Around the time of marriage, relationship researchers assess many different types of factors, including demographic variables, personality variables, and variables capturing the quality of interaction between the couples in hopes to determine which factors best predict divorce. Because 40 percent of all divorces occur within the first 4 to 5 years of marriage, studies tend to follow couples during this high-risk period to identify the factors predicting divorce. Accurate prediction can identify factors that put couples at risk for divorce and can be used to help target interventions (such as relationship workshops) to the couples that need them most. Although many variables have been assessed for their potential ability to predict divorce, this entry focuses on those factors that have been found to contribute the most to predicting marital separation and divorce as well as the methods researchers use to assess these factors.

Demographic Predictors

One set of factors that researchers have used to predict divorce is demographic variables. Demographic variables categorize individuals into certain groups or populations and include characteristics such as occupation, geographic location, religion, age, and marital status. Researchers have found that race, gender, and levels of education are significant predictors of the risk of divorce over time. Specifically, research has found that African-American couples are more than twice as likely as are Caucasian couples to divorce. In addition, couples with lower levels of education, lower levels of income, couples starting marriage at younger ages, and couples starting marriage with children are also at significantly greater risk for divorce. As these demographic variables often go hand in hand with one another, the results with these various demographic markers highlight the risk associated with general socioeconomic disadvantage.

Personality Traits

Researchers have also focused on how the individual personalities that husbands and wives bring to relationships affect marital outcomes. Studies

have consistently found that husbands and wives who have very negative and irritable personalities (a trait called *neuroticism*) tend to be less happy in their marriages and are more likely to divorce over time. Although neuroticism has shown the strongest long-term effects on relationships, a number of other personality traits have also been linked to relationship outcomes over time. Divorce tends to be slightly more likely for couples who have highly impulsive husbands (husbands who are more likely to act without thinking or are less able to inhibit themselves). Divorce tends to be slightly less likely in couples where spouses are highly agreeable (easy going and amiable) and conscientious. Thus, the personality traits that spouses bring into their relationships can sometimes place those relationships at greater risk for discord and divorce.

Feelings

Researchers have also examined affective factors such as passion, liking, trust, and emotional distress in predicting relationship outcomes. Specifically, high levels of emotional distress (a variable including many areas of psychological health including depression, anxiety, and hostility) around the time of marriage predict separation and divorce. Low levels of liking (positive impressions of a romantic partner) and low levels of trust at the time of marriage also predict more rapid relationship dissolution. Low levels of passion for one's partner at the time of marriage also predict earlier separation, but this result has only been found for women. This gender difference suggests that feeling passionate about one's spouse early in marriage might have different meaning for men and women. Drops in feelings of liking, trust, or love during the first 4 years in marriage also help to predict subsequent separation and divorce. Thus, feelings toward a relationship and toward one's romantic partner early in marriage can help to identify the couples who will separate and even end their relationships.

Communication and Support

Of all the factors examined, the factor most strongly linked to relationship outcomes is spouses'

behavior toward each other—specifically, the quality of their communication skills and the degree to which their discussions of everyday problems either remain constructive and supportive or become negative, hostile, and attacking. Research has consistently shown that high levels of self-reported hostile conflict behavior and frequent conflict in the relationship around the time of marriage are signals that a marriage may be heading toward divorce. Furthermore, husbands feeling validated (feeling listened to and understood by his wife) around the time of marriage is associated with lower risk of divorce. Similarly, spouses being emotionally supportive and compassionate toward each other—particularly during stressful periods—has been linked to better outcomes. Although many studies assess couples' communication using self-report questionnaires, researchers also often assess communication skills by videotaping couples discussing relationship problems in the laboratory. Research teams then code these discussions for the amounts of positive (e.g., warm, affectionate, empathic) and negative (e.g., defensive, angry, critical) behavior exhibited by each spouse. Coding of conflict behavior has been strongly linked to adverse marital outcomes (marital discord and divorce) across a series of studies from a variety of research labs. High levels of angry and hostile emotions during conflict discussions predict divorce during the first 7 years of marriage. In addition, a notable lack of positive emotions during conflict discussions has been found to predict divorce during 14 years of marriage. Both lower levels of positive and higher levels of negative conflict behavior have been linked to significant drops in relationship satisfaction during the first 4 years of marriage. Thus, becoming hostile and attacking when dealing with relationship problems potentially erodes relationships during the early years of marriage.

Physical Aggression

Mild forms of physical aggression (e.g., pushing, slapping, shoving) are known to occur in as many as 35 to 50 percent of all newlywed marriages, and another line of research has examined how such common couple violence is associated with marital outcomes. Physical aggression reported around the

time of marriage is a strong predictor of divorce in the first 4 years of marriage, even after controlling for the effects of hostile conflict behavior. These findings suggest that while both factors erode relationship quality, physical aggression has more immediate effects, eroding relationships more quickly. Researchers have also assessed drinking behaviors and alcohol-related problems in studies looking at relationship aggression, inasmuch as these often co-occur. Alcohol problems and excessive heavy drinking have been found to increase the risk of divorce two to three times during a 5-year period. However, even after taking alcohol problems into account, the presence of physical aggression in the relationship continues to more than double the risk of divorce, demonstrating a strong association with marital outcomes that rivals the prediction demonstrated for communication behavior.

Predicting From Interviews

Although many studies use either coded behavioral observations of conflict discussions (to assess the quality of communication behavior) or self-report questionnaires (assessing a range of factors including relationship communication, personality traits, and feelings about one's partner or relationship), another line of research has used ratings obtained from face-to-face interviews with couples to assess these same constructs. For example, the Oral History Interview asks partners about the history of their relationship, their attitudes toward marriage and the quality of their current relationship. In a series of studies, researchers have demonstrated that interviewer assessments of high husband disappointment (the husband seeming disillusioned about the marriage or seeming to have given up) and low levels of fondness (affection toward a spouse) predicted divorce during a 3-year period. In addition, assessments of poor marital bond (a general sense of closeness and a visible emotional connection between spouses) predicted divorce during a 5-year period even after accounting for self-reported levels of initial relationship happiness.

Retrospective Studies

Other marital researchers have attempted to examine the issue of prediction by collecting large

numbers of successful and failed marriages (after these outcomes have already occurred) and then using archival data collected from those couples just before marriage (obtained in the context of religious marital preparation) to identify differences between the two “outcome” groups. Although the data used for prediction was indeed collected prior to marriage, selecting couples for inclusion based on the ultimate outcome of their marriage differs markedly from including all willing couples and then tracking their outcomes. This sample-selection procedure typically resulted in samples made up of mostly extreme outcomes (very happy marriages vs. very bitter divorces) as the researchers eliminated more typical couples from their studies. This technique also limits the sample to religious couples as well as limiting the study to the religion-based compatibility inventories used to screen couples for marital readiness. Couples are often required to obtain sufficiently high compatibility scores to obtain permission to marry, so there is clear pressure on couples to adjust their responses accordingly—leading one to question the validity of such data. Despite these caveats, such studies have shown that higher levels of similarity on domains such as preferred leisure activities, life style expectations, religious values, and approaches to problem-solving and finances are associated with better marital outcomes.

Predictive Algorithms

In sum, evidence in the current literature points to a diverse group of factors that contribute to the risk of divorce including race, gender, education, aversive personality traits, hostile and attacking communication, social support, physical aggression, and compatibility. The results suggest that these factors can be measured by self-report scales, observational coding of couples’ behavior, interviewer ratings, or compatibility inventories without affecting the predictive information they provide. Just over a dozen studies have attempted to examine sets of these factors simultaneously to develop predictive algorithms. Although each of these factors makes a unique contribution to the process of prediction, results suggest that the bulk of the prediction can be achieved by including the factors representing partners’ behavior toward

each other—specifically, their communication, social support and aggressive behaviors. The current models can predict between 68 to 84 percent of marital outcomes during the first 3 to 6 years of marriage. This suggests that by simply giving engaged or newlywed couples a short packet of questionnaires to complete, it is possible to accurately predict the outcomes of three or four couples out of every five during the volatile early years of marriage, offering the possibility of targeting couples at the greatest risk for discord and divorce with preventive interventions to improve their interaction and thereby strengthen their relationships. However, it is also apparent from these findings that there is still much to be learned about how marriages succeed and fail. It may be that some factors involved in the dissolution of relationships have yet to be identified or included in prediction studies. It is also possible that marital discord and divorce are such complex, changing, and highly individual phenomena that it may never be possible to achieve perfect prediction.

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See also Boston Couples Study; Dissolution of Relationships, Breakup Strategies; Dissolution of Relationships, Causes; Dissolution of Relationships, Coping and Aftermath; Dissolution of Relationships, Processes; Divorce, Prevalence and Trends; Intergenerational Transmission of Divorce; Predicting Success or Failure of Marital Relationships

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MARITAL TYPOLOGIES

Marital typologies represent attempts of scholars to simplify the study of marriage by grouping together, and essentially treating as equivalent, those marriages that are similar and to distinguish, and treat separately, those that are different. This entry reviews basic assumptions underlying different marital typologies and their roles in theorizing about interaction processes and outcomes relevant to marriage.

Marital typologies, like other typologies of human relationships, provide a cognitive framework that primarily serves two functions: to organize observations and to systematically relate knowledge to explain and predict behaviors and outcomes. As such, they are the inventions of observers (scholars and laypersons alike) rather than the reflection of an actual or natural state of the marital relationship. Although often related, these two functions are theoretically orthogonal. Typologies that do a good job of fulfilling the first function (i.e., organizing observations) often make intuitive sense and are based on some easily recognizable attribute of the marriage that makes identification of the type easy. However, because marital outcomes usually are dependent on processes and dynamics that are not linked to easily observed attributes, typologies based on such attributes are not necessarily good at explaining and predicting behaviors and outcomes.

Typologies that are good at fulfilling the second function (i.e., explaining and predicting behaviors and outcomes) are frequently based on what scholars and researchers have learned to be relevant and important for the internal processes and dynamics

of marriages that lead to different behaviors and outcomes rather than some easily recognizable attribute. Consequently, it is not easily apparent what type a marriage falls into and, therefore, it is not uncommon to find that typologies of marriages are more meaningful to researchers than to laypersons or even the married couples themselves. Most scholars favor typologies that fulfill the function of explaining and predicting.

Assumptions Underlying Marital Typologies

Determinations about similarities and differences that allow marriages to be assigned a certain type are usually based on assumptions about similarities in experiences and external factors or on assumptions about similarities in internal dynamics and processes of marriages. Examples of the former include typologies based on stability (e.g., enduring vs. divorced), satisfaction and adjustment (e.g., satisfied vs. dissatisfied), or structure (e.g., first vs. second marriage; heterosexual vs. homosexual marriage; intra-ethnic vs. mixed-race). The underlying assumption of these typologies is that the individuals within marriages and the marriage dyads themselves essentially function similarly and that differences between marriages are the result of the different challenges and circumstance that couples confront.

Examples of typologies based on internal dynamics and processes include those based on conflict behaviors (e.g., validating, volatile, and avoiding couples), problem solving (e.g., competitive, collaborative, accommodating, neglecting, and compromising couples), and marriage beliefs (e.g., traditional, independent, and separate couples). The underlying assumption of these typologies is that individuals and couples constitute systems with unique properties who respond to similar challenges and circumstances quite differently, but that among these responses, there are regularities that can be used to classify couples into different types.

Marital Typologies in Social Science

As a consequence of social scientists' concern for explanation and prediction, most marital typologies developed in the social sciences focus not as

much on structural differences or differences in external circumstances as on differences in internal dynamics and processes.

Typologies of Couples in Specific Circumstances

For some typologies, these dynamics and processes are considered in the context of specific external circumstances only, such as newlyweds, couples with young children, or remarried couples. One classic example of such a typology is the work of Lawrence Rosenfeld and his colleagues, who developed a typology of dual-career marriages. Here, couples are classified based on spouses' involvement in family- and work-related activities. Collapsing couples are those in which wives adjust poorly to demands at work and home and husbands adjust poorly to demands at work and only moderately to demands at home. Work-directed couples, as the name implies, are those in which both spouses adjust well to work-related demands, but the wife adjusts only moderately and the husband poorly to demands at home. Finally, traditional-role couples are those in which the wife adjusts well to demands at home but poorly to demands at work, whereas the husband adjusts well to demands in both areas. In terms of satisfaction, wives were most satisfied in work-directed couples, whereas husbands were most satisfied in traditional role marriages, suggesting that challenges of dual careers require some sort of trade off between spouses.

Typologies of Couples Based on Specific Interpersonal Processes

Other typologies are also similarly narrowly focused, but rather than focusing on particular circumstance, they focus on specific processes, such as problem solving or parenting. A good example is John Gottman's seminal work on couple conflict. His typology is based on conflict behaviors and identifies three functional and two dysfunctional types. Of the functional types, the most intuitive is the validating couple. In this type, both partners openly communicate their needs and desires and are receptive of those of the other. They are supportive of one another, engage in collaborative problem solving, and maintain largely positive affect throughout conflict episodes. They are also able to repair

any damage caused to their relationship as a result of expressed negative affect by apologizing and expressing positive affect for the other.

Less intuitive is the volatile type. Couples who are volatile are those in which both partners are more competitive rather than collaborative and also freely express their negative affect. These couples, however, are able to compensate for hurt and negative emotions by also expressing a surplus of positive affect that allows them to maintain their relationship. Equally counterintuitive are avoidant couples, in which both partners avoid even acknowledging their divergent interests and, as a result, do not engage in any form of problem solving or openly express their negative affect. Although avoidant couples typically fail to explicitly resolve their differences, partners individually accommodate each other and, because they do not create a lot of hurt feelings, are able to maintain their relationship even in the absence of expressions of positive affect for each other.

Gottman also identified two dysfunctional types, the hostile and the hostile-detached couple. Conflict in these couples is characterized by the open expression of negative affect, often with the intent to hurt or denigrate the other. Because of the significant negative emotional toll that these interactions incur, couples with these conflict styles are unlikely to stay together for very long.

Typologies of Couples Based on Cognitive Representations and Behaviors

There are also a few typologies of marriages that are broader in scope in that they do not focus on marriages in specific circumstances or on only one or two interpersonal processes. Of these typologies, one of the earliest and most influential was developed by Mary Anne Fitzpatrick. Fitzpatrick's typology categorizes marriages based on how they are represented cognitively by spouses in terms of relevant beliefs about marriage and how these beliefs are expressed through behavior. Specifically, spouses' reports of their marital *ideology* are assessed, including beliefs spouses have about the sex-roles of husbands and wives, whether wives should take husbands' names, and how married couples should relate to their communities. Also measured is the behavioral *interdependence* of couples. Couples report on how they coordinate

their individual schedules and how they share their physical and psychological space, by, for example, having separate bedrooms or offices and maintaining privacy about financial matters and personal correspondence. Finally, *communication* is assessed and, in particular, whether couples engage in or avoid conflict and what they do, say, and feel during conflict interactions.

Based on these three dimensions, individuals can be categorized into one of three marital types: traditional, independent, and separate. Traditionals are very interdependent in their marriages, have conventional ideological values and beliefs about marriage and family life, and report an expressive communication style with their spouses. Independents are moderately interdependent in their marriages, have nonconventional values and beliefs about marriage and family life, and report a very expressive communication style with their spouses. Separates are not very interdependent in their marriages, have conventional ideological values and beliefs about marriage and family life, and report very little expressivity in their marital communication. In about two-thirds of marriages, both spouses have the same marital type; the remaining marriages fall into a mixed type (most frequently a traditional wife and a separate husband).

In addition to being more broadly applicable to investigations of marriage in a number of circumstances and concerns for various interpersonal processes, this typology has several other strengths. First, it is based equally on theory (the three underlying dimensions were identified based on prevailing marital theories) and empirical observation (the three types represent naturally occurring clusters in the conceptual space defined by the three dimensions). This typology also recognizes that different marriages achieve similarly satisfactory or functional outcomes in different ways that produce different sets of advantages and disadvantages for each type. That is, different types of marriages confronting the same set of challenges may respond differently and achieve similar outcomes; by contrast, similar ways of responding may lead to different outcomes based on marriage type. For example, independent and separate spouses both cultivate close relationships outside of marriage that are sources of emotional support for them, whereas traditional spouses and, in

particular husbands, focus almost exclusively on the spouse as a source of emotional support, often at the expense of external friendships. Thus, spouses in all marriage types are generally able to receive emotional support in times of need, although the loss of a spouse from death or divorce is more challenging in traditional marriages, whereas the stress of moving to a different town and building a new social network are more challenging in independent and separate marriages.

Despite these obvious strengths, there are also weaknesses in Fitzpatrick's typology. Probably the greatest weakness is that the typology fails to provide a comprehensive account of about a third of all couples (i.e., those that fall into the mixed category). Although there are six different types of mixed couples that likely vary in their communication, researchers usually treat mixed couples as a single group and contrast them to traditional, independent, and separate couples. This is an oversimplification and represents a lost opportunity to study the consequences of divergent perceptions of relationship among married couples.

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See also Conflict, Marital; Dual-Earner Couples; Marital Satisfaction and Quality; Parenting; Relationship Types and Taxonomies

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MARKETPLACE APPROACHES TO COURTSHIP, LOVE, AND SEX

Marketplace approaches to romance and sexuality seek to analyze these phenomena using economic concepts and terms. This entry describes how romance and sexuality can be analyzed in economic terms. A marketplace approach involves several basic assumptions, as follows. First, exchange is involved. Second, exchanges are to some extent beneficial to both sellers and buyers, though not necessarily equally beneficial. Third, the transactions of each pair of buyer and seller are intertwined, so that they affect each other, and are in accord with basic economic principles.

Human romantic and sexual relationships can be analyzed in marketplace terms for several reasons. Forming a romantic attachment, whether for one night or a lifetime or something in between, is a kind of exchange in which the two people offer each other something that each wants (though not necessarily the same things). In modern Western cultures, the strong tradition of exclusivity and laws against polygamy entail that these transactions involve two persons. The most common form involves one man and one woman, although same-sex pairings do occur with some regularity and present theoretically interesting variations on the marketplace model.

In psychology, the foundation for marketplace analyses is social exchange theory, which has sought to analyze human interactions in terms of what each person offers the other and what benefits each person gets from it, as well as the costs to each. A basic assumption is that people will only participate in such interactions (and relationships) as long as their benefits outweigh their costs. For example, people may remain in relationships that cause them some degree of pain and distress as long as they derive other, valued benefits from

remaining. A social exchange theorist might also consider that the two persons derive different benefits. One may find sexual satisfaction or emotional support to be paramount; the other person may feel that financial support or having a stable family is the main benefit.

Supply and Demand

Marketplaces respond to fluctuations in the relative amounts of supply and demand. This is true for romantic and sexual relationships also. In the market for heterosexual romance, the relative numbers of men and women available are important because an oversupply of either gender relative to the other means that not everyone will be able to find a mate.

In this respect, economic marketplaces are the opposite of democracy. In a democracy, the majority rules and can by its superior voting power insist on having conditions that favor it. In a marketplace, however, the minority has more power than the majority. If your gender is in the minority, then you have many romantic options, and the marketplace is likely to negotiate terms favorable to your gender. If your gender is in the majority, things will go less smoothly. For example, because men tend to die younger than women, elderly widowed men have many more potential romantic partners than do elderly widowed women.

The impact of the sex ratio (i.e., the number of men per hundred women) on sexual and romantic behavior was explored in a classic interdisciplinary book by Marcia Guttentag and Paul Secord called *Too Many Women?* Comparing across different cultures and times, Guttentag and Secord noted that patterns of sexual and romantic behavior fluctuated in step with the sex ratio. When there were more men than women (because more men immigrate to a place, or because selective infanticide or selective abortion reduces the female population), norms tended to conform to what many women prefer. Long-term committed relationships were typical, whereas premarital and extramarital sex were relatively rare. In contrast, when there were more women than men (such as after a major war in which many men have been killed, or today in some low-income minority populations from which many men are killed or arrested), the norms

seemed more suitable to what many men like: less commitment, more turnover in relationships, and much more premarital and extramarital sex.

Sexual Economics

Sexual economics theory was proposed by Roy Baumeister and Kathleen Vohs to analyze sexual interactions in marketplace terms. They invoked another basic principle of social exchange theory, the so-called Principle of Lesser Interest, which suggests that whoever wants something more is at a disadvantage. This principle has often been applied to relationships: Whichever partner is more in love is at a disadvantage because he or she wants the relationship to continue more than the other does, and so this person must typically offer the other extra inducements.

Applied to sex, the Principle of Lesser Interest puts men at a disadvantage because typically men want sex more than women. The greater desire entails that men must typically offer women additional inducements to persuade them to have sex. These may take the form of paying for dates and dinner, giving jewelry and other gifts, making a commitment, giving the woman respect and commitment, or in the case of prostitution, giving her money.

Sexual economics theory is decidedly unromantic, which has created some resistance to it, but it explains a broad variety of findings and observations. It treats sex as a resource that women possess and that men want, and so female sexuality has exchange value whereas male sexuality usually does not. Thus, women have been able to trade sex for career advancement, reduced punishments, privileges, drugs, and money, whereas men usually do not have that option. Among ordinary people, both men and women fantasize about having sex with celebrities, but only women are able to enact these fantasies because a man who offers sex to a celebrity is likely to be rejected whereas comparable offers by women are more likely to be accepted.

One application of sexual economics theory invokes basic economic principles about how monopolies can increase prices by restricting the supply. Many cultures have imposed restrictions on female sexuality. These have sometimes been

interpreted as efforts by men to control women, but a large amount of evidence indicates that, on the contrary, restraints on female sexuality are mainly supported and enforced by other women. Even the most extreme of these restraints, namely the female genital surgeries that impair women's sexual responses, are culturally maintained by women who make the decisions, put pressure on each other to continue the practice, and carry out the operations, generally to the complete exclusion of men and in many cases contrary to men's preferences. Women benefit from restrictive sexual norms insofar as the reduced supply of sex makes men willing to offer more (e.g., faithful long-term commitment, respect, financial support) for sex. Cross-cultural evidence indicates that sexual norms are most restrictive when women lack economic and political power, presumably because women need the price of sex to be high. When women have more opportunities, they can allow more sex.

Homosexual Marketplaces

Same-gender romance and sex also have marketplaces, although these differ in important ways from heterosexual marketplaces. Because both persons are of the same gender, the roles (corresponding to buyer and seller) may be less well defined than are gender roles. The minority status of homosexuality means that it is often relatively difficult to find potential partners, and so the prospects of finding an ideally matched partner are lower than for heterosexuals. Homosexuals may find it appealing to relocate to places where there are more potential partners, simply to have more prospects.

Love triangles likewise present additional complications among same-gender couples. In a heterosexual marriage, for example, a man may be upset to learn that his wife is attracted to another man, but he does not usually feel personally offended that the interloper is sexually pursuing his wife rather than himself. In same-gender triangles, any two of the three could potentially form the stable couple.

Roy F. Baumeister

See also Mate Selection; Sex and Love; Sex Ratio; Social Exchange Theory

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MARRIAGE, BENEFITS OF

Given the preponderance of divorce in developed nations, most people realize that a Cinderella wedding does not guarantee living happily ever after. Even so, most couples in the world get married, and many same-sex couples are fighting for the right to get married. For some, marriage is a sacred vow that must be enacted before having sex and children. For many others, it is a voluntary choice, entered into regardless of religious significance. In short, most people want to get married. With the well-known fact that many marriages do not last, one might wonder why people want to get married. Are there real benefits to marriage beyond those imagined through rose-colored glasses? This entry addresses this question. To answer it, the entry will also address two other questions. First, to whom do these benefits go? It can be argued that marriage benefits culture, society, the family, the couple, and the individual. Second, do benefits accrue differently for men and women? Research has shown that, at the individual level, marriage bestows benefits differently to men and women.

All legal marriages impart legal benefits, but other, less visible and direct benefits vary from couple to couple. The preponderance of research demonstrates that the most of the social, physiological, and psychological benefits of marriage accrue to those couples whose marriages are going well.

Culture and Society

It has been argued that marriage provides the best type of family structure within which to raise,

nurture, and socialize children to become productive members of society. On the practical side, spouses combining two incomes can, more easily than single parents, maintain a household and raise children. In addition, families are one way in which cultural and religious traditions are transmitted to the young. Being married also gives couples a connection to their community, and are recognized as spouses bound by law. Although our society tolerates and sometimes accepts cohabitation, such an arrangement is not given legal rights or as much legitimacy as marriage. More often, cohabitation is seen as a step toward the goal of getting married.

Family

Marriage creates a bond between one person and his or her spouse's family. Such a connection may be detrimental when, for example, in-laws interfere with the marital relationship or the socialization and discipline of children. However, the benefits that accrue when families are supportive are clear. The family group to which a couple belongs automatically becomes larger when they marry. The spouses are seen as family, and as such, have access to the resources of two families instead of one. Older family members can provide teaching functions for the new couple. Couple that have children also benefit from interactions with other family members, learning to socialize and become members of a larger family unit, not to mention the tangible benefits that other family members can provide.

Couple

Married couples have legal benefits that unmarried couples generally do not have. Legally, a spouse has access to the health insurance of the other and is allowed to make decisions for an ill partner when he or she is unable to make those decisions independently. In many nations, a spouse is also entitled to the retirement benefits of the deceased spouse, and married couples are given tax benefits. Married couples are also seen as more desirable parents to adopt children. In addition, in a court of law, spouses are not required to testify against each other. These benefits of

marriage are not given to unmarried cohabiting couples. Although marriage provides many other benefits, the legal benefits, in large part, are those that same-sex couples are fighting for.

There are other, less tangible benefits to marriage. Marriage gives couples a way to demonstrate their commitment to each other publicly. Being married bestows a sense of legitimacy, recognition as a couple, and inclusion into the larger society, which are other reasons that some same-sex couples want the right to marry.

Although the benefits of raising and nurturing children can far outweigh the costs, the changes children bring a couple's life are daunting at first. Day-to-day routines must change drastically to adjust to a new baby who is dependent on parents for every aspect of living. The joys of raising children, as well as the strains, can be shared by spouses, and may expand their "couple identity" as they become parents. However, if a marriage is troubled, having children usually does not solve problems. Research indicates that couples' interaction patterns generally do not change after having children. For example, spouses who engage in destructive patterns of interaction before having children continue to behave in destructive ways after having children. Research also shows that for most marriages, marital quality declines after having children, but stability increases. This downturn in marital quality occurs especially in younger couples who have children early in marriage. Thus, having children can be a double-edged sword for many couples.

Marriage can also be a source of social support in the sense that spouses help each other in times of need. Marital support is exemplified by having someone to confide in when upset, being taken care of when ill, and being valued as an individual. Marital support engenders the sense that one is not alone when facing stressful situations. One person's problems become *our* problems and can be faced together, fostering the attitude of "you and me against the world." Thus, problems may not seem as bad when someone can be counted on to help and reassure.

Individual Well-Being

U.S. society is considered to be individualistic compared with many Asian countries that are

considered to be collective societies. Therefore, it is not surprising that many of the benefits of marriage in Western society accrue to the individual. Individuals who are married are better off in many ways—physically and psychologically—than are people who are not married.

Physical Health

In Western society, married people are healthier than unmarried people. There are two major hypotheses for the health advantage of marriage. The first is selection. That is, healthier people choose (are selected or self-select) to be married. People who choose to be married often have more financial resources, less stress, more social support, and better health habits than do those who choose to be single. These advantages, at first glance, are not benefits to the individual because they exist before marriage. However, when two people with these same advantages combine resources, marriage can enhance their existing healthy lifestyle.

The second hypothesis for the health advantage of marriage is protection from ill health. Protection (as opposed to selection) is a benefit of marriage because it accrues after marriage. Interestingly, the health advantage after marriage is stronger for men than for women. One reason married men are healthier than unmarried men is that women are more likely than men to attempt to influence their partner's health-related behaviors (such as taking medication, visiting doctors, eating healthy foods). As such, wives are more likely than husbands to urge their spouses to seek medical help and even make their appointments with physicians. Further, men are more likely to depend on their wives for social support, whereas women tend to be more integrated into socially supportive networks of friends and family. Thus, in addition to having someone to monitor their health behaviors, men also gain a health benefit by being married to more socially integrated wives. Being integrated into social networks is also a factor that predicts better health.

For men, marital status seems to bestow health benefits upon the married man regardless of how satisfying the marriage is. On the other hand, married women are healthier than single women only when the marriage is satisfying. In other words, unhappy marriages are a greater risk factor for wives than for husbands. There are two

plausible, but not yet empirically established, explanations for the close tie between women's health and the quality of their marriages. Women's self-concept is intertwined with her relationships, so a poor-quality marriage may reflect poorly on the women themselves. Second, because women are also more likely to monitor others' health behaviors in addition to their relationships, they may ignore their own psychological and physiological signs of stress. Thus, women in unhappy marriages are at the same risk of ill health as single women are, and at greater risk of health problems than married men.

In response to acute stressors in laboratory settings (for example, being harassed, public speaking), however, men generally show greater increases in physiological indicators of stress than women do. Although men are affected more acutely by general stressors, research indicates that men's physiological responses to acute stressors tend to be short-lived and dissipate quickly. Conversely, physiological indicators of stress show that women, compared with men, react more strongly to discussions of marital problems. For women, the physiological reactions to the stress of marital conflict appear to last longer and have a longer-term effect than men's reactions do.

As implied earlier, ignoring their own physiological reactions to stress can lead to long-term health problems for women. If women are unaware of their physiological stress, they are unable to reduce it. This phenomenon underscores the point that health benefits of marriage accrue to women only when the marriage is satisfying. Such benefits are more likely to accrue to men regardless of the quality of their marriages.

Psychological Health

Compared with people who are unmarried, married people are also better off in their psychological well-being. That is, married individuals are happier and less depressed. On the one hand, some evidence indicates that happier and less depressed people may be more likely than are unhappy and depressed people to get married. On the other hand, some studies suggest that this greater psychological well-being is the result of the marital relationship rather than the fact that happier people are more likely to marry. It is likely that both

selection and protection play a part in spouses' psychological well-being.

These psychological benefits of marriage have been identified from large research studies comparing survey data from unmarried and married individuals who answered survey questions about life in general. The findings, as such, did not include married participants' own assessment of the benefits of marriage. However, some researchers, in turn, wanted to know whether the individuals themselves were aware of the benefits of being married. To understand whether individuals are aware of the beneficial nature of marriage, Denise Previti and Paul Amato asked a representative sample of married people in the United States open-ended questions about what keeps their marriage together. The most popular answers by far concerned the beneficial or rewarding aspects of marriages (e.g., love) rather than the costs of leaving (e.g., financial interdependence). The next most frequent rewarding aspect of marriage was friendship or companionship. Thus, the rewards most often mentioned (love and friendship) were those that emphasize feelings of connectedness and sharing life with another person.

In a sense, this research indicates that spouses know what their marriage provides for them. They see what marital support can do. Perceiving that such support is available has been shown to benefit individual's mental health in addition to their marital satisfaction. As such, trusting that someone will "be there" in times of trouble fosters a sense of personal security and well-being. People who were insecure in relationships can become more secure over time when they are in a trusting committed relationship. When marital support is consistent, insecure wives, especially during the transition to parenthood, become more secure.

Marriage provides people with someone to count on during times of trouble and provides someone to listen and understand when things go well. Researchers have found that spouses who share day-to-day positive events with each other feel positive emotions and are more satisfied with their relationships. Again, these benefits accrue only to marriages that are satisfying. Dissatisfied spouses do not enjoy these benefits and are likely to suffer significant costs.

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See also Cohabitation; Divorce, Prevalence and Trends; Marital Satisfaction and Quality; Marriage and Health; Social Support, Nature of; Work–Family Conflict

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MARRIAGE, EXPECTATIONS ABOUT

Although most adults in the United States will marry at some point in their lives, people's expectations about marriage may influence their decisions about when to marry their partners and whether marriage is an appropriate choice for them as individuals. In scholarly research, expectations about marriage have been defined in two primary ways. First, marriage expectations have referred to unmarried people's perceptions of whether they will marry their current partner or anyone else in the future. Second, marriage expectations have referred to unmarried people's perceptions of what marriage will or should be like.

Scholars have been interested in studying expectations in both of these ways to better understand dramatic changes in contemporary marital behavior such as delays in marriage (waiting until later ages to marry), increases in cohabitation (living with a partner outside of marriage), and high rates of divorce. This entry examines what existing research tells us about the expectations people hold about marriage—both whether they think they will marry and what they think marriage will or should be like—and the implications of these expectations for their marital behavior.

Do Unmarried People Think They Will Get Married?

A growing number of adults in the United States are waiting until later ages to marry, consistent with recent trends in Canada and Europe. For example, U.S. Census data from 2006 show the median age of first marriage was 27.5 years for men and 25.5 years for women, representing a 5-year rise for both groups since 1959. At the same time, many adults are choosing to live with a partner before marriage, and a minority will not marry at all. As people spend a larger proportion of their adult lives as single individuals rather than in marital relationships, the chance that they will have a child outside of marriage during this time also increases. Because there are more alternatives to marriage today than in the past, researchers have been particularly interested in examining the marriage expectations of people who have chosen to live with their partners and who have had a child outside of marriage. Much of this research has examined how unmarried people who are already in relationships assess the likelihood of marrying their current partner to understand why delays in marriage are occurring. When people are not in relationships or do not expect to marry their partners, studies have also asked whether they expect to marry anyone else. This question is designed to assess whether people are rejecting marriage altogether rather than simply delaying it.

In general, existing research shows that most unmarried adults expect to marry, even when they have chosen to cohabit or have a nonmarital birth. Studies also suggest that many people who live with their partner view cohabitation as a step

toward marriage. Almost 9 of 10 single women without children expect to marry their partner or someone else in the future, compared with about 7 of 10 single women with children. About three-quarters of cohabitators (or people living with someone) say they expect to marry their current partner. Similarly, most unmarried people who have had a child outside of marriage indicate a “pretty good” or “almost certain” chance of marrying the other parent at the time of their child’s birth. Research suggests that most cohabiting partners and unmarried parents also agree with each other about their chances of marriage, with the majority sharing the view that marriage is likely. When partners disagree, men are more likely to expect to marry than are women.

Some people’s expectations may be lower than others if they do not want to marry, if they do not perceive themselves to be desirable partners, or if they do not think they have many opportunities to marry. For example, women’s opportunities to marry may be lower in low-income, African-American communities, because of high rates of incarceration and mortality among men. Studies suggest that unmarried women are less likely to expect to marry their partner or someone else if they are older, have less education, come from disadvantaged background, or if their partner is of low socioeconomic status. The quality of unmarried couples’ relationships, personal problems experienced by either partner, and each partner’s beliefs about gender may influence their marriage expectations. In particular, unmarried mothers are more pessimistic about the likelihood they will marry their child’s father if there is a high level of conflict in their relationships, if they do not trust members of the opposite sex, or if their partner has drug or alcohol problems or has been violent toward them.

Do unmarried adults’ expectations about whether they will marry predict whether they will actually get married? Research shows that people who report high expectations about marriage are much more likely to make this transition than are people who do not think marriage is likely. Although marriage occurs more often when either partner expects to marry, couples are much more likely to formalize their unions when both partners hold similar expectations. When partners disagree, men’s expectations about marriage seem to be

more important for making this transition than are women’s expectations. At the same time, many unmarried people who say they expect to marry their partner do not follow through on their plans, particularly if they are members of disadvantaged groups. Therefore, policymakers have been interested in understanding how issues disproportionately affecting low-income and minority communities, such as male unemployment and incarceration, may also represent important barriers to marriage.

What Do Unmarried People Think Marriage Will or Should Be Like?

Another way unmarried people’s expectations about marriage have been examined is by investigating what they think marriage will or should be like. Sociologist Andrew Cherlin has argued that marriage went through two major transitions in the 20th century that had important implications for what people expected from marriage. In the first half of the century, he suggests that the companionate marriage, in which marriage was based on the emotional satisfaction of spouses who performed certain marital roles, replaced the institutional marriage, in which marriage held a more important place in the extended family and community. In the latter half of the century, the companionate marriage was replaced by a more individualized view of marriage, in which self-development, flexible marital roles, and communication were increasingly expected in marriage. In addition to desiring emotional fulfillment and equality in marriage, Cherlin argues that more unmarried adults are delaying marriage until they have attained particular economic goals or have achieved a certain level of economic stability.

Empirical studies of unmarried adults support this argument. For example, nationally representative surveys have documented greater acceptance of equalitarian attitudes in regard to gender roles between the 1960s and 1990s among both men and women. In studies of college students, also conducted during the 1960s and 1990s, love and affection were emphasized as the most important components of marriage, whereas expectations for moral and religious unity, the maintenance of a home, and achieving a respected

place in the community were considered the least important. During this time, students' expectations that marriage would offer companionship and emotional security also grew while their expectations that marriage should involve children declined.

Other research has focused on how adults perceive the anticipated benefits and costs of marriage. Studies of unmarried adults who do not live with their partners find that most thought their lives would be better or much better if they were married. In particular, they expected their sex lives, overall happiness, standard of living, and emotional security would improve. In contrast, those who did live with their partners usually did not expect their lives to change much. Those who did expect changes, however, also thought marriage would improve their lives, especially their happiness and emotional and economic security. The one area that was not expected to improve—particularly among male respondents—was their freedom to do what they want. Couples who think their lives would be worse by making this transition have also been found to assess their own likelihood of marriage as lower, indicating there is a link between what unmarried people think marriage will be like and whether they think they will marry.

If unmarried adults generally expect their lives to be better if they married, why are they delaying marriage much longer than in previous decades and a small minority are not marrying at all? Historians such as Stephanie Coontz have argued that some of the same factors that have made marriages more satisfying in contemporary society have also made marriage less stable. Although marriages today have a higher risk of dissolution than in the past, most people still expect marriage to be a lifelong commitment. Therefore, they may be thinking more carefully about choosing a partner or a relationship that will not end in divorce. At a time when alternatives to marriage, such as cohabitation and single parenthood, have become more acceptable, interviews with couples in diverse socioeconomic conditions suggest that unmarried partners are waiting until their emotional and economic expectations for marriage are already met before taking this step.

Maureen Waller

See also Beliefs About Relationships; Cohabitation; Divorce, Prevalence and Trends; Engagement as a Relationship Stage; Expectations About Relationships; Families, Demographic Trends; Goals in Relationships; Ideals About Relationships; Love, Companionate and Passionate; Marriage, Benefits of; Optimism, Effects on Relationships; Single-Parent Families

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MARRIAGE, HISTORICAL AND CROSS-CULTURAL TRENDS

Marriage is defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary* as “the formal union of a man and a woman, typically as recognized by law, by which they become husband and wife.” Marriage as an institution has existed across the millennia,

although it has often taken different forms. Marriage is usually highly valued by both the couple and the wider society, which tends to see it as an important means of regulating sexual expression within permitted limits. Marriage has also been seen as a “social glue,” binding individuals, kin networks, and wider society within a series of prescribed commitments. This entry gives a brief historical perspective on marriage, considers gender roles within marriage, then turns to some notable cross-cultural variations in marriage and patterns of change in different cultures.

Brief Overview of Marriage

For thousands of years, marriage was seen by society as primarily functional, serving political, economic, and social ends, as well as guaranteeing procreation with “approved” partners. For the rich, marriage was important for inheritance and the keeping and consolidating wealth. As a result, strategic alliances were arranged, often with minimal reference to the individuals concerned. For the poor, marriage was a means of bringing in new resources or skills, although a lack of resources meant that social mobility through marriage was relatively rare. Although individuals often fell in love with “inappropriate” others (as in the story of Romeo and Juliet), love was generally seen by families and the wider society as a poor reason for marriage. Instead, the family and wider social network was key in bringing suitable partners together.

The idea that individuals could marry for love, and that there might be a “one and only” irrespective of resources, became more prevalent in Western societies during the 18th and 19th centuries. Industrialization prompted a loosening of social ties, as individuals moved away from their families to the cities and enjoyed liberation from traditional role constraints, more financial independence, and greater opportunities to choose their own partners. At the same time, the economic challenges of these changing societies led individuals to retreat into their partnerships as an escape from a harsh world. This idealization of marriage was propagated through romantic novels of the time, and later through cinema and other media. The “golden age” of Western marriage was arguably in the

years immediately after World War II. At this time, marriage rates were higher in the United States than earlier in the century, and the age at which individuals married dropped. This was accompanied by a notable baby boom.

It has been suggested that marriage in Western societies decreased in importance in the 1960s. Increasing individualism in society led people to demand more from their relationships, with growing tensions between the fulfillment of personal desires and the commitments required for a successful marital relationship. Both actual and ideal age at marriage increased, and fertility rates decreased. There was also a decrease in numbers of those marrying. Women’s increased participation in the workplace in particular gave them new opportunities to meet potential partners, and their increased economic independence provided them with the means to “go it alone” if their marital relationship was unsatisfactory. New and more liberal divorce laws allowed for no-fault divorces that eased the divorce process and was associated with the marked rise in divorce rates in the 1970s and 1980s in the United States and Western Europe. In the United States and Canada, divorce rates quadrupled during the last three decades of the 20th century. As individuals lived longer, they were spending a smaller proportion of their lives married, or at least married to their first spouse.

Marriages have become deinstitutionalized with many of the social norms that governed behavior in marriage weakened. Recent decades have also seen a marked growth in cohabitation in Western societies, beginning in most industrialized societies in the 1970s and accelerating in the 1980s and 1990s. In both the United States and Britain, cohabitation was at first more common among divorcees, but later became more popular among those who had yet to marry. Nearly half of U.S. children now expect to spend some time in a non-traditional family, as a result of being born outside marriage, or as a result of divorce.

Although some changes in marriage patterns are indisputable, some scholars have argued that these changes in marriage patterns have been exaggerated. In the United States, the proportion of non-married women older than age 18 was actually similar at the beginning and end of the 20th century. The divorce rate was higher in Malaysia in the 1940s than it is in contemporary North

America; cohabitation was relatively common in early 20th century England. Furthermore, despite the changes noted previously, it is not clear whether that there has been any real decline in the esteem in which marriage is held. The percentage of unhappy marriages has not necessarily increased, although leaving such marriages has become more likely. U.S. research shows that mean levels of marital happiness were nearly identical in 1980 and 2000. In the United States, evidence shows strong commitment to the idea of marriage, even among those least likely to marry (for example, African Americans). Most North Americans believe that marriage is for one's lifetime and should only be ended under extreme conditions. Most continue to believe that parenthood is fulfilling and maintain a commitment to the marital ideals of a family with children. Some evidence also indicates a decline of divorce rates in both the United States and the United Kingdom (in England, the divorce rate in 2006 was at its lowest for more than 20 years).

Rates of polygamy worldwide are largely on the decrease, with monogamy increasingly the favored form of marital relationship. This is often as the result of direct governmental intervention (such as the introduction of new marriage laws in the 1950s in Vietnam and Yemen). A decline in polygamy is also associated with increased literacy and educational rates among women. Particular economic stresses, however, can lead to some unofficial polygamous behaviors, such as when migrant workers living away from home for extended periods form second families.

Gender Roles in Marriage

According to prevailing theories, modernization brings predictable changes to gender roles in marriage. In preindustrial marital relationships, couples performed mainly material tasks as part of shared common economic activities. High levels of economic uncertainty tended to reinforce traditional authority patterns, with a strong division in gender roles. Childbearing and childrearing were seen as the major female role. During a later bourgeois family period—when middle-class women stayed at home—couples carried out a mixture of material and socioemotional tasks, with the man having the principal financial responsibility and

the woman attending more to childrearing and the socioemotional needs of the family. In a postmodern world, there has been movement toward greater egalitarianism in gender roles in affluent Western societies. Roles have been reevaluated as women work outside the house: Whereas 30 percent of U.S. women worked in 1950, 55 percent did so in 1986. Egalitarian and liberal values are particularly strong among young, women, the well educated, and those who are less religious. Decision making has become more egalitarian between the sexes. However, although women may have become less defined by their family roles, no clear model defines women's life prospects. Indeed, the conflict between work and family remains a significant one for Western women. Although men have changed many of their views on gender roles, they have been slower to change than women in actual practices.

Cross-Cultural Variations

Most of the previous discussion has been framed in the context of Western marriage (primarily U.S. or Western European patterns). Although the patterns of modernization described can be seen as broadly representative of changes across the globe, there are important variations in these configurations and significant resistance to change in some cultures.

Religion

Religion is an important socializer of moral values and normative behaviors within marriage. Postindustrial societies are generally only moderately religious, with the comparatively religious United States a notable exception. In Islam, marriage is often between paternal cousins. Permitted marital age is often younger, as early as 9 in some cultures. Husbands in Islamic societies are more likely to retain authority over their wives and are less likely to encourage equality in decision-making. Unlike elsewhere, young people in Islamic cultures are no less traditional in their attitude toward marriage than do their elder counterparts. Islamic cultures are generally less likely to permit divorce, particularly if the woman wishes to initiate the break. Divorce can also be difficult to

obtain in some traditional Catholic societies, such as Chile.

Migration and Marriage

Around 2 percent of the world's population lives in countries other than those in which they were born. Marriage is now a major basis for migration into Western countries. Migration can both accelerate social factors related to modernization (by, for example, necessitating the employment of women who previously stayed at home). It can also reinforce other aspects of traditional authority (for example, when families encourage individuals to marry kin to allow those kin to migrate). Rather ironically, given that migration is usually aimed at helping the family, migration often exaggerates existing strains and provides new marital problems. For example, migrant workers in Africa are often absent during the critical early years of marriage and childrearing, frequently leading to a decline in marital quality. Life in migrant hostels can often mean the exclusion of spouses, which can create opportunities for infidelity. Unemployment and hunger has led many married women to establish economically supportive "Nyatsi" relationships, in which a married woman takes a male "friend." High levels of out-migration in Botswana have also substantially changed marriage timing, with marriages now delayed until the man is in his 30s and has the financial resources to establish a family home. Studies of male Indian migrants to the Middle East have found that women back home take on new responsibilities, leading to many new adaptations and changes for these women. This may often increase the self-confidence and self-esteem of these women, but lead to potential tensions with the husband on his return.

Marriage in Fast-Changing Societies

Rapid social changes provide new challenges for marital relationships, but can also help cement relationships. The economic pressures that followed the end of Communism in Eastern Europe caused emotional stress between partners, and have been associated with an increase in problems such as drinking and depression. Widespread unemployment in Russia led to government

directives that discouraged women from working outside the home. This loss of employment has been related to a decrease in egalitarianism in marriage. However, in the case of some more traditional cultures, such as the Georgian Republic, women were seen as more adaptable to changing market demands, and economic changes provided them new opportunities. Furthermore, although marriage rates decreased in Eastern Europe during this time of transition, numbers of divorces also decreased sharply as couples maintained their relationships to help deal with the difficulties of this time.

In China, the introduction of the one-child policy in 1979 may have had an important impact on family size. This policy also appears to underlie the large sex ratio (1.17:1 male live births to female live births), with some evidence of sex-selective abortion. This has led to concern over a lack of future female partners and national campaigns aimed at increasing the value of women. As family size in general declines, evidence indicates that the intimacy between the couple increased, alongside a strong emotional attachment to the single child. Greater freedom in partner choice and increased education has meant that couples are less keen to live with their parents, but a chronic lack of housing, particularly in large cities, has meant that coresidence patterns have persisted. Often, however, this means residence with the woman's parents, rather than the husband's, as in previous times.

As in the West, divorce rates in Asia have been growing. A failure of partners to "deliver" in the more materialistic 1980s has been seen as a major contributor to the increase, as have the temptations offered by large-scale internal migration (such as among the so-called astronauts who left mainland China to work in Hong Kong in the 1990s). Remarriage rates are high, however: in China 96 percent of divorcees remarry, 83 percent within 5 years. Furthermore, some of those who declared themselves to be single did so to obtain enhanced rations following changes in household registration procedures.

Looking Forward

In the future, marriage is likely to remain of great significance—to both individuals and societies.

Cohabitation rates may continue to increase, although most will still cohabit as a trial period before marriage, and will want to have their children within marriage. Furthermore, although modernization forces may encourage individuals to seek greater independence from their families, and greater equality between the sexes, significant religious and cultural forces will continue to play an important role in influencing marriage patterns and behaviors.

Robin Goodwin

See also Change in Romantic Relationships Over Time; Culture and Relationships; Divorce, Prevalence and Trends; Marriage Markets

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MARRIAGE, TRANSITION TO

One of the most significant psychosocial adjustments in adulthood is the transition to marriage. Although most men and women in the United States will marry at some point in their lives and

most look forward to this event with anticipation and excitement, the transition to marriage also involves adaptation to a variety of tasks that may fundamentally alter spouses' view of themselves and their alliances. During the first few years of marriage, spouses typically define new roles, which may be less individualistic and more interdependent; alter their social networks; and establish a core alliance with each other rather than with their families of origin. Additionally, more than 33 percent of divorces occur within the first 5 years of marriage. This entry presents theories about why couples succeed or fail in making the transition to a stable, satisfying marriage, identifies behaviors that put couples at risk for marital problems and behaviors that protect them from marital distress and divorce, discusses the impact of external stressors, and identifies the changes that individuals may experience in making the transition to marriage.

Theoretical Models

Several models have been developed to explain distress and divorce during the early years of marriage. The disillusionment model contends that as new marriages progress, spouses become disillusioned by the discontinuity between their idealized expectations before marriage and the actuality of their marital experiences. Before marriage, individuals may actively avoid conflict with their partners, manage impressions of themselves, and view their partners in the best possible light. During the early years of marriage, partners typically perceive a loss of love and affection, experience increased ambivalence about their relationships, and begin to view their partners and relationships in less positive lights. Some empirical evidence supports the disillusionment model because couples who divorce early in their marriage are more ambivalent about their marriages, report falling out of love at higher rates, and perceive their partners as less responsive to their needs.

Most researchers find that in happily married couples, a general decline in marital satisfaction occurs naturally. Therefore, some researchers have argued that disillusionment is an inevitable process as couples begin the transition from dating to newlywed marriage to early marriage, and therefore

cannot be a useful explanatory model because it occurs for distressed as well as happily married couples. The enduring dynamics model, in contrast, postulates that couples enter into marriage with at least some knowledge of the shortcomings of the relationship and their partner. Relationship distress, therefore, arises from interpersonal processes that are already present during courtship and that endure into marriage. This model suggests that differences between partners that are present while the couple is dating erode marital satisfaction over time and may contribute to eventual divorce. Some data support this model because the intensity of newlywed romance and negativity assessed at marriage predicts marital satisfaction 13 years later as well as, for couples who divorced, the length of time married before divorce.

Finally, the Vulnerability-Stress-Adaptation Model is an integrated model of marital processes that contends that marital quality is a function of enduring vulnerabilities that the partners bring to the marriage (e.g., attachment style, personality traits, etc.), stressful events experienced by the couple (e.g., relocation, starting a new job, having children, etc.), and the adaptive processes (e.g., social support, positive affective expressions, problem solving, etc.) couples use to contend with vulnerabilities and stressors. Considerable research has supported this model as a useful one in examining marital qualities, particularly marital problem solving, that likely moderate the effect of life events on spousal functioning. A strength of this more comprehensive model is that it reflects the diverse individual, relational, and external variables that contribute to marital quality and stability.

High-Risk Behavior

Research, guided by the theories presented, has identified behaviors in newlywed spouses that predict success in the transition to stable and satisfying marriages. Perhaps the most extensively studied area of marital relationships is communication behavior. Research on the verbal content of communication during problem-solving tasks suggests that negative behaviors distinguish satisfied from dissatisfied couples, especially hostility, stonewalling, and contempt. Rates of negative verbal communication during conflict discussions

have been shown to predict declines in satisfaction over time, particularly in the absence of positive affect and when the ratio of negative to positive behaviors is high (stable marriages typically evidence a 5-to-1 ratio of positive to negative exchanges). Growing evidence indicates that the specific emotions displayed in conflict discussions are even more powerful in differentiating distressed from nondistressed couples than is the verbal content of their discussions. For example, negative affect, particularly when it is reciprocated by the partner, appears to be a particularly powerful predictor of marital distress across many studies and has been shown to distinguish happily married from unhappily married couples after 4 years of marriage. Another important maladaptive pattern of communication is the demand-withdraw pattern, in which one member criticizes, nags, and makes demands of the partner (the demander), and the other partner withdraws and attempts to avoid conflict (the withdrawer). This pattern has been well established cross-culturally and is consistently associated with relationship dissatisfaction.

In addition to communication behavior, several studies of newly married couples indicate that the prevalence of intimate partner violence is substantially higher in young, recently married couples. If violence occurs early in the relationship, it is likely to continue, although its frequency may decrease overall. One third of engaged couples and approximately half of recently married couples report physical aggression in their relationship. The presence of physical aggression in a relationship is concurrently and prospectively associated with greater marital dissatisfaction and increases the likelihood of marital dissolution, even after controlling for psychological aggression, relationship length, and prior marital satisfaction. Aggression in newlywed couples reliably distinguishes between couples who remain married and those who become separated or divorced.

Protective Behavior

Supportive behaviors (i.e., empathic responding, constructive interactions, social support) have been associated with higher marital satisfaction, lower stress experience, and better psychological

and physical well-being. Longitudinal research suggests that newlyweds with poor social support skills are at increased risk of distress and divorce 2 years after marriage. Other researchers have expanded the concept of social support to include dyadic coping, which involves both ensuring the partner's well-being and enhancing the marital relationship. Research in this area suggests that more positive and less negative dyadic coping is significantly associated with longitudinal relationship satisfaction.

Positive affect, including expressing positive emotions, constructive engagement in the marriage, and empathic listening, is concurrently and prospectively associated with marital satisfaction. Some data suggest that positive affect can neutralize the effects of detrimental behaviors. That is, for some couples who display low levels of positive communication skills or high negative skills in problem-solving discussions, positive emotions such as humor, affection, and interest seem to diminish the negative effects, to the point where they have little bearing on declines in marital satisfaction. Conversely, the absence of positive affect appears to amplify the effects of unskilled communication patterns. This does not imply that *only* being positive is beneficial; some data suggest that exclusive positivity and excessive repression of negativity by wives is detrimental to marital relationships.

Cross-sectional research also suggests that acknowledgment of a partner's admirable qualities, pleasure derived from the relationship, and time spent with one's spouse are positively related to marital quality. For newlyweds, the relative novelty of the relationship and the excitement in forming a marital bond may also enhance marital quality. Data suggest that couples who maintain a high level of joint novel activities throughout early marriage may maintain higher relationship quality. Finally, relationship self-regulation, or the degree to which partners work at their marital relationship, predicts concurrent and longitudinal marital satisfaction for newlywed couples.

External Stressors

The stressful life events that couples experience in the early years of marriage have been linked to marital quality, in both cross-sectional and

longitudinal studies. When couples experience acute stress, they tend to report higher levels of problems in the marriage, communication difficulties, and a tendency to blame their partner for negative events. Research has also suggested that marital quality is lower among couples experiencing high levels of chronic stress and that chronic stress predicts more rapid declines in marital satisfaction. However, marital satisfaction is linked most strongly to stress when couples experience *both* chronic and acute stress; that is, negative life events are particularly detrimental when the external context places additional demands on an already strained system. Some evidence also indicates that physical violence is more likely to occur under conditions of high chronic stress combined with acute stress.

The effects of external stress on relationships may be attenuated by appropriate supportive coping responses in spouses. In general, positive responses, such as providing support and making allowances for the partner's aversive behavior, function to reduce the negative impact of stress on the relationship. For example, marital support has been shown to reduce the association between emotional distress and stressful economic events. Further, spouses who make relationship-enhancing attributions about their partner's behavior when under stress tend to fare better than do spouses who make distress-maintaining attributions about their partner's behavior.

Impact on Individuals

In addition to changes in the relationship, the transition to marriage involves changes in a variety of psychological and behavioral patterns for the individual members of the couple. One potential area of change for an individual is attachment style. John Bowlby originally speculated that infants develop working models of themselves (e.g., as lovable) and of others (e.g., as dependable) based on early interactions with caregivers, resulting in attachment styles that are presumed to be fairly stable across time. However, recent research has suggested that these spouses may transfer attachment functions (safe haven, secure base, etc.) from their family of origin to their spouse. The marital relationship, because it creates

a new caregiving environment and provides some psychological and physical distance from the family of origin, may be an opportunity for individuals to transfer their attachment functions to their spouses. Research examining attachment stability during the transition to marriage has confirmed that attachment representations are largely stable for most individuals, particularly for those who were securely attached before marriage. However, newlywed individuals with insecure attachment styles do tend to experience more security (i.e., feel less anxious about abandonment and more comfortable depending on their spouse) than they did before marriage.

A second potential area of change is in social networks. Newlyweds tend to go through a beneficial process of integrating social networks during the early years of marriage, reinforcing the couple identity and providing support for the new relationship. In contrast, newlyweds who continue to maintain predominately separate social networks may undermine the marital relationship and reinforce individuation and personal goals. Indeed, research has demonstrated that higher interdependence of family and friend networks predicts higher marital quality after one year of marriage, particularly for wives. However, these effects are not always positive. Some evidence indicates that maladaptive behaviors, such as drinking, may be fostered by integration of social networks.

Conclusion

Taken together, these data suggest that the transition to marriage is a complex one that involves many systematic and predictable changes at the individual, dyadic, and environmental level. The research has identified several robust correlates and predictors of marital *dissatisfaction*, but has been less systematic in the identification of those variables that contribute to marital *satisfaction*. If one assumes that marital satisfaction is more than just the absence of marital dissatisfaction, as considerable research and theory suggests, the research has less to offer for those facets that contribute to a lasting, fulfilling relationship. Future research is necessary to better elucidate those positive elements that can facilitate the transition in newlyweds and beyond.

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See also Abuse and Violence in Relationships; Expectations About Relationship; Marital Satisfaction and Quality; Predicting Success or Failure of Marital Relationships; Vulnerability-Stress-Adaptation Model

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MARRIAGE AND HEALTH

A key human relationship for most adults is marriage, which confers economic, social, and psychological benefits such as increased earning potential, resources for raising a family, and fulfilling needs for security and belonging. Across a number of surveys, married individuals report greater happiness and life satisfaction and have a lower risk of clinical depression than do their unmarried counterparts. In addition to these benefits, marriage confers benefits for physical health. At the same time, marriages characterized by low marital satisfaction and high conflict have damaging effects on physical health. This entry reviews evidence for

the physical health benefits of marriage, the link between marital quality and health, mechanisms that explain how marriage affects physical health, and the implications of marriage and health for interventions.

Marital Status and Health

Across a number of large-scale epidemiological studies, nonmarried individuals have higher rates of mortality compared with their married counterparts from all causes. In addition, morbidity among married persons is lower compared with unmarried persons across a variety of health conditions, including cancer, heart attacks, and surgery. Across several studies, the health benefits of marriage are also greater for men compared with women, such that the additional risk for mortality in comparing nonmarried men to married men is much larger than in comparing nonmarried to married women.

The two primary explanations for why marital status is related to morbidity and mortality are *selection* and *protection*. According to selection, marriage itself does not cause decreased morbidity and mortality; instead, a selection bias exists such that individuals who are healthier and engage in less health-destructive and more health-protective behaviors are more likely to get married. The protection explanation suggests that regardless of an individual's premarital health or functioning, marriage confers specific economic and psychological benefits, such as increased household income and social support, which contributes to better health. The selection and protection explanations are not mutually exclusive, and epidemiological findings support both explanations. Unfortunately, because relationship scientists cannot experimentally manipulate marital status, definitive resolution of these explanations is unlikely.

Marital Quality and Health

Although marriage on average is related to better overall physical health, people in troubled marriages have worse mental and physical well-being compared with people in satisfactory and happy marriages and, in some studies, nonmarried people. The most dramatic examples of the relationship

between marital *quality* and health come from studies of patients with existing chronic medical conditions. Low marital quality, typically measured through self-report, predicted earlier mortality over long-term follow-up in end-stage renal disease (46 percent increase in risk for mortality over 3-year follow-up) and congestive heart failure patients (65 percent increase in risk for mortality over 4-year follow-up). Beyond mortality, low marital quality is also related to increased risk of coronary events (including cardiac death, acute myocardial infarction, and revascularization procedures) in patients with cardiovascular disease and in a large 9,000-person cohort of British civil servants, increased illness symptoms over longitudinal follow-up (4 years) in healthy married couples, and increased pain flares in patients with rheumatoid arthritis.

In contrast to research on gender differences in marital status on health, where men derive greater health benefits from marriage compared with women, research on marital quality and health shows an opposite pattern. Specifically, the effects of marital quality on health are generally stronger for women compared with men. For instance, in a longitudinal study of participants in the Alameda County Study, increased marital strain was related to increased self-reported ulcer symptoms at 8- to 9-year follow-up in women, but not men. In addition, large, prospective longitudinal studies also show that lower marital quality is related to increased risk of disability and mortality over long-term follow-up (6–15 years), again in women, but not men.

How Does Marital Quality Affect Health?

The prevailing framework that explains the health benefits of healthy marriages and the detrimental health consequences of unhealthy marriages is the *stress/social support hypothesis*, originally put forth by Bonnie Burman and Gayla Margolin. The stress/social support hypothesis suggests that stress and support in marriages influences health through a number of pathways, including influences on the individual's cognitions, emotions, health behaviors, coping behaviors, and biological systems. The model was further elaborated on by Janice Kiecolt-Glaser and Tamara Newton, who suggested additional pathways, including mental

health and psychopathology, and individual differences in personality such as hostility. In addition, the pathways that explain relationships between marital quality and health are influenced by gender-related traits, cognitive schemas, and social roles that explain why marital quality has stronger effects on health for women compared with men. A number of entries discuss these mediating pathways and gender-related constructs; this entry focuses on how marriage influences health behaviors and biological systems.

Health Behaviors

Married partners influence each other's behavior across many contexts, including health-promoting behaviors (physical activity, diet, compliance with physician recommendations) and health-compromising behaviors (alcohol use, tobacco use, problematic eating). Indeed, large-scale studies indicate that health behaviors such as diet, physical activity, and smoking are highly correlated between spouses. However, studies that focus on couple-based interventions to increase health-promoting behaviors (notably physical activity and diet) and decrease health-compromising behaviors such as smoking have not shown significant success. In addition, attempts by spouses to control their partners' health behaviors are often ineffective in increasing health-promoting behavior, and may be met with resistance resulting in decreased health-promoting behavior and increased health-compromising behaviors. Thus, although married partners influence each other's health behaviors, the direction of influence may not always be in the direction of promoting healthy behaviors.

Biological Systems

Marital quality can also directly affect biological systems that are involved in psychological responses to stress and physical health. The three biological systems that have received the most attention in studies of marriage and health are the *cardiovascular system*, which is responsible for circulating oxygen, nutrients, and numerous cells throughout the body; the *neuroendocrine system*, which helps the brain regulate such important functions as energy balance and reproduction via

chemical messengers called hormones; and the *immune system*, which defends the body against threats such as bacteria, viruses, and parasites. Beyond serving a wide range of life-sustaining functions for the body, malfunctions or deficiencies in these systems are involved in most major chronic diseases.

Most studies in this area involve healthy samples that are disease-free and show low incidence of health-compromising behaviors, or samples where health behaviors are statistically controlled. These studies typically involve studying married couples while they interact with each other, usually involving a discussion (e.g., talking about specific problems in the relationship), coupled with measuring activity in one or more of the biological systems. Marital quality is typically operationalized as levels of hostile behavior, such as put-downs and criticism, during marital discussions. Thus, studies of marriage and biological systems have been mostly restricted to interpersonal interactions in laboratory settings.

The main finding across studies in this area is that hostile behaviors during discussions are accompanied by cardiovascular, neuroendocrine, and immune changes. Couples who show greater hostile behavior during marital discussions have more elevated blood pressure and heart rate compared with less hostile couples. Similarly, greater hostile behavior during marital discussions is related to elevated hormones that are involved in regulating energy balance and that mediate the body's response to psychological stress (including catecholamines such as norepinephrine, and hormones of the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis such as cortisol). Greater hostile behavior during marital discussions is related to suppression of the immune system's ability to fight off infectious disease and aid wound healing, and exacerbation of the immune system's systemic inflammatory response.

Although couples' behaviors toward each other affect biological systems that affect health, an empirical question is whether behavior in the laboratory actually affects disease-relevant outcomes. Any number of psychological or physical stimuli can cause changes in heart rate, blood pressure, stress hormones, or immune function, without any measurable impact on health or disease. Recent studies have begun to address whether links

between marital functioning and biological systems are relevant for actual disease. For example, coronary artery disease results from the buildup of plaques within the walls of arteries that supply the heart, a process that takes place over several decades before an individual actually experiences a heart attack. A number of studies now suggest that low marital quality and increased hostility within marriages are related to changes in biological measures that reflect the plaque accumulation process (e.g., ultrasound measures of carotid artery thickness, computerized tomography scans of the heart). These studies suggest that being in an unhappy marriage is related to greater accumulation of artery blockage over several years.

Current research has yet to demonstrate whether the link between low marital quality and disease-relevant outcomes is explained by changes in the biological systems described in this entry. For example, one important indicator of hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis function is the slope of change in cortisol secretion from its normal peak in the morning to its low point in the evening. Several studies in independent research groups show that low marital quality is related to flatter slopes (that is, lesser decreases), with levels elevated in the evening hours. Additional studies have linked flat cortisol slopes to disease outcomes including increased coronary artery calcification and fatigue. Thus, although separate lines of evidence suggest that the link between marital quality and coronary artery calcification may be explained by flat cortisol slopes, no studies to date have explicitly tested these links in a single study. Studies of marriage and health are increasingly incorporating assessments of both biological systems and disease-relevant outcomes, and will be able to test links between marital quality, biological systems, and health outcomes in the future.

Clinical Implications of the Links Between Marriage and Health

The importance of marital quality for health suggests that one avenue for improving health outcomes in patients with chronic illnesses such as cardiovascular disease or cancer is improving relationship functioning. Psychosocial interventions that focus on intimate partners or other family

members of chronic illness patients are effective in improving mental health outcomes and, in some limited cases, patient survival. In addition, these interventions also improve the mental health of the partner, particularly interventions that focus on the relationship between the partner and the patient.

Moreover, in some disease contexts, partner and spouse behaviors may play an important role in exacerbating disease symptoms; the most notable context for this is chronic pain. A number of studies show that spouses who respond to their partner's pain behaviors (expressions of pain or limited functioning resulting from pain) with negative or punishing behaviors, or solicitous behaviors (providing assistance, expressing concern) can actually increase their partner's pain severity, limitations resulting from pain, and psychological distress. Thus, interventions that target both relationships between patient and spouse, and the spouse's role in reinforcing their partner's maladaptive pain behaviors would be particularly effective in this context. Overall, links between marriage and health provide additional avenues for psychosocial interventions that may improve mental and physical well-being, primarily by focusing on improving relationships and effective coping with chronic disease.

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See also Anger in Relationships; Conflict, Marital; Emotion in Relationships; Health and Relationships; Health Behaviors, Relationships and Interpersonal Spread of; Marital Satisfaction and Quality

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MARRIAGE AND SEX

Marriage is defined as a legal union that typically occurs between a man and a woman. This interpersonal union is usually of an intimate and sexual nature that carries along with it governmental, social, and religious recognition. *Sex* is most frequently thought of as coitus, or vaginal intercourse (penetration of the vagina by the penis). Although coitus is the most common form of sexual expression, the term *sex* can also include many other types of sexual interaction such as anal intercourse (inserting the penis into the anus), oral-genital stimulation (mouth-to-genital contact), and masturbation (self-stimulation of the genitals for sexual pleasure), to name a few.

What is the relationship between *marriage* and *sex*? Why do people marry and what do they expect from their sexual relationship after marriage? This entry examines the relationship between *marriage* and *sex* with a specific focus on expectations of marital sexuality.

When asked about reasons for marriage, U.S. residents most often cite that they marry for love, emotional and economic security, companionship, and their desire to be a parent. Although sexual involvement is commonly experienced in dating relationships, marriage is the most socially accepted context for sexual expression to date. Marriage is the only condition under which the major religions positively sanction sexual interaction between couples. Additionally, marriage remains the primary context for which society approves of the entrance of children into a relationship. The link

between *sex* and *marriage* is particularly important because sex is considered an integral part of a marital relationship. Many believe that sex is the glue that holds a relationship together.

What are common expectations for sex after marriage? After reviewing the literature on marital sexuality, a number of expectations come to light. First, it is expected that to have a satisfying marriage, sex with one's spouse should be both pleasurable and sexually satisfying. A second expectation is that in a healthy marriage, sexual interaction will be desired by both partners and should occur on a regular basis. A third expectation is that a marriage shall remain sexually exclusive, meaning that individuals within a marriage are to remain sexually monogamous and refrain from engaging in extramarital sexual involvement. Fourth, a common expectation in marriage is that marital partners should have the ability for successful and problem-free sexual encounters. And a final expectation is that marital partners should be able to have children if desired.

Marital and Sexual Satisfaction

A common expectation of a satisfying marriage is that one's sexual relationship will be both pleasurable and gratifying. In effect, it is expected that marital satisfaction and sexual satisfaction share a common bond and that both will be present in a healthy marriage. The association between sexual and marital satisfaction has been a well-studied area of investigation. In fact, a large body of literature documents that satisfaction with one's sex life is tied to the overall satisfaction of the relationship in general, thus supporting the idea that marital and sexual satisfaction are interrelated. The interrelationship of sexual and marital satisfaction has led to much speculation about which comes first. Does a satisfying sexual relationship lead to a satisfying marriage? Or does a satisfying marriage lead to a satisfying sexual relationship? These questions have been long debated in the literature.

Although the interrelationship of sexual and marital satisfaction is supported, the direction of this association is not yet clear. For example, some scholars report that individuals' sexual satisfaction predicts their overall marital satisfaction, whereas

others posit that the opposite is true. For example, following this assumption, as one experiences a decrease in marital satisfaction, one's sexual satisfaction will decline as well. Still other researchers claim that the relationship between sexual and marital satisfaction is reciprocal, meaning the levels of sexual and marital satisfaction jointly affect each other. Collectively, these findings suggest that the association between sexual and marital satisfaction warrant further exploration to better highlight the process in which they occur and contribute to each other. Although the relationship between sexual and marital satisfaction has been well documented, much of the literature on the link between *marriage* and *sex* has focused on coital frequency (how often a couple engages in sexual intercourse).

Sexual Frequency and Marriage

Another common expectation within marriage is that in a healthy marriage, sex will occur on a regular basis and will lead to a more satisfying sexual relationship. Although the data show that married couples have sex one to two times per week on average, it is assumed that the higher the coital frequency, the more satisfying the sex life and marriage will be, and several studies have supported the link between sexual frequency and sexual satisfaction. Specifically, studies have documented that how often a couple engages in sexual activity can be a measure of the level of satisfaction in the sexual relationship. In effect, these findings support the premise that couples who have the most frequent sex are the most sexually satisfied.

Sexual frequency also relates to overall marital satisfaction. For example, findings document that partners who have frequent sex, and are satisfied with their sex life, are more satisfied with their overall marital relationship compared with partners who have less frequent sex and who are less satisfied with their sex life.

Given that data support the notion that sexual frequency can be an indicator of marital satisfaction as well as sexual satisfaction, many investigators use sexual frequency as a barometer of the health of the sexual and marital relationship. However, although sexual frequency can be an indicator of higher satisfaction, many individuals

remain satisfied even after experiencing a decrease in sexual encounters. During the first few years of marriage there is a significant drop in sexual frequency. This drop in frequency tends to slow and level off in the years thereafter. In addition, the presence of children is strongly related to changes in marital and sexual satisfaction over time. In particular, marital satisfaction and sexual frequency tend to decrease after the birth of a child. Moreover, the preferred amount of sexual frequency also undergoes a decline following the transition to parenthood. Furthermore, marital satisfaction is lowest among parents of infants. Although sexual frequency declines after the birth of a child, it appears that couples may begin to experience changes in sexual frequency even before their first child is born. However, even after the decline in sexual frequency, most married couples report being generally satisfied with both their sexual and marital relationship.

In addition to the entry of children, employment demands also have a notable influence on marital sexuality. Specifically, pressure from work can result in a decrease in sexual frequency. For example, in a national survey of U.S. residents, the number of hours worked per week was related to one's sexual relationship. In particular, those individuals who worked 40 hours a week or more had more sexual problems and lower levels of satisfaction than did individuals who worked less than 40 hours per week. Moreover, working different shifts also led to lower sexual frequency, lower sexual satisfaction, and an increase in sexual problems. Thus, it appears that many contextual issues such as the transition to new roles (i.e., parenthood), the presence of and age of children, number of hours worked per week, and work shifts all may influence one's sexual and marital relationship. Considering these findings as a whole, even when coital frequency and marital satisfaction decrease, couples report being largely satisfied with their sexual interactions. Therefore, coital frequency may not be the best indicator of how satisfied couples are with their sexual relationship or marital relationship.

Finally, the quality or satisfaction of a sexual episode may have nothing to do with how frequently a couple engages in sexual activity. For example, partners may have differences in opinion as to how often to engage in sexual relations as well

as differences in which types of interactions are satisfying. Moreover, research documents that couples often have discrepant reports of sexual frequency and different interpretations of what constitutes a satisfying level of frequency in their relationships. Even though a couple may report the same level of sexual frequency, a different interpretation of that frequency may emerge, one believing the frequency is high, and the other believing it is low, thus again highlighting that sexual frequency alone may not be the best indicator of satisfaction.

Extramarital Sexual Involvement

Remaining sexually faithful (monogamous) is commonly held as one of the core assumptions of marital relationships. Moreover, many couples feel that failure to remain sexually faithful is a violation of their marital agreement and can be considered as grounds for marital dissolution. U.S. residents disapprove of extramarital sexual involvement (also known as infidelity), and those in many other cultures disapprove of sexual behavior outside of one's marriage. Although some marriages are open marriages (nonmonogamous), the frequency of this type of marriage is small.

Extramarital involvement, or infidelity, typically includes behaviors ranging from emotional involvement to sexual intercourse. Three classifications of infidelity have emerged in the literature. The categorizations are as follows: primarily sexual (involvement in any sexual intimacy from kissing to sexual intercourse that occurs without a meaningful emotional involvement), primarily emotional (involvement in a moderate-to-deep emotional attachment with negligible physical intimacy), and combined-type (involvement includes sexual intercourse accompanied by a deep emotional attachment). Typically, the data show that women more often report being involved in the combined-type of infidelity, one that involves both a sexual and emotional attachment, whereas men are more likely than women to be involved in a sexual relationship void of meaningful emotional connection.

Rates of extramarital sex vary. Although some studies report rates of infidelity to be as high as 25 percent of wives and 50 percent of husbands, these best estimates to date come from a large scale

national survey that reports that approximately 15 percent of wives and 25 percent of husbands had been involved in extramarital sexual involvement including intercourse. Rates of extramarital sexual involvement are much higher when they include emotional affairs and sexual encounters not involving intercourse. The workplace is the most common place to meet extramarital partners. However, with the increase in technology and the popularity of the Internet, online infidelity is becoming a new phenomenon.

Recovering from infidelity can be a difficult task. Results from a large scale survey of marriage and family therapists identified infidelity as the second most damaging problem couples encounter following physical abuse. Moreover, therapists report that infidelity is one of the most difficult problems to treat. Although treating and overcoming the effects of infidelity can be challenging, research reports that most marriages survive infidelity. Additionally, some evidence indicates that couples who weather the impact of the infidelity emerge stronger after working through the trauma in therapy. Although many factors have been linked to infidelity (e.g., fear of intimacy, relationship conflict, life-cycle transitions), the causes are still not clear, for infidelity may be present in both happy and unhappy marriages.

So, does extramarital sexual involvement lead to the end of a marriage? Some research reports that infidelity is involved in 90 percent of first-time divorces. However, decades of research by John Gottman, a marriage researcher at the University of Washington, finds that only 20 percent of divorces are caused by affairs. Though infidelity may be linked with marital dissolution, it is not clear whether infidelity leads to a decline in one's marital quality or whether it is a consequence of a low-quality marriage. Nonetheless, these data highlight the significant impact extramarital involvement can have on a marriage.

Sexual Problems and Marriage

Although most couples expect that they should have a healthy and problem-free sex life once they are married, many couples experience difficulties with sexual functioning, and many couples will seek marital therapy because of problems with

their sex life. Moreover, not all couples with sexual issues enter therapy with sexual problems; many couples present with general relationship issues but have underlying sexual problems present.

Sexual problems typically consist of sexual dysfunctions, or disorders that interfere with a full sexual response cycle, making it difficult for a person to enjoy or to have sexual intercourse. Common sexual problems include premature ejaculation (inability to reasonably control ejaculatory reflex on a regular basis), erectile dysfunction (failure to achieve or maintain an erection), sexual desire disorder (low or high levels of sexual desire), female arousal disorder (inability to attain or maintain typical responses to sexual arousal), orgasmic disorder (inability to reach orgasm), and sexual pain problems (dyspareunia [painful or difficulty during sexual intercourse], vaginismus [involuntary spasms of the muscles surrounding the lower third of the vagina]). National survey estimates indicate that 43 percent of U.S. women and 31 percent U.S. men have experienced problems with sexual functioning.

Research documents that sexual functioning is important to the development of intimate relationships for both men and women. Specifically, poor marital quality is related to the presence of sexual problems for both men and women. Moreover, sexual problems can affect a person's ability to form and sustain romantic relations, including marriage, and difficulties with sexual relations are linked with an increased risk of marital dissolution.

Many psychological factors have been linked with sexual functioning. Included in this class of influential factors is the state of one's mental health. Emotional problems such as depression or anxiety or drug and alcohol use or abuse are also often associated with impaired sexual functioning. Many social and relational factors have also been found to influence sexual functioning. For example, relational dynamics, such as relationship quality and work status variables including number of hours worked a week and education are associated with sexual functioning.

Sexual Reproduction and Marriage

A final assumption of marriage is that many couples expect that they will be able to have children if they so choose. Reproductive difficulty

(infertility) is typically defined as the failure to conceive after one year of regular sexual intercourse without contraception, or an inability to carry a pregnancy to live birth. Infertility affects approximately 10 percent of people of reproductive age and approximately 15 percent of married couples.

Infertility is typically equally contributed to problems of the male (40 percent) or female (40 percent). The remaining 20 percent is typically attributed to problems of the couple that can include factors such as not enough sex, too much sex, sex at the wrong times of the month, fatigue, and emotional stress. Individual factors such as the effects of sexually transmitted diseases, poor nutrition, or poor general health may also play a role in difficulty conceiving. For males, the problem is most often linked with low-quality sperm, a blockage somewhere between the testicle and the tip of the penis, or erection and ejaculation problems. For the female, infertility is most often linked with age, and the failure to ovulate. Similar to males, at times there may be a blockage (of the fallopian tube) that leads to the inability to conceive. Another common cause of reproductive difficulties for women is endometriosis, a condition in which some cells of the inner lining of the uterus grow in the pelvic and abdominal cavities. Finally, some women experience an inhospitable environment for sperm, which is an immune response or acidic chemical climate in the vagina that can immobilize sperm. In about 15 percent of cases of infertility, there are no identifiable contributions present.

Infertility may have profound psychological effects. Partners may become more anxious to conceive, which consequently can lead to further problems with sexual functioning. Marital discord often develops in infertile couples. Many couples suffer from high levels of anxiety and disappointment. Moreover, it is not uncommon for women struggling to conceive to experience clinical depression. What's more, the inability to conceive bears a stigma in many cultures. Research documents that even couples who chose to bear no children by choice are viewed negatively, thus highlighting societal values about the expectation that couples reproduce and the stigma and pressure that exists if they do not.

Tiffani S. Kisler

See also Marital Satisfaction and Quality; Sex and Love; Sex in Established Relationships; Sexual Dysfunctions

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MARRIAGE MARKETS

Marriage markets refer to the characteristics, composition, and geographic location of dating pools within which people search for intimate partners. Broadly speaking, marriage market research posits that individuals make decisions regarding the formation and dissolution of intimate relationships, as well as decisions about when and where to have children, according to

the availability of desirable partners who reside in their marriage market.

Marriage market studies examine both the *quality* and *quantity* of potential partners. Measuring partner *quantity* is straightforward. *Quantity* refers to the numerical availability of potential partners who are of a given age. This is usually measured in terms of the sex ratio, which is the number of males divided by the number of females.

Partner *quality* is not as straightforward. It has been measured in numerous ways by numerous researchers. Perhaps the most common quality measures are socioeconomic attributes such as earned income, labor force participation, and educational attainment, although physical attractiveness is also emphasized by some researchers. Socioeconomic attributes have been particularly useful when examining the quality of males in women's marriage markets. Research demonstrates that men's traditional role as financial provider makes males with high socioeconomic status more desirable marriage and dating partners. These men may provide greater financial security and are able to sustain a household once married.

By focusing on the quality and quantity of potential partners, marriage market research examines how individuals attempt to exchange their own personal assets for a partner with the greatest number of desirable traits. While attempting to maximize one's own personal gains from establishing an intimate relationship, individuals must also compete with others in the marriage market who may possess more desirable traits than one's self. This process produces a counterbalancing mechanism inherent in marriage markets that helps ensure that assortative mating is achieved—meaning that people with similar levels of desirable traits marry one another. However, when the numerical availability of persons with desirable characteristics is low, individuals are forced to settle for a partner with a lower level (or different set) of qualities than they would prefer, delay forming a partnership until a more advantageous match can be formed, or forgo a relationship altogether. In this way, marriage market composition is hypothesized to determine the ease or difficulty of various familial processes. In the remainder of this entry, major theories of marriage markets are presented and selected research findings are discussed.

Leading Marriage Market Theories

Prominent theories of mate selection explicitly emphasize the importance of marriage markets in determining men's and women's dating, marital, divorce, and childbearing behavior. The fundamental tenets of the three leading theories are described.

Specialization and Trading Model

Gary Becker's specialization and trading model adopts a rational-choice perspective that views men and women as attempting to maximize personal gains through marriage. People search for a spouse in the marriage market. Once in the market, individuals exchange their personal assets—be it income, wealth, home production, childrearing skills, or physical attractiveness—for a partner with the highest overall value on a related set of assets. Historically, men have specialized in and traded on their economic production, whereas women have specialized in and traded on their domestic production. This mutual dependence is thought to increase each gender's gains from marriage. Becker argues that women's increasing labor force participation, as well as the separation of sexual expression from marriage, has weakened marriage as an institution by reducing men's and women's gains from marriage.

Career-Entry Theory

Valerie Oppenheimer's Career Entry Theory applies Job Search Theory to the marriage market and the process of partner selection. Job search theory asserts that potential workers look for employment in the labor market until they find a job that satisfies the minimum qualifications necessary for acceptable employment. From the perspective of the worker, the sorting of individuals into jobs is maximized when the number of jobs available in the market increases. According to Oppenheimer, an analogous situation occurs during the process of selecting a partner in the marriage market. A person wishing to establish a relationship searches for a partner in the marriage market. Similar to employment, individuals usually have a predetermined idea of the minimum characteristics necessary before a potential partner is deemed acceptable (parallel to a minimally

acceptable hourly wage). Once in the marriage market individuals compete with others who also wish to find a partner.

Oppenheimer argues that high levels of female human capital delays women's transition to marriage by extending their marital search process and simultaneously raising the minimum characteristics they deem as necessary in a husband. Perhaps more importantly, men's economic volatility also decreases the incidence of marriage by creating long-term financial uncertainty for both partners.

Though Becker and Oppenheimer approach the role of the marriage market from a different perspective, each theory asserts that the probability of finding a desirable partner is the highest when the number of opposite sex persons with desirable characteristics is at its highest. Therefore, an increase in the supply of desirable partners available in the local marriage market is hypothesized to facilitate union formation.

Imbalanced Sex Ratio Theory

Marcia Guttentag and Paul Secord's imbalanced Sex Ratio Theory rests on two important premises: (1) men and women have divergent familial goals, and (2) an imbalance in the marriage market will produce a shift in *dyadic power*. All else being equal, the theory asserts that females prefer to form stable, long-term, secure, monogamous relationships through marriage, whereas males seek more sexually permissive relationships and wish to avert or delay intimate long-term commitments. Furthermore, the gender that is in short supply is assumed to have greater dyadic power within the marriage market because of supply and demand. When the sex ratio is low—a greater supply of females relative to males—*men* enjoy more dyadic power within relationships because they are in high demand. Conversely, when the sex ratio is high—a greater supply of males relative to females—*women* benefit from greater dyadic power because they are in higher demand. Greater male dyadic power is hypothesized to lead to lower levels of legal union formation, and women's greater dyadic power is predicted to result in widespread adoption of traditional family patterns including a relatively early age at first marriage, high rates of marriage, low rates of divorce, and low rates of children born outside of marriage.

Research Findings

Interestingly, divergent marriage market theories predict identical behavior (albeit for different reasons) by women—that is, women will be more likely to form partnerships and less likely to have children outside of marriage when they reside in marriage markets characterized by numerous eligible men with desirable socioeconomic characteristics. This is in fact what studies have shown.

Studies of men's familial behavior, though not as prevalent as studies of women, are conflicting. Some suggest that men display a greater propensity to marry when they reside in marriage markets characterized by numerous potential female partners, but others do not. Research also reveals that both men and women are more likely to divorce when they reside in marriage markets that are characterized by a gender imbalance—specifically, women are more likely to divorce in marriage markets that contain a large proportion of single men, and men are more likely to divorce in marriage markets that contain a large proportion of single women.

Kim M. Lloyd

See also Age at First Marriage; Assortative Mating; Contextual Influences on Relationships; Exchange Processes; Field of Eligibles and Availables; Marriage, Transition to; Mate Selection; Physical Attractiveness, Role in Relationships; Power Distribution in Relationships; Sex Ratio

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variety of cultures tend to pair up with those who are similar in physical attractiveness. The handsome man and the gorgeous woman date and marry each other, and their more homely counterparts pair up with their plainer counterparts. Similarity in physical attractiveness also occurs in gay and lesbian couples. In everyday language, this is referred to as dating in “one's league”; a person assumed to be unattainable because of being much more physically attractive than oneself is described as “out of one's league.” Occasionally, however, one will see a couple that seems mismatched. He may be older and unattractive. She's young and beautiful. What attracted them to each other? This entry discusses the *matching hypothesis*, first introduced in the 1960s, to refer to the tendency for people to pair up with others who are equally physically attractive (unattractive). We also discuss *complex matching*, which occurs when people are able to attract partners far more physically attractive than themselves by offering compensatory assets—say, status, power, or financial standing.

Original Matching Hypothesis and Classic Dance Study

Elaine Hatfield (Walster) and her colleagues proposed the original version of the matching hypothesis. Based on Kurt Lewin's Level of Aspiration Theory, they proposed that in making dating and mating choices, people will tend to choose someone of their own level of social desirability. Theoretically, people should be influenced by both the desirability of the potential match (what they want) and their perception of the probability of obtaining that date (what they think they can get). Social psychologists referred to such mating choices as *realistic choices*, because they are influenced by the chances of having one's affection reciprocated.

The researchers tested the matching hypothesis in a classic dance study. In this study, 752 freshmen at the University of Minnesota were invited to attend a get-acquainted dance. When the participants picked up their free tickets, a panel of judges surreptitiously rated the students' physical attractiveness. Also available from either university records or additional measures completed by the

MATCHING HYPOTHESIS

A quick glance at couples in public settings will likely lead to the observation that people in a

participants was information on personality, grade point average, and social skills. The freshmen students were randomly matched with partners. The success of these matches was assessed via a survey distributed during the dance's intermission and in a 4- to 6-month follow-up. Before the dance, the more attractive the student, the more attractive they assumed their date would be. Nonetheless, once participants had met their matches, *regardless of their own physical attractiveness*, participants reacted more positively to physically attractive dates and were more likely to try to arrange subsequent dates with the physically attractive. Self-esteem, intelligence, and personality did not affect participants' liking for the dates or subsequent attempts to date them. This study, then, did *not* find any support for the matching hypothesis.

Evidence for the Matching Hypothesis: Follow-Up Experimental Studies

The dance study was criticized as not reflecting the reality of the dating marketplace because in the computer dance setting, there was no or little chance of rejection, at least for the evening of the dance. Follow-up experimental studies were conducted in which college students, in laboratory settings, were asked to react to profile information about "potential dates." The researchers manipulated the dates' physical attractiveness and sometimes presented bogus information about how likely the date would be to enter a relationship with the respondent. Similar to the findings from the classic dance study, most people—regardless of how attractive they were—reacted more positively to profiles of attractive dates than of unattractive dates. Although learning one could be rejected by a potential date had a dampening effect on reactions to the other, overall the physical attractiveness effect (physical attractiveness of the other highly associated with attraction for him or her) predominated over a matching effect or a concern about rejection.

Observations of Actual Couples

Data collected in the real world, however, told another story. In a number of studies, social psychologists measured the attractiveness level of each partner of actual couples. They did this in

various ways but tried to be objective as possible, often asking more than one "judge" to provide the ratings and having the ratings of one member of the couple done independently of the ratings of the other member (often through photographs). Here, there was strong evidence found for the matching hypothesis. Similarity has been found between the partners' levels of physical attractiveness in real couples.

Preferences, Realistic Choices, and What Actually Occurs

One explanation for the diverse findings across contexts is that in these disparate studies, scholars are studying different phenomena. Although the *matching hypothesis* is most often referred to as a single hypothesis, there may be at least three separate subhypotheses included within. As noted by S. Michael Kalick, there are distinctions among *preferences*, *realistic choices*, and what *actually occurs* (i.e., what people will settle for).

1. *Preferences*: In the strongest form of the matching hypothesis, it would be proposed that people prefer to match with partners of their own level of attractiveness. No evidence has been found for this, however. What do people prefer, if issues of possible rejection or competition are not salient? Most people prefer someone who is physically attractive. For those who are physically attractive, what they want and what they can get are identical. For those who are unattractive, however, desire conflicts with reality. In making their choices, they must balance the two.
2. *Realistic choices*: What do people choose under more realistic social situations, where they must approach someone (or wait to be approached), and social rejection is a very real possibility? Under these conditions, Hatfield and her colleagues proposed that—although all prefer an ideal partner—they would be likely to choose to approach someone of approximately their own level of attractiveness. This form of the hypothesis distinguishes between preferences and choices.
3. *Reality*: The reality considers everything—what a person desires, whether the other wants him or her in return, and market considerations (including whether other desirable alternatives come along for one or both of them). In real life, people typically settle for mating within "their league," whether they want to or not.

Of these three forms of the matching hypothesis, the least amount of support has been found for the first version (people yearn for the ideal, regardless of the possibility of attaining it), the most support has been found for the third version.

More Complex Matching

Although the original matching hypothesis proposed that people would pair up with someone as “socially desirable” as themselves—choosing people who are equal in a panoply of assets—over time, the matching hypothesis has come to be associated specifically with matching on *physical attractiveness*. However, people come to a relationship offering many desirable characteristics. A person may compensate for a lack of physical attractiveness with a charming personality, kindness, status, money, and so forth. The notion that individuals can sometimes compensate for their lack of attractiveness by offering other desirable traits has been termed “complex matching.” As social psychologists point out, a traditional type of pairing is gender-linked: An older, wealthy, successful man pairs with a younger, attractive woman—known in popular culture as the “trophy wife”—a testament to a businessman’s success.

Third-Party Assistance and the Matching Principle

Today, most people make their own dating and mating choices. The original matching hypothesis was proposed as an explanation for individuals’ decisions about their own mating and dating choices. Nonetheless, matching is sometimes assisted by third parties—friends, families, and by Internet dating sites. It is likely that friends, families, and matching services also consider physical attractiveness and other desirable traits as they determine who will make suitable matches.

Conclusions

Many years ago, sociologist Erving Goffman observed that in the United States, a proposal of marriage occurred when a man calculated his own social worth and suggested to a woman that her

assets weren’t so much better as to “preclude a merger.” Goffman and social psychologists who proposed and tested the matching hypothesis were keen observers of the dating and mating marketplace. Today, compelling evidence indicates that although men and women may yearn for the ideal mate, when the time comes to make a choice they generally settle for the “art of the possible.”

Elaine Hatfield and Susan Sprecher

See also Assortative Mating; Equity Theory; Exchange Processes; Physical Attractiveness, Role in Relationships

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MATE GUARDING AND POACHING

Like most birds and many other species, most people employ a socially monogamous mating strategy. At any given time, a person maintains a romantic relationship with only one other person in which both members of the relationship cooperate to maintain the relationship. This social relationship, however, does not guarantee sexual exclusivity. Although it may be socially undesirable, men and women sometimes engage in sexual behavior with people other than their partners. Keeping one’s long-term mate from being sexually unfaithful is as much of a problem for people today as it was for our ancestors hundreds of thousands of years ago. Because this has been such a costly problem throughout human evolutionary

history, people today have evolved a series of cognitive and affective mechanisms that motivate behaviors intended to guard against such infidelities, as well as behaviors intended to circumvent the mate guarding behaviors of a potential mate's current partner. This entry discusses findings from recent research in the area of human romantic relationships suggesting how and why people keep their own mates from being sexually unfaithful and how and why other people evade those attempts.

Having one's mate be unfaithful can be costly for both men and women. Men whose partners are sexually unfaithful run the risk of being cuckolded—unwittingly investing time, energy, and material resources in genetically unrelated offspring. In addition, a man whose partner has been unfaithful also risks permanently losing his partner to another man, effectively losing all previous investment in his partner and in the relationship, as well as all possibility of future reproduction with her. He must then expend effort finding another mate and developing a new relationship. Women, on the other hand, are never at risk for cuckoldry. When a woman has a child, she knows that the child is hers. However, women still are subject to negative consequences of their partner's infidelity. A woman whose partner defects the relationship, even temporarily, risks losing her partner's investment in herself and her offspring. If she is interested in establishing a new romantic relationship, she must expend effort finding another mate who is willing to invest in her and any children she may have. Given the reproductively costly consequences of a partner's infidelity, then, people in romantic relationships perform a variety of behaviors intended to discourage their mates from defecting from the relationship in the form of an infidelity.

Mate Guarding

People use a variety of behaviors to guard their mates and attempt to keep them from being unfaithful. Studies have reported dozens of different behaviors that people use as part of their mate guarding efforts. These behaviors have been categorized into five general tactics: direct guarding, intersexual negative inducements, intrasexual

negative inducements, positive inducements, and public signals of possession.

Direct Guarding tactics include some of the more overt forms of mate guarding behaviors—for example, snooping through a partner's personal belongings, insisting that a partner does not go out without oneself, and monopolizing a partner's time to keep him or her from interacting with potential affair partners. Intersexual Negative Inducement tactics focus on the manipulation of one's partner. For instance, a woman may flirt with another man in front of her partner to make him jealous, or a man may yell at or be physically violent toward his partner when he catches her flirting with someone else. Intrasexual Negative Inducements are similar to Intersexual Negative Inducements except that they include behaviors aimed at same-sex rivals rather than one's partner. Instead of hitting one's partner for flirting with another man, for example, a man may hit the man who flirted with his partner. He may also tell other men negative things about his partner to keep them from being interested in her.

Not all mate retention behaviors are negative, however. Some behaviors, such as those tactics categorized within Positive Inducements, are aimed at enticing one's partner to stay in the relationship rather than punishing a partner's defection. These tactics include behaviors such as presenting a partner with gifts, enhancing one's own appearance to look nice for a partner, and offering a partner help, support, and affection. The fifth category of mate retention tactics, Public Signals of Possession, also includes behaviors that amount to bestowing benefits on a partner rather than inflicting costs on a partner. These tactics can include being physically affectionate in public and bragging about one's partner to others. Regardless of which category of tactics is used, and whether or not they are consciously associated with the goal of guarding one's partner, all mate retention behaviors are ostensibly aimed at keeping one's partner invested in the current relationship.

Just as mate guarding tactics differ, people differ in their use of these tactics. For instance, men are more likely than women to attempt to retain partners by displaying their resources, such as by spending a lot of money on their partners. This is not surprising given that women are particularly attracted to men who have resources and are

willing to offer access to those resources. Men are also more likely than women to threaten other men who show interest in their partners. Women, on the other hand, are more likely than men to keep their partners invested in the relationship by enhancing their own appearance, telling other people that their partner is taken, and punishing men's threats to be unfaithful.

In addition to differences between men and women in the use of mate retention behaviors, there are also individual differences that vary from one relationship to another. For example, men perform more mate retention behaviors with younger partners. This is because younger women are perceived to be "higher quality" mates than older women, although there is as yet no research investigating mate guarding by male partners of postmenopausal women. Men's perceptions of their partner's physical attractiveness also influences mate retention behaviors. Men who believe that their partners are more attractive perform more mate retention behaviors than do men who believe their partners are less attractive. Age discrepancy in a relationship is also associated with mate retention behaviors, with men who are significantly older than their partners performing more mate retention behaviors. Mate retention behaviors also increase with the perceived risk of partner infidelity. The more likely a man thinks that his partner will be sexually unfaithful, the more mate retention behaviors he uses, suggesting that mate retention behaviors are indeed enacted to thwart anticipated infidelities.

Not all women perform mate retention behaviors to the same degree either. Younger and more attractive women are more likely than are older and less attractive women to enact mate retention behaviors. Women in general perform more mate retention behaviors with husbands who have higher incomes and who display greater status striving. In contrast to men, women who believe that their partners are more attractive perform fewer mate retention behaviors.

Mate Poaching

Mate guarding behaviors function to keep one's partner from deserting the current relationship. Mate poaching, one reason for leaving an existing

relationship, occurs when a person attempts to attract someone who is already involved in a committed relationship with another person. Although the percentages vary across cultures, about 50 percent of men and women report having made at least one attempt at poaching someone from a relationship at some point in their lives. Roughly 70 to 85 percent of men and women report that someone else has tried to poach either themselves or their partner out of a relationship.

The particular tactics that people use to poach potential mates are not unlike the tactics people use to attract and then to guard their own mates against poaching. Women enhance their own physical appearance to attract the attention of an already-mated man and then provide him with easy sexual access. Men, on the other hand, are more likely to display resources and generosity (i.e., a willingness to invest in a woman and any possible offspring) and by making a woman question her current partner's fidelity and commitment to the relationship.

As with mate guarding, all poaching behaviors are not equal. Not all people are poachers, and some people are more likely to receive poaching attention than others. Agreeable and conscientious people are less likely to be poachers than are unreliable and self-described erotophilic people (i.e., people who have positive feelings and responses to sex and sex-related stimuli). Extraverts and those open to new experiences are more likely to receive poaching attempts, whereas neurotic, unloving, and masculine people are more likely to be successfully poached away from an existing relationship. Characteristics of the existing relationship are also important to consider in the use of poaching tactics. Poaching tactics are perceived to be less effective when used on men and women in established, long-term, committed relationships, compared with people who are just starting or just ending a relationship.

The benefits of mate poaching mirror the benefits of nonpoaching relationships: Men gain access to physically and sexually attractive women and women gain access to men who have resources and who display a willingness to invest those resources in her and possibly her children. The potential costs of mate poaching, however, are substantial. A poacher must be concerned with competing against a current partner and with retribution by the

current partner, should he or she discover the poaching. In addition, most relationships include some amount of fidelity uncertainty. In a relationship in which one of the members has been poached from a previously existing relationship, the risk of infidelity is exacerbated. That person might still be sexually involved with the partner from the earlier relationship, and he or she might be susceptible to further poaching from other sources.

Being poached is not a passive process, and some relationships are subject to poaching enticement. Poaching enticement occurs when a person in a relationship encourages poaching by a partner's rivals. Women who desire to be attracted away from their current partners are more likely to display physical beauty and offer sexual access to desirable men other than her current partner. Men who want to be poached are more likely to display resources and dominance behaviors to potential poachers.

Poaching enticement is not without costs, however. A person whose poaching enticement efforts have been detected by his or her current partner may be at risk for more severe and most likely unwanted mate guarding behaviors. Consequently, people who engage in poaching enticement also engage in behaviors intended to disguise such enticement, often by overtly giving their current partners what they want most. For example, women may increase the frequency of sexual activity with their current partners in addition to maintaining their daily routines and keeping atypical behaviors to a minimum. Men, on the other hand, are more likely to display overly pronounced commitment to their current partner.

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See also Attraction, Sexual; Evolutionary Psychology and Human Relationships; Jealousy; Mate Preferences; Mate Selection

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MATE PREFERENCES

Romantic relationships are everywhere—people in all cultures engage in various forms of mating, including short-term, casual sexual relationships on the one hand and committed partnerships and marriage on the other. This entry looks at people's mate preferences, including the characteristics that people desire in long- and short-term relationships, how selective people are in choosing a mate, and trade-offs individuals make. Some important ways in which men and women are alike and differ are described; these mate preference phenomena are explained from two major theoretical perspectives.

Short-term relationships, including one-night stands, casual sex, and sexual affairs, tend to lack commitment and revolve around sexual or physical relations. Conversely, long-term relationships, including marriage and exclusive, steady relationships, tend to involve commitment and investment between partners, and endure for a while. Although people may sometimes find themselves in relationships that have characteristics of both types, a general division of relationships as either committed, long-term, or casual, short-term is nonetheless useful in characterizing the various nuances of mate preferences, and is used in this entry.

Valued Characteristics In Mates

Mate preference researchers have found distinct patterns in the characteristics that people desire for short- and long-term relationships. To begin with, many characteristics are important to both men and women for both types of relationships, including kindness, intelligence, physical attractiveness, creativity, an exciting personality, sense of humor, and social status. For short-term mates such as one-night stands, casual sex partners, and affair partners, both sexes place particularly high value on physical attractiveness. Specifically, both men and women consider it necessary for short-term partners to have a minimum level of physical attractiveness. Indeed, when given the opportunity to obtain information on a potential short-term partner, people inquire first about the potential mate's physical attractiveness.

For long-term mates such as marriage partners, mutual attraction and love, dependable character, emotional stability and maturity, pleasing disposition, and education and intelligence were identified as the top five most desired characteristics across three major regions in the United States. Many traits, such as those related to kindness and intelligence, tend to be equally valued by men and women and may be important in demonstrating parenting skills, fidelity, trustworthiness, generosity, and ability to maintain a relationship. Such characteristics tend to be equally valued across cultures and generations. However, some preferences are more prevalent in certain cultures. For instance, when David Buss and colleagues compared 29 cultures from different parts of the world, they found that physical attractiveness was more highly valued in cultures with higher levels of parasites. In addition, some characteristics change over time. For example, in an analysis of more than 50 years of studies on mate preferences in the United States, researchers observed an increase in the importance of love and mutual attraction.

The sexes tend to differ on their preferences for physical attractiveness and social status in a long-term mate. Specifically, men value physical attractiveness more than women do and women value social status (and earning potential) more than men do. These sex differences in preference for social status and physical attractiveness have been studied extensively and have been found across age

groups and ethnicities in the United States, across several decades, and across numerous countries around the world.

In particular, men prioritize finding a minimum level of physical attractiveness in long-term mates, whereas women prioritize obtaining a minimum level of social status in their partners. That is, although people would ideally like to have well-rounded mates who are great looking, smart, successful, funny, talented, kind, and virtuous, men want someone who is at least minimally physically attractive and women want a partner who has at least a minimal level of social status.

Explaining Sex Differences in Valued Characteristics

The priorities that men and women place on physical attractiveness and women place on social status can be explained by two major perspectives: sociocultural and evolutionary. Sociocultural theories look to social norms (what is appropriate for people to do in social situations) and the influence of larger groups, including family, religion, and society. From a sociocultural perspective, women in most societies have less access to status, power, and economic resources than men do. To gain stable access to economic resources and achieve upward mobility, women need to select marriage partners who have status and income potential. Men, on the other hand, are in the economic power seat, and thus are free to pursue what society deems as pleasurable, such as a long-term mate's physical attributes. However, if the intended mating duration is short-term, then economic constraints should be less relevant and both sexes should be free to value their mates' physical attractiveness.

Whereas sociocultural theories revolve around societal constraints, evolutionary theories rely on more distal explanations and consider biological constraints and heredity. Evolutionary theorists maintain that preferences and behaviors may be heritable, and that the psychologies we have today may have been naturally selected during millions of years. Specifically, psychologies that aided ancestral humans in reproducing more successfully are likely to have been passed down over evolutionary history. Because men and women have

different reproductive capacities and constraints, the sexes may have evolved different psychologies relating to mating and reproduction.

Evolutionary theorists note that men vary in their ability to provide resources for offspring. Ancestral men with high social status had good access to resources, whereas ancestral men with low status may have had little or no access to resources. Thus, ancestral women who prioritized having some status in their long-term mates likely secured essential resources for their offspring and outreproduced those who did not and passed this proclivity down through the generations. For short-term mates, resources are less relevant, but a man's heritable traits, including his physical appearance and qualities implied by his appearance, may be passed on to any resultant offspring. Thus, evolutionary psychological theories suggest that women may value physical attractiveness in short-term mates for heritable benefits. This point is elaborated further later.

Men's preference for physical attractiveness may be related to an important constraint in female reproductive capacity. Whereas men's fertility tends to decline slowly over their life spans, women are most fertile in their 20s and decrease in their ability to have children after age 30, until hitting menopause by age 50. Because of this reproductive constraint, ancestral men who were attracted to the most fertile women—more specifically, physical features belonging to the most fertile women—would have outreproduced men who were not. Consequently, attraction toward fertility-related features would have become more prevalent over generations.

Physical Attraction: A Closer Look

The qualities that people list as important in choosing a mate can be further studied to uncover the detailed nature of preferences. Research on what people find physically attractive illuminates the specificity of preferences. Both men and women find physical characteristics that signal good health to be attractive in a mate. Traits such as smooth skin, strong hair, good teeth and gums, and normal gait and movement can provide evidence of good nutrition and healthy development.

Men are additionally attracted to those features in women's physical appearance that indicate fertility. In particular, men tend to be drawn to secondary sexual characteristics and signals of youth, because female fertility varies with age. These characteristics include full lips, soft and lustrous hair, smooth skin, colorful cheeks, good muscle tone, breasts, buttocks, and a low waist-to-hip ratio (the circumference around the thinnest part of the waist divided by the circumference around the thickest part of the hips).

Among the various features, the waist-to-hip ratio is one that has been studied extensively in recent years. Waist-to-hip ratio is a visual cue that is noticeable from a distance and from behind as well as from the front. Although preferred overall female body size tends to vary over time and by culture, male preferences for a low female waist-to-hip ratio (around 0.7) has been found to be stable across time and across various cultures. Research in this area has found that lower waist-to-hip-ratios are associated with both increased fertility and lower health risks in women. A study done at a fertility clinic found that every 0.1 increase in waist-to-hip ratio is associated with a 30 percent decrease in conception probability.

Conversely, women are physically attracted to male features such as facial masculinity, muscularity, and symmetry that may be indicative of good genes. According to proponents of the good genes theory, a healthy set of genes and immune system allow a person to resist pathogens that can adversely affect developmental stability. In addition to having negative health consequences, individuals who are not able to fend off pathogens during development tend to possess a greater degree of bilateral asymmetry (left-side development deviates from being symmetrical to right-side development). Because testosterone suppresses the immune system, only men who have good immunity are able to maintain high levels of testosterone and remain healthy. Thus, testosterone-related physical features, when present with symmetry, advertise that a man's genes are resistant to pathogens.

Indeed, research shows that men who are symmetrical tend also to possess testosterone-mediated secondary sexual characteristics such as muscularity, broad shoulders, and facial masculinity, and they are the men that women tend to consider

sexually attractive. Compared with asymmetrical men, symmetrical and masculine-looking men start having sex at an earlier age, are more desirable as sexual partners, have more sexual partners, and are more likely to bring their partners to orgasm. In ancestral environments, women who were more physically attracted to symmetrical than to asymmetrical men may have passed on good genes to offspring, who then were more likely to be healthy and survive to reproductive age, and, in the case of male offspring, more likely to be attractive to potential mates.

Mate Selectivity

Which mate preferences a person expresses is influenced by a person's inclination to seek and accept mates for particular relationships. For instance, men and women tend to be equally careful and selective when entering a potential long-term relationship. Studies have found that when considering minimum requirements for a marriage partner, both sexes have equally high standards. For example, both men and women indicate that they require above-average intelligence in a marriage partner. Where the sexes differ are short-term relationships: men tend to be much more eager than women for sexual opportunities. In a study done on Florida State University's campus, men and women were approached by an attractive, opposite-sex stranger (actually, a student who was helping to carry out the experiment) who immediately makes an invitation for casual sex. A majority of men—75 percent—said yes, whereas 100 percent of the women said no. Several of the women threatened to call the campus police. In contrast, of the 25 percent of men who declined, many were apologetic and asked to reschedule.

Men are much more willing than women to engage in sexual relations after any length of acquaintance from 1 minute to 5 years. To facilitate sexual relations, men require much less commitment and investment before consenting to sex. Indeed, men report significantly lower standards for short-term relationships, especially for one-night stands. For instance, whereas women's minimum acceptable intelligence for one-night stands is at the same high level that they require for long-term partners, men indicate that they are willing to

accept a one-night stand whose intelligence is far below average (around the 25th percentile).

Explaining Sex Differences in Mate Selectivity

Men's lower short-term mating thresholds and mate preferences in general can be explained by the two major perspectives. According to a socio-cultural view, societal norms tend to influence men to be more proactive and women to be more passive across many endeavors, including sexual behaviors. Thus, the difference in whether to enter short-term relationships may be the result of gender role differences, whereby men are socialized to be sexually autonomous and women are socialized to be sexually restrained.

An evolutionary perspective suggests an alternative explanation for this sex difference. A key to understanding this perspective is to consider that in an ancestral environment, long before birth control, pregnancy was always a possible outcome of sex. However, women, not men, are physiologically required to provide substantial resources during and after pregnancy for offspring to survive. Thus, uncommitted, casual sexual encounters present much higher potential reproductive costs to women than to men. As such, short-term sexual relationships are reproductively less favorable to women. On average, those ancestral women with a choosier mating psychology that favored long-term relationships, where partners are more likely to stick around and invest in offspring, likely outreproduced those who were less selective and favored having casual sex, where partners are likely to be absent if offspring show up.

Men, on the other hand, are not physiologically constrained by pregnancy and nursing, and can contribute as little as a few sex cells to a casual sex encounter, even if offspring result. As such, male reproductive success can be more readily increased through openness to casual sex than female reproductive success can. Thus, because of the asymmetry in reproductive costs between men and women, men may have evolved to be more open to casual sex and have lower requirements for potential sex partners than women do.

Whereas only women make a potentially substantial reproductive investment in short-term

relationships, both sexes tend to invest significantly in the relationship and in raising children in long-term relationships. Thus, according to an evolutionary perspective, both sexes may have evolved to be selective about taking on a long-term partner.

An evolutionary perspective further suggests that in addition to selectivity, men and women may also desire characteristics in mates that indicate a willingness to engage in the preferred relationship type. For instance, when men look for short-term mates they may look for a willingness to engage in casual sex. When men and women look for long-term mates, they look for a willingness to commit.

Tradeoffs in Individuals' Mate Preferences

Aside from general sex differences, individuals' own traits affect the type of relationships they pursue and, consequently, the preferences they have in mates. Although women tend to prioritize physical attractiveness in short-term mates and social status in long-term mates, it would be reproductively ideal for women to find mates who can provide both genetic and material benefits to offspring. However, obtaining both sets of features in one male partner is difficult. Such men tend to be in high demand and are targeted by women who are willing to have casual sexual relationships; thus, these men tend to be less committed to any one partner. As such, research suggests that most women may need to make a strategic tradeoff by selecting long-term partners who are higher in investment potential than sexual attractiveness. However, evolutionary-minded researchers also suggest that it may be adaptive for women to seek primary partners who provide investment while obtaining better genes through extra-pair mating (sex with individuals other than one's primary partner).

Evidence for this dual-mating hypothesis comes from studies that examine mate preferences throughout a woman's menstrual cycle. Around the time of ovulation, when pregnancy is most likely, female sexual desire becomes stronger and the frequency of sexual fantasies increases. However, these fantasies are directed not toward primary partners, but toward potential affair

partners. This is particularly true if a woman's primary partner is not physically attractive and lacks indicators of genetic fitness, including strength, symmetry, and social dominance. When women are ovulating, they also more strongly prefer masculine faces and symmetrical features in men, and the scent of symmetrical men, compared with when they are not ovulating. Indeed, men who report being chosen for sexual affairs tend also to have symmetrical measurements. Furthermore, self-report research conducted in the United Kingdom indicates that women who are in a steady relationship tend to have sex with their primary partner evenly across the ovulatory cycle. However, if partnered women have sexual affairs, they are more likely to do so around the time of ovulation.

A strategic trade-off that men face involves the allocation of effort to mating versus parenting. The resolution of these trade-offs depends on cues from the environment. When men possess indicators of good genes and are sexually attractive to women, they tend to allocate more effort to mating. When men do not have the attributes that make them sexually attractive or otherwise face limited sexual opportunities, they tend to invest more heavily in a single mate's children. For example, African tribal evidence shows that men of high status have more wives and spend less time on parenting than do men of low status. Thus, men's access to short-term mates is a primary factor in determining the type of relationship that men prefer, which in turn influences what characteristics they value in a mate.

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See also Attraction, Sexual; Evolutionary Perspectives on Women's Romantic Attraction; Evolutionary Psychology and Human Relationships; Mate Selection; Physical Attractiveness, Defining Characteristics

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MATERIALISM AND RELATIONSHIPS

Human relationships take place in broader cultural contexts that provide the settings and norms governing how people relate to each other. Many contemporary humans live in cultural contexts characterized by capitalism and consumerism, both of which encourage individuals to pursue their own self-interest, to obtain financial wealth, and to acquire many possessions signifying high status and the “right” image. When people believe that money, possessions, image, and status are important goals to strive for in life, they have internalized materialistic values. Although most research on materialism has investigated its negative correlations with indices of personal well-being, a growing number of studies also report that problematic interpersonal relationships are associated with strongly valuing materialism. This

entry briefly reviews that literature and describes three possible explanations for these findings.

Materialism and Relationship Quality

Studies with adults and adolescents have shown that the more people endorse materialistic values, the lower the quality of their interpersonal relationships. For example, materialistic values are associated with having relationships characterized by lower trust and acceptance, and by more jealousy and emotional volatility; these findings occur with both self- and peer-reports of relationship quality. Materialism is also associated with lower marital satisfaction among couples and higher conflict among parents and their children. People who strongly value money, image, and status also tend to feel more alienated, detached, and separate from those around them. It may not be surprising, then, that adolescents who put a high priority on “being rich” are more likely to be diagnosed with personality disorders indicative of problematic interpersonal relationships and with disorders involving antisocial activities.

Three Explanations

One explanation for these findings is that when people care a great deal about materialistic pursuits, they tend to care less about close interpersonal relationships and other people in general. Cross-cultural research on values and goals consistently demonstrates that self-interested, materialistic aims typically stand in opposition to the kinds of values that promote good interpersonal relationships. For example, materialistic values tend to oppose benevolence and affiliation values, which concern being “helpful” and “loyal,” obtaining “true friendship” and “mature love,” and having close, committed relationships. Across various cultures, materialistic values and goals also typically oppose universalism and community feeling aims such as working for “social justice” and “equality,” and trying to make the world a better place. Experimental results in the United States even suggest that activating materialistic values by making people think about money and possessions may cause them to orient away from friendly, helpful, cooperative acts.

For example, in one study with 4- and 5-year-olds, children randomly assigned to watch a commercial promoting a fun toy were more likely to decline the opportunity to play with their friends so they could instead play with the toy. These subjects were also more likely to choose to play with a “not so nice” boy who had the toy than with a “nice boy” who did not. In a different series of studies, U.S. college students randomly assigned to create sentences out of money-related words (as opposed to neutral words) later spent less time helping an experimenter pick up pencils that had been dropped and less time helping a confused confederate. They also donated smaller portions of their honorarium to charity. Such results suggest that it is quite difficult for individuals to simultaneously strive for materialistic and relationship goals and that relationships tend to lose out when materialistic goals are activated in people’s minds (as happens so often in capitalistic, consumer culture).

A second explanation for the interpersonal problems associated with materialism is that individuals who endorse such values, beliefs, and goals tend to be highly focused on how others view them. Indeed, the materialistic aims of money, image, and status are typically referred to as “extrinsic” because they reflect strong concern with external rewards and the opinions of others. Supporting this label, studies show that materialistic values are associated with thinking more about the impression one is making on others, with fearing the negative evaluations of others, and with feeling pressure to conform to one’s peers. Other research suggests that materialism is typically motivated by concerns about looking cool, seeming to be of high status, and demonstrating one’s competence to other people. Such concerns and motives are likely to interfere with high-quality relationships, as worries about evaluation or desires to appear certain ways typically are inimical to feeling close and connected to others.

Finally, a strong focus on money and possessions is associated with a tendency to “objectify” other people. That is, materialism apparently increases the likelihood that other people are treated as objects to be manipulated in the pursuit of one’s goals, rather than as unique, subjective individuals with their own desires,

experiences, and needs. This tendency toward objectification can be seen in some of the attitudes empirically associated with strong materialistic values, including lower empathy, more manipulative tendencies, and a stronger likelihood of being socially dominant and prejudicial. Materialistic individuals also report engaging in fewer prosocial and more antisocial activities, including questionable ethical behaviors in business settings. Finally, a few studies suggest that when placed in resource dilemma games, materialistic values are associated with being less generous and with acting in more competitive and less cooperative ways. None of these qualities are likely to promote healthy, mutually satisfying human interactions.

Conclusion

Although a populace focused on materialistic aims may be beneficial for economic growth, corporate profits and retail sales, existing research suggests that materialism is consistently associated with poorer interpersonal relationships. More studies are necessary to test these associations in a wider array of cultures and with other types of relational outcomes.

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See also Contextual Influences on Relationships; Cooperation and Competition; Exchange Orientation; Media Influences on Relationships; Money and Couple Relationships; Narcissism, Effects on Relationships; Values and Relationships

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MATE SELECTION

Mate selection refers to the process by which an individual chooses, or is chosen by, a potential partner from the pool of eligibles and the factors that predict the formation, maintenance, escalation, or dissolution of a long-term, romantic relationship over time. As part of the process, each individual is thought to consciously or unconsciously evaluate one's fit with a partner on a wide variety of social, personal, and relationship characteristics. These evaluations of the partner and relationship are thought to be an ongoing process in which an individual considers an array of factors at different stages of the relationship and as new information about the partner is discovered. The importance of a particular characteristic, however, is likely to vary as the stage of involvement in the relationship changes. A woman, for example, may place more importance on physical appearance in her decision about whether to accept a date or give someone her phone number, but may place much less importance on appearance when deciding whether or not to marry a long-term boyfriend who may have other redeeming qualities. When individuals feel their partner and their relationship are a good match for them, they are likely to increase their involvement in the relationship. The process and meaning of mate selection, however, has continued to evolve as demographic trends have influenced the social practices associated with the choosing of a mate. This entry discusses several factors about mate selection, including a historical perspective to mate selection, social and contextual influences on partner selection, an evolutionary perspective to mate selection, and formal intermediaries in mate selection.

Evolution of Mate Selection and Demographic Trends

The evolution of mate selection can be seen throughout the history of the United States. In colonial times, a man who wished to court a woman had to ask for her father's permission, be introduced to the family, and had to have a chaperone for all interactions. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the industrial revolution and

changes in the social position of women led to the emergence of dating, as individuals arranged times and places to meet outside of the home. In the middle of the 20th century, dating became formalized with role-based scripts, and relationships generally followed an orderly progression toward marriage.

In early studies on mate selection conducted during the middle of the 20th century, the term *mate selection* was used to describe an individual's selection of the initial marital partner and the progress of a romantic relationship toward marriage. Most of these studies were based on the idea of a courtship continuum that began with the first meeting and advanced through dating, going steady, courtship, and engagement, progressing to marriage.

More recently, however, the term *mate selection* has been broadened in the research to include non-marital, romantic relationships, such as cohabiting relationships. The focus of research on mate selection has subsequently moved from relationship formation and progress toward marriage to the study of relational characteristics and phenomena in various close and romantic relationships. Although there may be many potential reasons for this shift in the focus of the research, some possibilities include a change in the meaning of marriage and three demographic trends, the delay in marital timing, the growing prevalence of cohabitation, and the increase in nonmarital fertility.

The mate selection process may have evolved because of a change in the societal meaning of marriage. In the past, marriage has been described by some as a social compromise in which men and women exchanged different resources for their mutual benefit. Men provided economic support and protection, whereas women provided child-rearing and homemaking. Although this view likely oversimplified and excluded key components of marriage (e.g., love, commitment, attraction), it was believed people primarily chose partners to fulfill socially defined roles. As society has continued to change, however, individuals are thought to see marriage as more of a personal choice with more emphasis on other relational qualities, such as love, rather than as an exchange of resources. Individuals are thought to be seeking their *soul mate* with whom they may have a physical, emotional, and spiritual connection. Finding such a

partner likely requires greater selectivity, self-awareness, and more time, perhaps altering the mate selection process, especially marital timing.

During the last 50 years, there has been a substantial increase in the median age of first marriage, meaning the age at which half of all people born within a 5-year period have entered into their first marriage. In the past, many young adults chose to marry in their early 20s after they finished high school and entered the workforce or college. According to the most recent U.S. Census report, the median age at first marriage has been steadily rising to historically high levels, to 27.1 for men and 25.3 for women, with the greatest increases occurring for women. This rise means more and more individuals are delaying marriage until their later 20s and 30s, perhaps offering opportunities for greater diversity in mate selection activities, including dating, hanging out, hooking up, or sexual encounters. Researchers estimate that more than 90 percent of individuals will eventually marry at some point of their lifetime. Additionally, this marital delay has influenced some individuals' mate selection because they may be choosing marital partners in different social environments because they are older (e.g., workplace or social club rather than college/high school environment), and some may be engaging in mating behaviors before marriage (e.g., cohabitation or nonmarital fertility).

The second demographic trend that may alter mate selection is the increasing prevalence of cohabitation, or individuals living together before marriage. About 50 percent of all individuals who marry have cohabited at some time with a partner before marriage. Researchers have discovered that not all individuals who cohabit do it for the same reasons and have subsequently identified three groups of cohabitators: those who see cohabitation as a stage in their relationship, those who already have plans to marry, and those who use cohabitation as a replacement for marriage. Cohabitation is likely to alter the mate selection process and social practices for some people because researchers have found that cohabitation may serve as initial screening or trial marriage in which partners test their compatibility and gather more information and determine whether their relationship should progress. Once a couple cohabits, they likely have greater barriers to seeking new

partners and often begin an inertial movement toward marriage. Research on cohabiting couples, however, has suggested cohabitation may have some negative influence on future marital success (e.g., higher divorce rates and lower levels of marital satisfaction for those who have cohabited). The trend of cohabitation is continuing and will influence mate selection.

The mate selection process may have also evolved because of the increase in nonmarital fertility, or the birth of children to unmarried individuals. Recent estimates suggest as many as 33 percent of all births in the United States are to unwed mothers and as high as 66 percent of all births are to unwed African-American women. The separation of fertility from marriage may further influence the mate selection process because social expectations or scripts may be modified, leaving individuals without a socially defined, delineated path for their relationship.

Research on Mate Selection

Although many disciplines have explored mate selection (e.g., anthropology, communication studies, family science, psychology, sociology), this entry concentrates on three prominent approaches in the research on mate selection: (1) the sociological perspective of mate selection, focused on the choosing of and match between partners; (2) an evolutionary psychology viewpoint, concentrated on the genetic and biological influences of attraction and sexual selection; and (3) the interdisciplinary study of close relationships, concerned with the formation, maintenance, and characteristics of romantic and marital relationships.

Sociological Research on Mate Selection

The first approach to mate selection in the research largely focuses on macrocharacteristics from a sociological perspective. Most of this research investigated the social and contextual influences in partner selection. This perspective also examined the social exchange of resources between partners in their attempts to maximize their resources.

A number of important concepts, themes, and theories were formed from this literature. One

central theme regarding mate selection was the ideal of propinquity, or the necessity for potential partners to be close in time and space. This concept simply meant individuals who were not close in age or geographical space likely would not have the opportunity to meet or develop a relationship.

A second major theme in the research was the presence of homogamy, or the tendency for similarity between coupled partners on various characteristics. This research often investigated the similarity of various social characteristics (e.g., age, education, intelligence, occupation, race, religion, and social status) between existing coupled partners compared with random pairings of individuals and demonstrated that individuals were more likely to choose someone similar to them than a random pairing of partners. A related term was developed, *endogamy*, meaning the tendency for a person to select a partner within a particular group (e.g., same race or religious denomination). Later research on similarity suggested similarity of attitudes, values, and behavior was perhaps more important than were social characteristics as the relationship progressed. The explanation for the importance of similarity was called *consensual validation*, or that one's own values, attitudes, and behavior are reinforced when one's partner has similar values, attitudes, and behavior.

Another concurrent theme in the mate selection literature, opposites attract, suggested complementarity of some characteristics would be desirable in potential partners. Although the ideas of similarity and complementarity appear to be contrary and more empirical support existed for similarity, researchers eventually concluded both ideas had merit. A group of theories, called filter theories, suggested that a combination of similarity and complementarity was most ideal. These theories suggested as coupled partners fit well with each other at various levels, they would pass through these filters and progress in their relationship. Researchers found similarity of attraction and social characteristics are important initially in relationships, similarity of values and attitudes become more important when individuals begin dating more seriously, and complementarity of needs and roles become important when individuals are considering a marital relationship.

Sociologists also developed the concept of marriage markets, or local communities defined by

geography and other social characteristics. Individuals are often limited in their choices of potential partners to those within their marriage market. Ideally, a marriage market would contain an equal ratio of men and women. The calculation of the number of men divided by women is referred to as the sex ratio. In a well-functioning marriage market, the matching hypothesis suggests those who are most desirable pair off with partners who are equally desirable; those who are less desirable pair off with partners who are also less desirable, and so forth. However, an imbalanced sex ratio places individuals in the larger group in a marriage squeeze because not enough partners exist for them. The most often cited example of a marriage squeeze occurs for African-American women, who have fewer numbers of African-American men from which to select because of their higher rates of unemployment, homicide, incarceration, and participation in interracial relationships.

Although some research continues in this discipline, the focus of mate selection research has shifted more to changes in the courtship continuum and other forms of relationships outside of marriage. New research is needed as the process of mate selection continues to evolve and social practices continue to change.

Evolutionary Psychological Research on Mate Selection

Darwin's theory of evolution posited the survival of the fittest, but did not explain why some species possessed heritable traits that would not necessarily promote their survival (e.g., a male peacock's tail is likely to attract the attention of its predators or the nutrition and effort to grow large antlers each year for deer could reduce its ability to survive the winter). As a result, Darwin developed sexual selection theory to explain the heritable traits and innate preferences possessed by species to help promote their ability to attract a mate, and compete against and fend off potential rivals.

Sexual selection theory was originally rejected by those who studied humans, but during the last 30 years, evolutionary psychology researchers have taken great interest in mate selection. The increase in interest is largely based on Robert Trivers's explanation of sexual selectivity in humans using the idea of parental investment. Because of

the disparity in the level of parental investment and reproductive roles, men and women tend to prefer different characteristics in their mates. Because women have a greater investment in child-bearing, they are thought to be more selective in their sexual partners. Men's selectivity, however, tends to increase as the level of involvement increases toward marriage, when their selectivity is similar to that of women.

As predicted by the theory, researchers have found some differences in preferences men and women have for characteristics in their partners. Men are more likely than women to state a preference for characteristics that suggest women are fertile and healthy. Examples of these characteristics include measures of attractiveness, including large eyes, prominent cheekbones, facial symmetry, and a small waist-to-hip ratio, as well as indicators of their ability to care for children. Women tend to report greater preferences for evidence of economic resources to provide for their children (e.g., income), and the ability to provide and protect (e.g., height, strength). The value of these resources, however, may not increase linearly, but may be just to avoid poverty or a short spouse. David Buss and colleagues, as well as others, have shown that these preferences are likely to change as they are a combination of innate mechanisms and societal values. They may also vary as a function of the seriousness of a relationship or when considered simultaneously in a cost-benefit analysis, when actually choosing a partner.

Some researchers have called for the combination of the sociological and evolutionary psychological approaches because they are not inherently incompatible, but may work simultaneously. Social influences, such as the sex ratio, mate value, and cultural norms are likely to influence mate selection and moderate the influence of evolutionary mechanisms involved in sexual selection. Results from several studies appear to indicate that both of these approaches are needed to explain mate selection.

Interdisciplinary Research on Mate Selection

During the last 30 years, researchers from many disciplines have come together in the study of various types of intimate relationships. Rather than a focus on the progress of romantic relationships toward marriage, this interdisciplinary

approach has emphasized universal properties across various types of relationships. Topics in this body of research include topics such as relationship satisfaction and stability, commitment, trust, and interdependence. Emphasis has been placed on various levels of influence, for example, contextual and social network influences (e.g., macrolevel) as well as dyadic and intrapersonal phenomena (e.g., microlevel). Although this approach is interdisciplinary, some have suggested the need for more integration among disciplines to combine the strengths of many approaches.

Formal Intermediaries in Mate Selection

From the ancient use of matchmakers to more modern intermediaries—such as personal ads and dating services—formal intermediaries, or alternative ways of meeting and selecting mates, have influenced the mate selection process. Because the selection process continues to evolve and because of the delay in marital timing, the use of formal intermediaries likely will continue to rise. Additional intermediaries have been created with the proliferation of the Internet, including chat rooms, online dating services (e.g., match.com or eharmony.com), and online communities (e.g., Facebook.com or Myspace.com).

The use of formal intermediaries and technology may help some to overcome issues of propinquity, imbalanced sex ratios, and difficult marriage markets. These intermediaries may first help individuals overcome geographical separation, by letting people meet and interact with potential partners they likely never would have met and allow individuals to find others who have similar interests to their own (e.g., religious beliefs, leisure activities or hobbies, or political orientations). Although these intermediaries may help individuals find potential partners, many feel that they will not fully replace face-to-face interaction in the selection of a marital partner.

Conclusion

Mate selection is a complex and evolving process that will continue to require study by researchers from many disciplines to fully understand it. Although the focus of research on this topic may

have changed over the years, the investigation of how individuals select, form, and maintain marital or long-term, nonmarital unions, should continue to be an important emphasis in the study of close relationships.

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See also Biological Systems for Courtship, Mating, Reproduction, and Parenting

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MEDIA DEPICTIONS OF RELATIONSHIPS

Different relational roles such as strangers, acquaintances, coworkers, friends, family members, and romantic partners are depicted through different media channels including television, movies, print, video games, and music. These depictions are presented with regularity to media consumers. In 2006, Americans watched an average of 4 hours 35 minutes of television everyday. The mass media are social agents that shape viewers' attitudes and behaviors such as gender role-related behavior; sexual behavior; conflict; aggression; and privacy, disclosure, and betrayal. This entry discusses how gender roles, sexual attitudes and behaviors, conflict, aggression, and privacy and disclosure are viewed or presented in the media.

Gender Role-Related Behaviors

Television often portrays males and females in stereotyped traditional gender roles. Females are portrayed as youthful and constitute more than half of 18- to 34-year-old prime-time characters, whereas the reverse is true for 35- to 49-year-olds. Marital and parental status is more easily identifiable for female characters. When parental status is known, females are twice as likely to be caregivers. Females are more likely than males to be unemployed. For those who are employed, males have more occupational power and higher salaries. Children's programming often portrays males and females in even more stereotyped roles than prime-time programming does.

Romantic relationships in romance novels generally depict two strong-willed people who initially do not like each other but are nonetheless attracted to

each other. The couples eventually realize their passion for each other (sometimes violently), and the novels often result in a happily-ever-after ending.

In films intended for children, familial relationships are portrayed as a strong priority for their members. Families are generally diverse but the diversity is often simplified. The importance of the paternal role is elevated, whereas the maternal role is marginalized. Also, relationships are created by “love at first sight,” are easily maintained, and are often characterized by gender-based power differentials.

Sexual Attitudes and Behaviors

Within the recent phenomenon of reality dating programs, participants often espouse attitudes such as, “Dating is a game,” “Women are sex objects,” and “Men are sex driven and have trouble being faithful.” Frequent viewers of these shows endorse these attitudes personally, but they do not engage more frequently in the behaviors that are portrayed on the shows.

Sexual relationships are frequently portrayed on television, and sexual content has increased throughout the past decade, appearing in almost three-quarters of entertainment programs. The frequency of sexual relations between unmarried couples on television has increased since the late 1990s with just over half occurring between established partners who are in an ongoing relationship. A third of sexual relationships occur between people who have just met, or who have met before but are not in a committed relationship. Depictions of nontraditional sexual relationships, such as homosexual relationships, have also increased on television.

Sexual risk and responsibility messages also increased in programs that feature sexual content. About a quarter of programs depicting intercourse mention sexual risks and responsibility, with about a third of those scenes featuring risk and responsibility as the principal focus of a scene.

Across several film genres, married couples represent less than a fifth of total sexual behavior with unmarried couples composing the majority. The most common sexual behavior among husbands and wives is passionate kissing. Implied intercourse is the most common sexual behavior among unmarried partners.

Sexual content in video games is depicted with increasing frequency. One study of games found that more than a quarter of the games sampled contained sexual content.

Conflict

Very little research has examined conflict on television. The work that has been done found that opposite sex clashes appear to be most prevalent. The most frequent response to conflict is avoidance. Contrary to research with actual couples on the demand-withdraw pattern, which indicates that women are more likely to demand and men are more likely to withdraw, men on television were less likely than women to physically withdraw from an argument. A recent analysis of the top ten shows watched by adolescents, which crossed genres, showed that conflict occurred in less than half of romantic relationships, was most frequently initiated by the female partner attributing the cause to the male partner, and was characterized by distributive conflict resolution (such as patronizing comments and chastisement) by women and integrative conflict resolution (such as apologizing or changing behavior) by men.

In film, stepfamilies are typically portrayed in a negative or mixed way with almost half depicting stepchildren resenting stepparents. The most common type of stepfamily portrayed is mother-stepfather relationship. Within young adult novels, the focus is generally around conflict or dramatic events that a family experiences. Most often, the relationship between mothers and daughters is characterized by conflict or separation because of illness or death or an emotional disconnect. Fathers are generally absent, which is contrary to the finding for children’s films, which was that fathers’ importance is usually elevated.

Aggression

Much research has focused on televised violence. Overall, more than half of all shows depict violence, and most of it is sanitized, glamorized, trivialized, not chastised, and committed by adult Caucasian males. About half of all victims are acquainted with the perpetrator. Children’s shows are the genre most likely to contain violent

content with about 14 violent acts per hour of programming.

Some researchers have claimed that there is a link between violent video game play or television violence and subsequent aggression, but other researchers doubt this claim.

Privacy, Disclosure, and Betrayal

One issue that has been uniquely studied with television talk shows is privacy, disclosure, and betrayal. Television talk shows portray people in controversial and sensationalistic relationships. An analysis of them showed that self-disclosures accounted for less than half of private information revealed about guests on the shows. Hosts and trusted personal relations of the featured guests were revealing the private information most of the time. The guests were victims of public “ambush disclosures.” Although the most frequent response to an “ambush disclosure” was a face-saving attempt by the guest, a murder of an acquaintance by the featured guest occurred after one such disclosure by the acquaintance.

*Sandi W. Smith, Lauren M. Hamel,
and Edward L. Glazer*

See also Aggressive Communication; Conflict, Marital; Gender-Role Attitudes; Gender Roles in Relationships; Sex in Established Relationships

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MEDIA INFLUENCES ON RELATIONSHIPS

Through their stories, articles, and visual images, media convey cultural messages about relationships,

including desirable relationship and relational partner qualities, relationship roles, likelihood of relationship success, and prescriptions for forming and maintaining relationships. This entry specifically addresses the effects of media on viewers' expectations for romantic relationships. Expectations for romantic relationships have implications for real life relationships. Unrealistic expectations have been associated with lower relationship satisfaction and may contribute, in part, to divorce, depression, and abuse. Although expectations for romantic relationships form in a number of ways, media content may contribute to their creation and maintenance.

Theoretical Background

Media's power to influence conceptions of romantic relationships lies firmly in people's consumption of media content and the nature of that content. Nancy Signorelli wrote that television may be the single most common and pervasive influence on perceptions and behaviors related to marriage and romantic relationships. According to Cultivation Theory, television shapes viewers' beliefs about reality. Early cultivation researchers argued that frequency of viewing was more important than the viewing of specific program content because television programs present a uniform message. Though a substantial amount of research has documented the association between heavy viewers' beliefs and predominant television messages, this frequency orientation has been largely replaced by a content-specific approach (i.e., analyzing the frequency of viewing specific genres). Researchers have also investigated media beyond television, such as films, novels, music, and magazines, for their effects on romantic relationships.

Romantic Relationship Expectations

A growing body of work examines how media affect viewers' ideas about romantic relationships. A recent study found that as television viewing increased, never-married viewers' idealistic notions about marriage decreased. Idealistic beliefs included such ideas as expecting one's partner to read one's mind, seeing disagreement as destructive to the relationship, and perceiving

destiny to be a major causal force in relationship development or deterioration. Perhaps television content directly contradicts such idealistic beliefs, but it is more likely the case that messages about marriage and romantic relationships vary by genre. For instance, watching a great deal of romantic movies and television programs, reading appearance-focused magazines, and consuming gender-stereotypic and reality-dating television programming have all been associated with viewers' greater support of idealistic relationship beliefs. Other media-related behaviors that extend beyond viewing frequency may matter as well. The degree of dependency on television for information about relationships, the presence of alternative sources of information, and the belief that television presents accurate information have been important factors identified in past media effects studies. For example, late adolescents who rated themselves as highly influenced by media in early adolescence reported more unrealistic beliefs about romantic relationships.

Another argument is that these associations arise because people with idealistic notions of romance select more idealistic romantic programming. In partial support of that argument, participants who used more romantic media also reported ruminating and fantasizing more about romance. When asked to view a romantic comedy in an experiment, the attitudes of these already romantically minded individuals did not become more accessible (i.e., easily recalled and retrieved). However, another experimental study concluded that viewing a film that emphasized relational destiny (e.g., "fate brought the couple together") strengthened participants' beliefs in relational destiny. Hence, evidence indicates that viewers who take in a great deal of romantic media have more idealistic expectations for romantic relationships. This outcome is attributable partly to media influence and partly to viewer selectivity.

Other viewer characteristics may influence relational expectations. For instance, people may become more realistic as they age or life experiences may counteract media models. Despite higher portrayals of divorce, single parenthood, and pre- and extramarital sex in today's programs, heavy-viewing Generation Xers (children of the 1980s) hold more unrealistic relationship expectations (e.g., believing that partners who care about

each other should be able to sense each other's needs and preferences and that one must be a perfect sexual partner) than heavy-viewing Boomers (children of the 1950s). Heavy-viewing Generation Xers also prescribe to gender stereotypic relationship roles. Similarly, heavy-viewing adolescents were found to support traditional gender roles and scored higher on the sexism scale than did light viewers. They endorsed such statements as, "Women are happiest at home raising children" and "Men are born with more ambition than women."

Content analytic studies have indicated that media portrayals are mixed in that spousal relationships are presented as more equal and expressive but men and women are still shown in traditional ways. Men are more likely than women to be shown "on the job," and female characters are more likely to be seen dating, seen talking about romance, or presented as rewards for men who choose the right product. A recent study found that viewing prime-time comedies and dramas is positively correlated with believing that men are sex driven, women are sexual objects, and dating is a game.

Romantic Relationship Success

Media content also sends mixed messages about the likelihood for relationship success. Romantic relationships are highly valued on television and in movies but are often presented as fragile and difficult to maintain. Viewers report corresponding perceptions. Heavy-viewing adolescents saw singlehood more negatively than did light viewers. Heavy-viewing young women in the study conveyed the strongest desire to get married and have many children, and they wanted to engage in these activities at a younger age. Heavy-viewing college students of soap operas more strongly endorsed the belief that marriage is fragile than did their light-viewing counterparts.

Some experimental studies have attempted to clarify the causal relationship between media content and relationship success beliefs. In one study, elementary schoolers who were exposed to heavy doses of soap operas decreased their estimates of the number of happy marriages and increased their estimates of the number of divorces and

extramarital affairs. Similarly, in an experiment with college students, extensive exposure to sexually explicit films led to greater acceptance of sexual infidelity and sexual promiscuity. Being exposed to highly attractive women in magazines may also alter relational outcomes. Males who viewed highly attractive women in magazines lowered their partner's attractiveness ratings and rated themselves as less committed, satisfied, serious, and close to their actual partners.

In sum, research supports that media content can alter people's beliefs about and expectations for relationships. Yet, people may also gravitate toward media presentations that coincide with their belief systems. Ultimately, researchers need to account for these prior belief systems, as well as for the nature of the media content, frequency of viewing, and other viewer characteristics, when studying the influence of media on relationship expectations.

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See also Expectations About Relationships; Ideals About Relationships; Media Depictions of Relationships; Technology and Relationships

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MEDIATION, MARRIAGE DISSOLUTION

Because divorce is both a legal and an emotional process, these processes interact in ways that create problems for both. This entry briefly explains the legal processes used to divorce and present an

influential theoretical model explaining emotional processes of divorcing parents. The goal is to provide a brief review of legal divorce methods while highlighting potential unintended consequences of those processes for couples locked in negative emotional cycles.

Legal Process

The legal process is defined as the entire process and procedures used to obtain a legal divorce. It is a linear process with a set of complicated, rigid rules and procedures that unfolds over months to years. To begin, one spouse must file with the court a set of specific documents detailing how the financial and child-related issues should be settled. There are sets of rigid rules for what documents that must be filed, the wording, and providing the documents to the other spouse. The second spouse then has a particular period to submit his or her own set of documents to be allowed to question any of the positions in the beginning set of documents. From this point forward, the legal process varies widely depending on whether the spouses agree, or can negotiate an agreement over time, or whether additional or alternative procedures need to be used to help the spouses agree.

Litigation

Traditional litigation is not a unitary phenomenon. In its simplest form, using attorneys, or through negotiations on their own, a couple can create an agreement that addresses financial and child-related issues and file it with the court. If the court approves, the agreement will become an order of the court. This process can be lengthy or swift depending on the level of cooperation between the couple (and the attorneys, if any).

If an agreement cannot be worked out in this manner, the couple can make proposals until an agreement is negotiated. This process can require hours of attorney time, multiple documents filed with the court, and multiple court appearances. At the extreme, couples can be so hostile and polarized as to require significant hours of attorney and several additional professionals' time (e.g., accountants, appraisers, psychologists or psychiatrists, attorneys for the children) to resolve disputed

issues. This extreme type of litigation is seen as formalized competition in which there is a “winner” and a “loser” for each issue, and has been criticized for being inherently competitive, adversarial, and expensive—which it is.

Although three decades of research have addressed divorce mediation, there has been little on this litigation process. The popular perception is that divorce lawyers are obnoxious, argumentative, and refuse to settle for what is fair thus increasing acrimony between the spouses. Unfortunately, no empirical studies confirm the number and percentage of lawyers who behave in this manner and no studies that focus on what lawyers see as their goal. Interview research indicates just the opposite: Argumentative and unreasonable lawyers are in the minority. The overriding desire among divorce attorneys interviewed is for a “reasonable divorce.” The major role of attorneys is to limit client expectations and overcome the resistance of angry clients who do not want to settle but instead want to use the legal system to play out emotional rather than legal issues. This process is often called *cooling out* the client. An interesting twist is that more clients are choosing to negotiate on their own and not involve attorneys or mediators. There is no empirical research on how the negotiation process works when clients negotiate in this manner.

Divorce Mediation

Mediation differs from litigation in several important ways. Most divorce mediation in the United States is through court-connected programs or court-appointed mediation providers. The issues to be settled are nearly always restricted to child-related issues (e.g., custody; parenting time; holiday and vacation schedules; education, religion and medical decision-making). Thus, while in litigation, spouses can resolve all issues; in divorce mediation couples must return to litigation to resolve any financial disputes. Thus, mediation is most often an *adjunct* to litigation rather than an *alternative* to litigation.

The divorcing partners are the negotiators in mediation. They are encouraged to consider options and alternatives, make proposals, consider what is best for their particular family, and to formalize an agreement. By contrast, attorneys assist

the clients in formulating proposals and are the negotiators for that proposal. Troubles often arise because clients in emotional crisis do not understand (or remember) what the attorney is negotiating or the attorney is not in agreement on the client’s position. Often forgotten is that divorcing clients (in addition to attorneys) have tremendous influence in choosing the level of hostility of any given divorce.

Another feature of mediation is that the couple meets with a neutral third party to express their concerns and tell their side of the story. Some argue that this may be *the* most important feature of mediation. Clients are further able to refine the narrative of their divorce in a cooperative, rather than adversarial, process. And, the cooperative nature of mediation has lasting effects on the clients’ postdivorce parenting (e.g., noncustodial parents see their children more).

The manner in which the features of mediation are then put into practice vary greatly. The process varies state-to-state, and even county-by-county within a state. At one end of the spectrum, clients participate voluntarily and pay hourly fees for mediation provided by private mediators. Private mediators can have a range of prior training (e.g., social worker, lawyer, psychologist, business, or no professional training). If the mediator is trained in a mental health discipline and offers a therapeutically oriented model of mediation, a significant number of sessions can focus on resolving emotional issues (e.g., focus on separating parenting and marital roles, defining boundaries of closeness and intimacy, frequency of contact, letting go of past conflicts, building conflict resolution skills). These private mediators can use as many sessions as necessary (and the clients can pay for) to resolve some or all divorce-related issues for a family, including financial and child-related issues.

At the other end of the spectrum are court-connected mediation programs that offer services for free (or a sliding fee) and are generally time-limited (1 to 10 sessions). Mediators in these programs are generally trained in mental health disciplines but, because of time constraints, the focus of this type of divorce mediation is on obtaining an agreement regarding child-related issues, rather than on resolving all issues in dispute (e.g., financial or emotional distress).

Emotional Processes

An influential, normative theoretical model for understanding the emotional process of divorce posits that whether people make the choice to divorce (the “leaver”) or are pushed into one by their spouses (the “left”), the process is filled with grief associated with many losses (e.g., friends, the social role of husband/wife, a daily routine, financial security, social status). As the grieving process proceeds, three competing emotions (*love*, *anger*, and *sadness*) vary in intensity and longevity. Spouses do not cycle through the emotions at the same time but they nevertheless are locked in the cycles with the other. Regardless of the other spouse’s emotions, one spouse can become “stuck” in one of the three emotions and not cycle back into the others. This “stuckness” can affect the legal process in several ways.

A person stuck in *anger*, for example, can express this anger by making outrageous accusations against the other parent in court, delaying the legal process, and refusing to follow court orders, which requires a spouse to go back to court again and again. In divorce mediation, this angry spouse can reschedule sessions, show up late, agree, then change his or her mind at the last minute and renege on these prior agreements. Recent research has found a significant predictor of making an agreement in mediation is the level of disparity in attachment between the spouses. If, for example, one spouse is attached and does not want the marriage to end, and the other spouse is not attached, the chances of reaching an agreement in mediation significantly decrease.

One or both spouses can reexperience the grief associated with the divorce and often it occurs during life events and life changes (e.g., holidays, graduations, when one spouse remarries or has a child with a new partner). Ex-spouses may suddenly, on the remarriage of one spouse, begin filing documents in court about parenting time, custody or both. Careful assessment of this situation is important. It may well be that the new spouse or siblings are negatively influencing the existing relationships within the first family; however, it may also be essentially grief and resentment manifesting through the legal process.

Intimate Partner Violence

Intimate partner violence (IPV) has become a growing concern among professionals working with divorcing couples. Within the mediation context, the number of mediation cases reported as having some type of IPV ranges between 40 and 80 percent. This range is significantly higher than that found in the general population, which is between 5 and 25 percent. In addition, few couples referred to mediation are screened out because of IPV (6–7 percent).

A particular type of IPV, *culture of violence* or *coercive control*, may be of particular concern. Critical elements include an ongoing strategy of isolating victims from friends, family, and children; controlling access to resources such as transportation, money, and housing; and controlling access to employment and education. Control is subsequently maintained through the use of (or threats of) physical and sexual violence to the victim or the victim’s family and friends. Thus, when coercive control is successful, the physical violence necessary to maintain control may be sporadic and in less severe forms. Critical for screening for IPV in divorce cases is to focus on coercive control. Recent research indicates that mediators focus on physical violence, injury, and outside involvement with the family (calls to police, arrests, hospital visits) to make determinations of IPV and may miss victims of coercive control.

Noncoercive negotiations, with a neutral third party, to consensually develop agreements reflecting the needs of all family members are the central elements of a fair mediation process. If one party is being coercively controlled, this is impossible. Within the litigation process, provided attorneys have a sophisticated knowledge of IPV and are aware of the coercive control, they may be able to better shield the client from direct negotiations. Unfortunately, no published empirical research indicates the level of knowledge of most attorneys regarding IPV, if attorneys screen clients for IPV, and if they do shield victims from their abusers.

Concluding Remarks and Future Directions

The manner spouses process their emotions can have tremendous impact on the legal process of

divorce for the family and vice versa. While families are in the midst of a psychological and sometimes financial crisis, they must also participate in a complicated, rigid, linear legal process that focuses “winners” and “losers” of particular positions presented to the court. Research indicates that people need to develop a coherent, organized, and meaningful personal narrative about stressful events (in this case divorce). To do so, spouses need to tell and retell their stories. The litigation process, however, does not allow spouses to tell the story of their relationship and what led to the divorce, nor does it allow the parties to express to the judge moral outrage, anger, or fear. Spouses may recite their stories to an attorney, but attorneys generally do not know what to do with the emotionally laced stories. The attorney’s job is to elicit what the client wants in a financial and parenting settlement and argue for it, not to assist a client develop a meaningful and organized narrative of their divorce. Spouses raw with the emotions or stuck in one emotion can use the legal system as an emotional weapon to harass, punish, and drain financial resources from their spouse, without any significant consequences.

For victims of IPV, accurate assessment of and responses to IPV by lawyers, mediators, and judges is essential to protect the victims yet we have little research that addresses whether it is done or if it is done accurately. Continued research addressing the interactions between the emotional and legal process of divorce are essential to design a more fluid system to better address the needs of divorcing families.

Connie J. A. Beck and Marieh Tanha

See also Abuse and Violence in Relationships; Conflict, Family; Conflict, Marital; Dissolution of Relationships, Coping and Aftermath; Dissolution of Relationships, Processes; Divorce, Effects on Adults; Emotion in Relationships

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MEMORIES AND RELATIONSHIPS

People tend to have detailed and vivid memories of their relationships, outlining how their relationships have changed and developed over time. These memories form the basis for the relationship stories people present to others, and they provide the framework people use to reflect upon their relationships. This entry discusses how memories influence current feelings, accuracy in relationship memory, how current feelings influence recollections, how memories can predict future outcomes, and how people recall their relationships changing over time.

Accuracy in Relationship Memory

Research on relationship memory demonstrates that like memories in general, memories for relationships are not fully accurate records of past events. Although relationship memories have some degree of accuracy, these memories become degraded over time, essentially missing some of the specific details. Consequently, people use information that is accessible in the present when trying to fill in the gaps in their memory. This is shown in existing research in at least three ways. First, to the extent that people are currently committed to their relationships, they are motivated to preserve their sense of relational security and consequently fill in the gaps in their memory with details that maintain their faith in their relationship. Second, people use their current sentiments and knowledge about the relationship to help them interpret their pasts. Third, people use their current beliefs about how relationships change to help them understand how their own relationship

has changed over time. Although these processes tend to bias relationship memories, these biases, are informative, illuminating how people feel about their relationship at the present time and the likely future of that relationship.

These biasing effects have led some researchers to argue that researchers should be cautious in how they interpret self-reports of change or reports of past relationship events. However, people can enhance the accuracy of relationship memories by asking partners to recall past events together. *Collaborative memories*, memories constructed when two people work together to recall past information, tend to contain more accurate details and fewer errors than the memories recalled by individuals. When working together on recalling a past event, partners can cue each other's recall and even correct one another's errors in recalled details. For example, imagine a couple telling the story about their first date. One partner's recollection that they met at the roller coaster might remind the other partner to add the detail about how long the line was. Alternatively, one partner might recall they met at the roller coaster while the other partner is convinced they met at the water slide. In such instances, partners might be able to correct each other's recollections. Importantly, the process of working together to recall past events can reveal certain relationship dynamics such as respect, shared emotions, and dominance. For example, unequal levels of dominance among partners would be revealed if one partner always conceded when the partners disagreed on the details of a past event.

Memories Influence Today

Relationship memories surface frequently. Relationship researchers aren't the only ones who ask people about their relationship memories. Friends and family members routinely seek information about the course and development of relationships (e.g., "How did you two meet?"). Relationship memories can even be elicited by a partner's current behavior.

In addition to influencing the behavior partners engage in today, recollections of past relationship events shape the partners' current feelings about their relationship. For example, when people recall a time when their partner surprised them with a

kind and selfless act, they are reminded of a variety of past (or perhaps present) positive feelings about that partner. Such momentary recollections may lead individuals to feel a boost in their good feelings about the relationship. Conversely, present relationship evaluations might be far more negative if one had instead been reminded of a serious past conflict or partner transgression.

Today Influences Memories

Research on relationship memories, like much of the research on memories in general, demonstrates that present knowledge and sentiments play an important role in recollection. Current feelings influence which events are recalled, and as people piece together recalled information, they may interpret, embellish, and revise information to be consistent with their current understanding of their relationship. This process is likely not deliberate or intentional; people merely use their current knowledge to "fill in the blanks" in their memories.

Cathy McFarland and Michael Ross conducted a pioneering study investigating how present feelings can influence the recollection of a relationship. They used what has now become one common method for studying bias relationship memories: Participants were asked to indicate their current feelings about their relationships (Time 1), and 2 months later, they indicated their current feelings (Time 2) and recalled their initial reports (Time 2 Recollection). In this particular study, participants' feelings about their relationships at the present moment (Time 2) biased their recollections of their initial reports. People believed that their current feelings toward a partner were reflections of how they had always felt toward that partner: Those whose affections toward their partners increased retrospectively exaggerated the intensity of earlier reports whereas those whose feelings became more negative underestimated their original positivity toward their partner.

Research on memories for specific events, and not just overall evaluations of the relationship, has demonstrated similar patterns of bias. More satisfied couples fail to recall negative statements from previous conversations, and their relationship memories contain less negative affect and

ambivalence than do those of less satisfied couples. Similar effects have also been reported in nonromantic relationships: Happy friends recall a previous laboratory interaction with a friend as more enjoyable than they had indicated at the time of the initial interaction.

Relying on Scripts

People use their current feelings to infer their recollection and rely on their *scripts*, or general theories of how relationships progress and change, to help fill in the blanks in their memories. Scripts are highly influenced by cultural and social stereotypes. For instance, when people are asked to provide the script for how heterosexual relationships begin, they typically place the male in the initiator role (e.g., asking her for a date) and the female in the gatekeeping role (e.g., accepting or declining his advances). As relationships progress and time passes, people are more likely to use their scripts to fill in the gaps in their memories. For example, people are more likely to downplay the wife's role in initiating a relationship or proposing marriage when recalling the beginnings of a relationship at a later time than soon after the wedding.

Sometimes people rely on their unique, individualized theories of how relationships should progress to help them complete their relationship histories. For example, husbands who consistently endorse high egalitarian beliefs recall equally sharing responsibilities with their wives. However, husbands who wane in their egalitarian beliefs over time revise their earlier memories to reflect an unequal division of responsibilities (e.g., being less involved in wedding planning).

Memories for Own and Others' Relationships

People also exhibit bias when recalling other people's relationships, although typically in the opposite direction. The *perceived superiority effect* refers to the tendency of individuals, especially those who are currently happy in their relationships, to describe their own relationships as better than those of other people. When asked to report their memories for recent events in their own relationship and in the relationships of other people they know, people are more likely to describe more positive events for their own relationship than for

others' relationships. This is true when people are describing what they know about their parents' relationship, their friends' relationships, the relationships of acquaintances, and the relationships of people in the media. Such uneven recollections could certainly fuel the perceived superiority effect and possibly heighten optimism for the future of their own relationship.

Memories Influence Tomorrow

Memories can also influence how people feel about their futures. If a relationship has been satisfying for the last several years, people are likely to feel optimistic about their future together. Conversely, if partners can only recall negative relationship events and see their relationship history as a string of misfortunes, they are likely to be pessimistic about its future. Research in this area demonstrates that when individuals who are asked to recall past events in their relationship describe those memories with greater negativity and disappointment, they are more likely to separate or divorce in the years to come. Similarly, when partners' memories are biased to perceive recent improvements, they are more likely to be happy in their marriages in future years.

Memories for Relationship Change

How do people see their relationships changing over time? The research described suggests that people are inclined to view their pasts in a manner that is consistent with their present feelings. Viewing a relationship as stable might enable individuals to feel more secure. However, Charles Carver and Michael Scheier argued that perceiving improvement was more satisfying than perceiving stability. In other words, people prefer a story that suggests that their relationship has been getting even better to a story that suggests their relationship has always been good. Michael Ross and Anne Wilson proposed the Temporal Appraisal Theory, which suggests that the most recent past has the greatest implications for the present. In a sense, what happened in the distant past is dissociated from the present self and relationship and only the recent past has direct implications for the here and now. Consequently, perceptions of

improvement in the recent history should offer more benefits than should perceptions of improvement in the distant past.

The typical methodology for studying this phenomenon includes asking individuals to report on their relationship quality at several points in time. Further, at each point in time, except for the initial assessment, participants are asked to reflect on the trajectory of change in their relationships since the last assessment(s). In some studies, participants indicate how much they have changed since a specific time point, and in other studies, participants are asked to draw the trajectory of change in their relationship quality over time. Researchers then compare participants' memories of change in quality to their contemporaneous reports. Results reveal that retrospective reports indicate improvement in the *recent* past even though contemporaneous ratings tend to show stability or declines. These effects have been found in studies that have followed spouses and dating partners from periods ranging from 2 to 40 years.

Research also reveals that relationship partners benefit from perceiving recent improvement. First, recalled improvement is strongly associated with present relationship satisfaction. Second, recalled improvement is strongly associated with optimism for the future of their relationships. Third, recalled improvement actually predicts whether a couple will remain together.

Indeed, perceptions of improvement may not simply be beneficial but may be motivated. Perceptions of improvement can also provide a mechanism that allows individuals to maintain positive views of their relationship despite specific negative events. For example, when individuals are asked to recall a time when they hurt or transgressed against their intimate partner, they are apt to report relationship improvement even when their victims do not report similar levels of improvement. In this way, the perpetrators of these transgressions can dissociate themselves from their misdeeds and maintain optimism for their future together. Indeed, these perpetrators were more likely than were their victims to be optimistic about the future of their relationships. As such, perceptions of improvement allowed these perpetrators to feel secure in their relationships and to be optimistic for the future. This suggests that perceptions of improvement might boost cognitive

coping strategies. Importantly, recent evidence in a study conducted by Nancy Frye suggests that perceptions of improvement might also reduce negative conflict in relationships. When individuals do not see improvement in their relationships, they have fewer psychological resources available to pursue effective dyadic coping strategies, resulting in a higher rate of verbal and physical aggression. Presumably, perceiving improvement provides hope for the future and ultimately encourages positive relationship behaviors in the present.

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See also Beliefs About Relationships; Change in Romantic Relationships Over Time; Motivation and Relationships; Satisfaction in Relationships; Storytelling; Transgressions

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MENTAL HEALTH AND RELATIONSHIPS

The relationships people have with their romantic partners and other family members are likely to be the most intimate and long-standing relationships they have in their lives. For example, relationships with romantic partners and family members provide the most frequent opportunity for social support. Because they assume such a prominent role in people's social environment, family and relationship functioning is likely to influence and be influenced by the mental health and well-being of the members of these relationships. Evaluating the importance of family and relationship functioning with respect to mental health is consistent with modern biopsychosocial models of well-being and psychiatric disorders. This entry describes the role of family and relationship functioning on the onset, course, and treatment of mental health problems.

Family Functioning

There is growing awareness that family dysfunction and mental health problems such as psychiatric disorders are often associated with one another. On one hand, the need for emotional and instrumental support that accompanies mental health problems, as well as the symptoms of mental health problems (e.g., negative mood), may be taxing and burdensome for family members. On the other hand, family members may influence the course of mental health problems through such means as treatment adherence and promotion of behaviors that facilitate recovery. Indeed, poor family functioning is associated with a variety of psychiatric disorders, including mood disorders, anxiety disorders, substance use disorders, eating disorders, and schizophrenia spectrum disorders.

Furthermore, the level of family dysfunction observed in the families of psychiatric patients is higher than in families with a medically ill member; however, there is little difference between families with different specific psychiatric diagnoses in their level of family dysfunction. Compared with nonclinical families, families in which one member has a psychiatric diagnosis appear to be particularly impaired in communication and in resolving problems.

Although the research design for much of the research on family functioning and mental health is cross-sectional (i.e., measures of family functioning and mental health are collected at the same point in time), some research shows that family functioning assessed at one point in time is associated with changes in measures of mental health collected at a later time. For example, results from longitudinal or prospective studies indicate that family functioning is associated with the course of mood disorders. Specifically, compared with people with better family functioning, those with poorer family functioning report higher levels of depression, lower recovery, and lower levels of overall adjustment over time. Furthermore, families with a depressed member report worse family functioning than do control families, both during an episode and at remission, suggesting that family problems are not just a consequence of depression.

To the extent that poor family functioning is associated with the onset and course of mental health problems, improving family functioning through interventions such as family-based therapy should result in improvements in psychiatric functioning. In support of this perspective, family-based treatment approaches have been shown to be effective for a variety of mental health problems, including schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, conduct disorder, eating disorders, alcoholism, and adolescent substance abuse. Studies comparing family-based treatments with other types of intervention generally suggest that family-based treatment is as effective as other approaches to treatment. Furthermore, family-based interventions affect not only the person with the mental health problem, but also have the added benefit of improving functioning in other family members. For example, family-based interventions have positive effects on relatives' caregiver burden, psychological distress, and overall family functioning.

Thus, it appears that family therapy, singly or in combination with other psychiatric interventions such as medication or individual psychotherapy, may be an important part of a comprehensive approach to the treatment of mental health problems.

Marriage and Relationship Functioning

Relationship Quality and Psychopathology

The most commonly studied measure of relationship functioning that has been studied with respect to mental health is partners' self-report ratings of the overall quality of the relationship, as described by terms such as *satisfaction*, *discord*, or *distress*. Furthermore, most of the research on relationship functioning and mental health has focused on married individuals. Studies have found a negative association between marital satisfaction and symptoms of psychopathology. For example, many studies have found that increasingly lower levels of marital satisfaction are associated with increasingly higher levels of symptoms of depression. To provide an overall estimate of the strength of association between marital satisfaction and personal well-being (e.g., depression, anxiety, psychiatric symptoms), a meta-analysis was conducted of existing research; a meta-analysis is a summary of previous research that uses quantitative methods to compare outcomes across studies and provide a measure of the magnitude or degree of the association (i.e., an effect size). A meta-analysis of the association between marital quality and well-being using different measures of well-being across 93 different research studies yielded a mean effect size (r) of .37. The square of the effect size r (i.e., r^2) can be interpreted as the proportion of variance in either of the two variables that may be accounted for by the variance of the other variable. Squaring the effect size of .37, therefore, suggests that 14 percent in the variability in either marital quality or personal well-being can be accounted for by the other variable.

In addition to symptoms of mental health problems, researchers have studied the association between relationship quality and diagnosable mental health problems (i.e., psychiatric disorders). Results from these studies have consistently shown that marital satisfaction is lower among people with psychiatric disorders. In studying this

association, researchers have generally adopted one of two strategies. First, researchers have examined the marital satisfaction of people seeking treatment for a psychiatric disorder compared with people not in treatment. Compared with those without a psychiatric disorder, marital satisfaction is lower among people with mood, anxiety, substance use, and eating disorders. However, because only a subset of people with mental health problems seek treatment for their psychiatric disorder, these studies may be limited in their generalizability insofar as they do not include people with mental health problems that do not seek treatment. Therefore, a second strategy used by researchers studying the association between marital quality and diagnosable psychopathology has been to examine this association in representative, population-based community samples. Results from large epidemiological surveys have found that lower marital satisfaction is associated with sexual functioning and a variety of mood, anxiety, and substance use disorders. For example, in a population-based sample of more than 2,000 people, marital distress was associated with (a) broad-band classifications of anxiety, mood, and substance use disorders; and (b) narrow-band classifications of seven specific disorders, with the strongest associations obtained between marital distress and bipolar disorder, alcohol use disorders, and generalized anxiety disorder. In an earlier population-based study involving more than 2,500 married individuals, maritally distressed individuals were two to three times more likely than were nondistressed individuals to experience mood, anxiety, or substance use disorders. In addition, lower marital quality is associated with higher psychological distress, poorer perceived health, and greater functional impairment (i.e., social impairment in relationships with relatives and friends, work impairment); these associations remain significant when controlling for current mood, anxiety, and substance use disorders, suggesting that relationship discord is incrementally related to distress and impairment, over and above the effects of psychiatric disorders.

Although cross-sectional studies such as these are important for establishing an association between marital quality and psychopathology, the design of these studies does not address the causal direction of this association. Is lower marital

satisfaction for people with mental health problems a cause or a consequence of their emotional and behavior problems? On the one hand, mental health problems can adversely affect relationship outcomes. For example, being married or involved in a committed relationship with a person with mental health problems can result in stress and burden on the spouse or partner, which may contribute to relationship problems and increase the likelihood of relationship dissolution. In support of this perspective, studies have shown that people with early-onset psychiatric disorders are more likely to marry early and are more likely to experience marital separation or divorce.

On the other hand, lower marital satisfaction can adversely affect people's mental health. For example, decreases in support from the partner or increases in relationship stressors or strains can affect the psychological and biological functioning of the person, increasing the risk of mental health problems. In support of this perspective, marital dissatisfaction has been shown to predict increases in symptoms of depression over time. Furthermore, marital dissatisfaction has been shown to predict the onset of psychiatric disorders. In a population-based sample in the United States, low marital satisfaction at baseline predicted increased risk for the onset of major depression and alcohol use disorders among people that did not meet criteria for the corresponding disorder at baseline. Furthermore, marital quality predicts first onset (i.e., incidence) of psychiatric disorders among people who do not have a history of mental health problems. In a longitudinal population-based study of more than 4,500 people in the Netherlands, lower marital quality at baseline was associated with an increased risk for the onset of psychopathology assessed during a subsequent 2-year period. Specifically, lower marital quality at baseline was associated with an increased risk for first incidence of broad-band factors of mood and anxiety disorders, as well as for the separate diagnoses of major depressive disorder, dysthymia, social phobia, and alcohol abuse. Thus, it appears that marital functioning and mental health mutually influence one another over time in a bidirectional, recursive fashion.

Whereas much of the research on couple functioning and mental health has focused on global relationship quality, research is beginning to

identify some of the specific relationship components that are associated with mental health outcomes. For example, studies have evaluated communication behaviors and patterns that are associated with mental health problems such as depression, anxiety disorders, and substance use disorders. Furthermore, studies have found that physical abuse occurring in the context of marriage and romantic relationships demonstrates a cross-sectional and longitudinal association with increased risk for psychiatric symptoms and onset of psychiatric disorders.

Finally, marital and relationship functioning is also associated with the mental health of the partners involved in the relationship, as well as with the mental health of their offspring. Specifically, parental marital discord and violence between parents is associated with elevated rates of psychiatric symptoms and diagnosed psychiatric disorders in children and adolescents. For example, parental marital discord and aggression are associated with the presence of anxiety, depression, oppositional defiance, conduct problems, and substance abuse in children and adolescents. Given this association, researchers have sought to identify moderating variables that affect the magnitude of the association between parental relationship functioning and mental health outcomes in children. Researchers have also sought to identify the mediators or mechanisms by which parental relationship functioning may increase risk for mental health problems in children. For example, parental conflict and aggression may create vulnerabilities that, by themselves or in interaction with genetically based vulnerabilities, produce disruptions in psychosocial functioning, disruptions in stress-responsive biological regulatory system, and poor health behaviors. Thus, poor marital functioning affects the mental health of other family members, including children, as well as that of partners. Furthermore, as with partners' mental health and well-being, marital problems and child mental health problems appear to influence one another in a reciprocal, bidirectional fashion.

Relationship Quality and Treatment of Psychopathology

To the extent that marital discord is associated with the onset and course of mental health

problems, then it may be expected that the higher rates of marital discord will be associated with poorer outcomes to treatments for mental health problems that do not specifically address relationship problems. For example, marital discord might be expected to be associated with poorer outcome for people on medication or who receive psychotherapy that includes only the person with the mental health problem. Indeed, poor functioning in marriage or other intimate relationships is associated with poorer outcome to individual-based treatments (e.g., medication, individually oriented psychotherapy) for mood, anxiety, and substance use disorders. Compared with people who report greater levels of relationship satisfaction, people with lower levels of satisfaction have higher levels of symptoms at the end of treatment and during follow-up and are more likely to relapse or experience a recurrence of the mental health problem following treatment.

To the extent that marital discord is associated with the onset and course of mental health problems, then treatments such as marital or couple therapy that specifically target relationship problems should be effective in improving mental health outcomes. Support for this perspective comes from studies showing that couple therapy is effective in treating major depression and alcohol and drug use disorders; partner-assisted exposure (in which the partner is included in the treatment as a cotherapist, assisting the patient in practice sessions at home) has been shown to be effective in treating obsessive-compulsive disorder, and partner-assisted exposure and partner-assisted cognitive behavioral treatment have been shown to be effective in treating agoraphobia. When the efficacy of couple therapy or other couple-based interventions are compared with the efficacy of medication or individually oriented psychotherapies, couple therapy and couple-based interventions have generally been found to be as effective as these other approaches in the treatment of these disorders. Furthermore, whereas individually oriented treatments for mental health problems do not appear to alleviate marital discord, couple therapy has been shown to improve marital or relationship functioning, as well as reduce psychiatric symptoms. Finally, some evidence indicates that changes in marital quality are responsible for (i.e., mediate) the effects of couple therapy on changes in

psychopathology, at least in treatment effects of couple therapy on depression. Taken together, existing studies suggest that couple therapy and other couple-based interventions may be effective for a variety of mental health problems, particularly those that co-occur with marital or relationship discord.

Expressed Emotion and Perceived Criticism

In addition to global measures of family and relationship and functioning, researchers have sought to identify specific aspects of the couple and family environment that predict mental health outcomes. One such component of a person's interpersonal environment that has been identified as important in this respect is the degree of *expressed emotion* (EE). EE refers to how the partner or other relative of a person with a mental health (i.e., psychiatric) problem talk about the person in a private interview with a researcher. Partners or other relatives are classified as high in EE if they make more than a specified threshold number of critical comments about the person with the mental health problem, or show signs of hostility or marked emotional overinvolvement. Initially, EE was developed to understand relapse rates for people with schizophrenia. More recently, it has been more extensively studied as a predictor of relapse for other mental health problems, including depression, bipolar disorder, and eating disorders. A meta-analysis of existing studies indicates that EE predicts relapse in people with schizophrenia (mean $r = .30$), mood disorders (mean $r = .39$), and eating disorders (mean $r = .51$). Furthermore, relatives who are classified as high in EE behave in a more negative fashion when interacting with patients than do relatives who are classified as low in EE. Finally, results from several family-based treatments indicate that decreases in EE following treatment are associated with decreases in relapse rates. In summary, it appears that differences among partners and relatives in their level of EE reflect characteristics of the patient-relative relationship that are important for understanding relapse rates across a range of mental health problems.

Whereas the EE construct is based on observations of a partner or other relative's behavior when talking

to a researcher about the person with mental health problems (or, in some cases, based on self-report questionnaires completed by the partner or relative regarding their relationship with the person), researchers have also evaluated the perceptions of people with mental health problems regarding how critical they think their partner or relative is of them. This subjective measure of *perceived criticism* completed by the person with the mental health problem has been shown to predict relapse for people with mood, anxiety, and substance use disorders. Furthermore, perceived criticism ratings are stable over time and are not related to concurrently assessed symptom severity, suggesting that the association between perceived criticism and relapse is not an artifact of symptoms. Thus, it appears that the degree of criticism in the marital or family environment, whether measured by outsiders' coding of spontaneous comments about the person or by insiders' ratings of their perceptions of criticism, is important for understanding the course of mental health problems.

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See also: Alcoholism, Effects on Relationships; Borderline Psychopathology in Relationships; Divorce, Effects on Adults; Family Therapy for Adult Psychopathology; Health, Relationships as a Factor in Treatment; Neuroticism, Effects on Relationships; Psychopathology, Influence on Family Members; Relationship Distress and Depression

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MENTORING PROGRAMS

Mentoring programs pair youth who are perceived to be at risk for poor outcomes with volunteers who are trained to provide mentoring. Such programs have experienced tremendous growth in recent years. An estimated 3 million young people are in formal one-to-one mentoring relationships in the United States. This represents a sixfold increase from just a decade ago, and funding and growth imperatives continue to fuel growth. As mentoring programs have expanded, so too have the ways in which the services are delivered. Among the most popular alternative to the traditional one-on-one pairings of adults and youth are group, peer, and e-mail mentoring. Strategies tied to particular settings—such as school-, workplace-, and faith-based mentoring—also are exhibiting rapid growth. Indeed, although mentoring programs have traditionally been community-based, nearly half of mentoring relationships now meet through schools. Big Brothers Big Sisters of America (BBBSA), the nation's largest and oldest mentoring program, has seen a fourfold increase in school-based matches since 1996.

The enthusiasm for and growth in initiatives to support mentoring speaks volumes about the faith society places in one-to-one relationships between vulnerable young people and unrelated but caring adults. And with good cause. The success of human services initiatives often rests on the quality of relationships that are forged among participants. By putting relationships at center stage, mentoring programs can deliver this healing in full

potency. This entry reviews evidence for the effectiveness of mentoring programs and discusses the elements of mentoring programs that appear to be central to this effectiveness.

Effectiveness of Youth Mentoring Programs

Program evaluations suggest that high-quality youth mentoring relationships can effectively reduce social, academic, and behavioral problems. Nonetheless, there appears to be considerable variability in program impact. In some instances, negative or no effects have been found, or effects have eroded to nonsignificance within only a few months of program participation. Only one mentoring program, "Across Ages," has achieved the status of "model program" on the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices (NREPP), an online registry of independently reviewed and rated interventions.

BBBSA was listed on this registry as an "effective program," a designation that stemmed, in part, from the landmark study of their community-based mentoring (CBM) programs. The evaluators traced the experiences of youth given access to the programs, as well as a control group, over time. Although the standardized effect sizes across all outcomes in the study were relatively small, several widely cited, statistically significant differences in behavior and academic functioning between the mentored youth and the control group were uncovered.

More recently, a large randomized evaluation of BBBSA school-based mentoring (SBM) program was conducted by Carla Herrera and her colleagues. Overall findings were mixed. At the end of the first school year, youth assigned to receive mentoring showed significant improvements in their academic performance, perceived scholastic efficacy, school misconduct, and attendance relative to a control group of nonmentored youth. These effects were generally small in magnitude and, when youth were reassessed a few months into the following school year, most differences were no longer statistically significant.

Despite these somewhat discouraging trends, the group differences that have been uncovered in these evaluations do give grounds for cautious optimism

about the potential viability of mentoring interventions. Given the vast continuum in the quality and duration that exists in the mentoring relationships, however, it is unrealistic to expect dramatic, across-the-board reversals of the negative trajectories that are typical of adolescence. Indeed, matches and programs can vary considerably in their effectiveness, depending on the characteristics of the individuals involved and the quality, intensity, and duration of the relationships they form. Secondary analyses of the SBM data revealed that mentees who experienced longer, closer relationships received bigger benefits than do those in shorter or weaker relationships. And, in Year 2, those involved in weaker, shorter relationships actually showed declines relative to their nonmentored peers. The same patterns have been found in CBM. When all relationships are combined, positive outcomes are easily masked by the neutral and even negative outcomes associated with less effective mentoring relationships. The challenge is to identify those program inputs and factors that can facilitate the formation of close, enduring, and, ultimately, effective mentor-youth ties.

Research has been conducted in this regard. Close, enduring connections between youth and mentors appear to be fostered by factors resembling those identified as important in effective therapeutic relationships, such as empathy and authenticity, and a basic compatibility in youth and mentors' personalities, interests, and expectations for the relationship. The formation of a close, effective relationship is also conditioned by the background characteristics of the mentor, the effectiveness of the mentor in addressing the developmental needs of the child, the consistency and duration of the tie, and the quality of broader program and community context in which the relationship unfolds.

A series of meta-analyses also shed light onto the issue of effectiveness. David DuBois and his colleagues revealed favorable effects of mentoring programs across relatively diverse types of program samples, including programs in which mentoring was provided alone or in conjunction with other services. Positive effects were found both in programs that had general goals and in those with more focused goals, and held up for youth of varying backgrounds and demographic characteristics. Among the small number of studies that included

follow-up assessments, the benefits of mentoring appeared to extend a year or more beyond the end of a youth's participation in the program. Although there was considerable variation across studies, the average effect size across the samples was relatively small, particularly in comparison with the effect sizes that have been found in meta-analyses of other prevention programs for children and adolescents. More recent meta-analyses have found similarly modest effects.

Conclusions

In some cases, youth mentoring interventions can have extraordinarily influential effects; in others, they can do more harm than good. The balance can, and should, be tipped toward the former. A deeper understanding of mentoring relationships, combined with high quality programs, enriched settings, and a better integration of research, practice, and policy will better position programs to harness the full potential of youth mentoring programs.

Jean Rhodes

See also Fictive Kinship; Intergenerational Family Relationships; Mentoring Relationships; Social Support Interventions

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MENTORING RELATIONSHIPS

Association with guiding patrons and more knowledgeable others is featured in stories and biographies of successful men and women in the past and present. Finding and building a relationship with a mentor has been described as facilitating success in business, education, and other life pursuits. Likewise, identifying a talented and promising protégé has been linked to building support and one's life work living on in others.

These relational partners could be college professor and student, business executive and junior partner, volunteer and special-needs child, grandparent and grandchild, neighbor and newcomer, spiritual leader and neophyte, or sports coach and athlete—to name only a few possible mentors and protégés. The knowledge learned and tasks accomplished are as varied as mentors and protégés.

A *mentor* is a person with more knowledge and sophistication in a particular area of expertise who shares this knowledge with someone less knowledgeable through a relationship. The person who learns from the mentor is a *protégé*. Together, the mentor and the protégé form a mentoring relationship.

Mentoring relationships are personal relationships in which neither partner can be substituted without significantly altering the relationship. Mentoring relationships can develop through mentoring programs or they can develop informally. Many long-term mentoring relationships are the result of informal mentoring relationships that develop into high-quality mentoring relationships. This entry discusses the development, maintenance, and repair of mentoring relationships and the overall benefit of these relationships.

Development of Mentoring Relationships

Mentoring relationships are unique from other relationships in that there is no assumption of equality in the relationship. There are fewer mentors available than there are potential protégés. Mentors have knowledge, skills, and connections that are desired by protégés. This gives mentors more relational power and influences the dynamics of the development, maintenance, and repair of mentoring relationships.

Potential mentors may perceive risk in becoming part of a mentoring relationship with a protégé. Those who perceive greater risk in being close to others will be less likely to mentor than will those who do not perceive risk in being close to another. In professional and academic environments, mentors may perceive risk in sharing their secrets and strategies for being successful with others because the protégé may one day become more proficient than the mentor, or the protégé may share the mentor's closely held secrets with others. Generally, mentors may perceive risk in investing the time in helping another person to become successful. As a person's time is typically at a premium, the time spent helping a protégé may be a cost that a potential mentor is not willing to commit. There is the risk that time will be invested in a protégé but that person will not be successful and the protégé will reflect badly on the mentor. Finally, there is the risk that the protégé will simply take the mentor's knowledge and move on to another mentoring relationship.

For the mentor, the risks of a mentoring relationship are countered by the opportunity to help another person, see one's accomplishments remembered by another, be the source of positive regard by another, have a protégé to assist with projects and activities, and receive social support from the protégé. Mentors may also participate in mentoring relationships to help members of disadvantaged groups, to help those they care about, or to help their profession, passion, or area of expertise grow with talented new members who have gained from the knowledge shared.

The limited number of potential mentors coupled with the perceived risk in becoming part of a mentoring relationship places protégés at a disadvantage in finding mentors. Protégés have much to gain from a mentoring relationship and fewer risks to consider. Protégés might perceive risk in exposing lack of knowledge or expertise to a mentor, associating with a mentor, and possible future discouragement by the mentor if one wishes to move on to other relationships or pursuits. However, for protégés, the perceived risk of being close is not as strongly associated with avoiding mentoring relationships as it is for mentors. Being a protégé with a more accomplished mentor means having someone to help one gain knowledge, to advocate on one's behalf, and to help with gaining access to

opportunities that one may not have had the opportunity to access on one's own. Those who report having a mentor also report greater success in business, education, and other pursuits. There is often competition with other potential protégés to develop a relationship with particularly successful mentors.

Mentoring relationships can be facilitated through invitation from the mentor to the protégé, through the protégé approaching a mentor, by a third-party arrangement placing the mentor and protégé together, or through routine and strategic social interaction between a potential mentor and protégé.

According to Mentoring Enactment Theory, mentoring relationships are developed, maintained, and repaired through strategic and routine communication with mentors and protégés. Just as with any relationship, mentoring relationships build slowly and communication should be appropriate for the level of the relationship. Mentoring Enactment Theory predicts a protégé approaching a potential mentor for general help and advice will be more effective at building a mentoring relationship than will a protégé who directly asks a potential mentor to be one's mentor. This is because a direct request to mentor would be the relational equivalent of asking someone in a beginning friendship to be one's best friend or asking someone in a beginning romantic relationship to marry. Although sometimes these bold questions will be met with the reward of the other's commitment, more likely the potential relational partner will be rebuffed for requesting too much commitment too soon in a relationship. This would not be the case for potential mentors who have already made the commitment through joining a formal mentoring program.

For mentors and protégés, the relationship develops in the context of the common goal or shared interest, be it work, career, education, hobby, spirituality, or whatever has drawn the mentor and protégé together. The mentor having more knowledge and experience in the area is in the position to teach and guide the protégé. The protégé is in the position to learn from the mentor and perhaps share new insights and discoveries with the mentor. Mentors may introduce the protégé to others who are accomplished in the area of interest and who can also help the protégé.

Mentors may also serve as advocates for the protégé, helping when difficult situations or competitors are encountered. Protégés help the mentor with tasks and with projects relating to the common goal or interest. A new perspective can help the mentor stay fresh. Also as protégés' skills and abilities develop, they can reciprocate with the mentor by sharing new insights, introducing the mentor to new associates with complementary interests, and advocating for their mentor as well.

Relational Maintenance and Repair

Mentors and protégés are members of a relationship and, as with other types of relationships, they can build trust and social support as well as have conflict and jealousy. Any factors or processes evident in any human relationship can be a part of a mentoring relationship. The mentoring relationship is unique in that the focus of the relationship is the goal or interest that drew the two together. This focus is elaborated in the context of a relationship.

Mentoring relationships may last only a few years or they may last a lifetime. Mentoring relationships have been studied as phase-based relationships with a specific beginning, development, and end. Mentoring relationships have also been studied as ongoing relationships that do not necessarily have a predictable trajectory. This perspective considers mentoring relationships to be developed through strategic and routine communication and these relationships may move forward or backward in development depending on the conflicts, challenges, and opportunities that occur as part of any relationship.

As in other relationships, mentors and protégés engage in relational maintenance strategies to keep their relationships viable. When conflict with their mentors occurs, protégés may employ a number of strategies to appease their mentors and to maintain their relationships. These can include pragmatic appeasement, such as pledging to work harder to accomplish expertise and complete tasks, as well as affable appeasement, such as expressing positive regard and focusing on the relationship more than on tasks.

Research has shown that mentors tend to forgive their protégés and to maintain positive regard for them after conflicts have occurred, with pragmatic

appeasement strategies being more effective than are affable appeasement strategies. In these situations, the mentor and protégé power differential is evident, with protégés in the position of communicating appeasement and mentors in the position of forgiving the protégé.

Problems can occur in mentoring relationships when protégés' interests change or develop in ways that are no longer compatible with their mentors' interests. Protégés may disagree with the mentor's advice or surpass the mentor in accomplishments. In some cases, as protégés attempt to leave mentoring relationships or redefine these relationships as friendships or other more general sources of social support, this change may not be acceptable to the mentors. Some protégés experience difficulties exiting or redefining mentoring relationships as mentors may resist losing their protégé. As with any relationship, not all mentoring relationships are positive, however the relationships may still flourish with the protégé learning desired skills and the mentor building a legacy of knowledge shared.

Some protégés have several mentors. Others have built a network or constellation of social supportive relationships with mentors and others who are interested in their success. Some mentors have several protégés at one time or have several serial protégés. These protégés may form support networks among themselves as protégés or former protégés of a mentor.

Those who have been mentored are more likely to mentor others. This means that even if a mentor has only mentored one protégé in a lifetime, generations of protégés may be influenced by this relationship. If each protégé mentors one or more other protégés as they develop expertise and knowledge in an area of interest, the number of generations could be endless.

Mentoring relationships are the relational conduit for social support and success of a protégé. They can also provide social support to a mentor. Together the mentor and protégé form a relationship of care and assistance. Mentoring relationships will not always be smooth. However, if the mentor and protégé are able to maintain their relationship and go on to mentor others, then a web of social support and expertise can result from these mentoring relationships.

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See also Acquaintance Process; Helping Behaviors in Relationships; Initiation of Relationships; Maintaining Relationships; Mentoring Programs; Social Support, Nature of; Teacher–Student Relationships; Workplace Relationships

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METACOMMUNICATION

“The two of you might metacommunicate,” the facilitator said to the two vice presidents who were struggling with understanding each other. Their puzzled looks were punctuated by one of them asking, “What do you mean by ‘meta-communicate?’” The facilitator replied, “Meta-communication is communicating about communication. For

example, when you say, ‘John, I’m only kidding’ that tells him how to interpret what you said. The facilitator continued, “Such is the role of metacommunication—always present, not always noticed, yet an important interpersonal skill.” This entry on metacommunication describes the types and uses of metacommunication and its use by competent communicators.

Explicit Metacommunication

Metacommunication occurs explicitly and implicitly. When someone says, “This is an order,” or “I don’t mean this as a criticism,” or “I’m really upset with you,” that person is telling the other explicitly how to interpret what is said. Explicit metacommunication serves as a verbal “frame” to guide the other’s interpretation. As with any communication, explicit metacommunication may not match the receiver’s experience of the speaker. For instance, if one has a habit of “joking,” but is really saying sarcastic things, when he or she labels it as “Oh, I was just joking,” the attempt at providing a frame may not match the other’s experience. A good relationship occurs when the verbal frame provided matches with the other’s experience—saying it was meant as a joke and the other interpreting it as a joke.

One of the skills personal counselors and therapists use is providing alternative “frames” or metacommunication labels for what clients are communicating. For example, if in a marital couple, the man says, “There she goes again, criticizing me,” the counselor may say, “That is interesting—it sounded to me like she was just being descriptive and didn’t mean that as a criticism.” The counselor adds a different metacommunication label or frame, trying to help the man reinterpret the communication from his partner.

Explicit metacommunication can be seen as negative or positive. Early writers on metacommunication thought that in counseling, for example, most metacommunication was negative, such as “there he goes, trying to control me again.” However, explicit metacommunication serves positive functions as well. A competent person in the business world might say, “I need to talk about this issue with you so we can be ‘on the same page’ and you will feel more supported”—clearly, a

positive metacommunication. In personal relationships, positive metacommunication is often at the heart of good exchanges, by labeling exactly what one intended so the other will not misinterpret the verbal message.

In this example, explicit metacommunication is used in the conversation itself. One can also metacommunicate explicitly about the nature of the relationship. For instance, to say, “Julio and I are friends” is a form of relationship-level metacommunication, so if the two of them hurl insults at one another, saying they are friends cues onlookers to their relationship—and how to interpret the exchanges. Romantic partners, who begin as friends and then become romantically involved, have to change their relationship-level metacommunication, by exclaiming, for example, “Oh, yes, we were friends and now we are seriously dating.” Explicitly saying, “This is our relationship” is a form of metacommunication about how to interpret the exchanges. At times of relationship change such as this, it helps others interpret the communication by being explicit.

When you attend a party with your romantic partner, and say, “This is Carl, my boyfriend,” it cues others about the nature of your relationship. Or, the reverse, when a politician is accused of having an affair and says, “Our relationship is strictly professional,” the politician is trying to convince outsiders that the relationship is not romantic. A brother and sister, for example, may be close to each other and do lots of hugging and gentle touching. When they are with others, the brother may say, “Hi, this is my sister—I’m really lucky to have such a close relationship with her.” The participants in all these relationships are trying to cue outsiders about the nature of their relationship by being explicit. One rather fascinating example of explicit attempts comes from a parrot. When the owner comes home and opens the door, the parrot says, “I love you.” Although it warms the heart of the owner, the parrot is likely motivated more by the desire for a treat than by the desire to provide clear, explicit metacommunication!

Implicit Metacommunication

Humans also metacommunicate implicitly—without labeling their intentions. Implicit metacommunication is cueing the other nonverbally

rather than verbally. For instance, if someone says, “Close the door” with a harsh tone of voice, or alternatively, says, “Close the door” in a friendly tone of voice, different implicit signals are given for how to interpret the communication. Interestingly, these implicit forms are more common than explicitly labeling how to interpret communication. The implicit forms occur within every exchange—participants are always cueing others with tone of voice, body language, and body tension about the proper meaning for the message. For instance, if someone is angry at his or her child, using a stilted tone of voice, tense body tone, and eye gaze directed above the child’s head cues the child that the parent is upset. Or, the child, who, in response to a request from the parent to clean up her bedroom, doesn’t look up and quickly says, “Whatever,” lets the parent know the child is not really listening nor complying.

Other animals besides humans also implicitly metacommunicate. For instance, two dogs can signal each other how to interpret their intentions, with absolute accuracy. One dog, while looking aggressive, can metacommunicate to the other, “This is play—not serious dominance.” And then they play. The elaborate rituals dogs and other animals use when greeting another of their species ensures fairly accurate metacommunication. The dog in the park doesn’t walk up and say, “I’m friendly and won’t attack you” to another dog, but body posture, speed of closing in, eye gaze, tail wagging, and the degree of body tension, all signal the other that no attack is forthcoming. It is interesting watching humans who do not know a particular dog misinterpret that dog’s implicit metacommunication. Rosie, an Australian shepherd, for example, bares her teeth to humans she likes—it is a “smile,” rather than a sign of aggression. But humans who do not know her may think she is snarling at them. Another dog, meeting her, however, relies on a host of cues in addition to the smile, and there is no miscommunication—the meaning is instantly clear and accurate. Dogs also read dominance signals from other dogs they have just met. What is it about dogs (and other animals as well) that allows them to metacommunicate with another with absolute accuracy, yet humans seem to struggle over their metacommunication with someone they have lived with for years? It

may be that humans emit messages with more mixed signals than do other animals. Humans, can, however, learn what signals work to cue their animals about their intentions. Dog owners, for example, who want to play with their dogs can do so without any words. Rather than explicitly saying, "Rover, now we are going to play," the human will hunch over, move rapidly, grab the dog's toy, and instantly the dog knows that this is play behavior—good, implicit metacommunication is occurring between the two of them. An engaging television program, *The Dog Whisperer*, illustrates how interspecies' implicit metacommunication occurs. Caesar Milan, the dog whisperer, specializes in retraining dogs that have gotten out of control. Using no words, he can instantly metacommunicate with a dog. For example, to get a dog to stop jumping on humans, he simply quickly grabs the dog on the neck and lets go. The dog apparently interprets this as a "bite" and, as if an adult dog were training her, stops jumping on the human.

Metacommunication of both types, explicit and implicit, are skills that can be learned. Children learn both by observation and through explicit instruction. For example, a father may teach his son to look someone in the eye when speaking, rather than looking sideways, to signal sincerity and respect. For children, and all of us, once someone learns some metacommunication repertoires, he or she can implicitly show their intentions for a conversation or explicitly say what those intentions are. This allows the receiver into the world of the sender, and opens dialogue about what the receiver interpreted. For instance, if one metacommunicates and describes what is going on in a conversation ("I note that every time I say something about your team, you interrupt me"), it can serve as a springboard to clarify communication patterns.

There may be important cultural differences in the recognition and use of metacommunication because humans learn how to use or not use metacommunication. Some cultures teach and practice it on levels not seen in Eurocentric cultures. For instance, the Maori indigenous culture in New Zealand has the *Haka*—a dramatic approach to strangers that entails a threatening posture and loud vocal sounds. More research could uncover forms of metacommunication used across the world. It would be useful to find examples of when

metacommunication enhances communication exchanges and relationships. Learning the skills of both explicit and implicit forms of metacommunication helps individuals expand their communication repertoires. It may be, as trained mediators and counselors know, improving both explicit metacommunication ("talk about talk") and being more sensitive to the implicit cues are both important and useful skills. Such skill improvements are useful in many contexts, from personal relationships to situations where persuasion is the key to success, such as in a sales situation.

William W. Wilmot

See also Accuracy in Communication; Deception and Lying; Equivocation; Initiation of Relationships; Nonverbal Communication, Status Differences; Personal Relationships, Defining Characteristics

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MILITARY AND RELATIONSHIPS

In practical terms, the military family must be divided into at least two major groups, according to the military's institutionalized pattern of stratification. There are officers; an educated, managerial class; and enlisted personnel, a class of workers whose normal duties include the performance of manual labor, or, in the case of higher-ranking enlisted soldiers, the immediate supervision of lower-ranked enlistees. By design, there is little mobility between officer and enlisted classes, but there are gradations within each. There are then at least four main categories of military family, according to the rank of the serving soldier: junior

enlisted (new recruits), senior enlisted (soldiers promoted out of the ranks to administrative and ceremonial positions), junior officers (recent college graduates now tasked with small group leadership), and senior officers (the highest ranked service members). Within each category are subdivisions by the usual demographic markers such as race, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic origin, marital status, and number of children (if any). This portrait is further complicated by changes to the military institution itself across time. In the 20th century alone, the U.S. military experienced periods of build-up as well as periods of personnel drawdowns, both popular and unpopular wars, segregation and subsequent desegregation (1948), periods of conscription (World War I, World War II, and 1948 to 1973), and several anomalous events, including a military participation rate of 12 percent during World War II, unmatched in U.S. history, before or since. Thus, there is no single “military family,” just as there is no monolithic “civilian family.”

Service members serve the needs of a demanding and unusual institution. On the one hand, the families of service members pass through phases familiar to any sociologist of the family: mate selection, marriage, parenting, competing career demands, divorce, internal conflict and perhaps even violence within the family, and retirement planning. On the other hand, these phases are shaped by the unique features of the military institution, among the most intrusive of which are the following: (a) Members of the military are subject to an additional set of laws known as the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ). These laws are stringent and socially conservative. For example, adultery and homosexuality are both criminal acts according to UCMJ. In practice, the laws of UCMJ pertaining to family dynamics are selectively enforced. For example, the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” policy is an attempt to regularize selective enforcement of the legal prohibition on homosexuality. Although only the service member is subject to UCMJ, his or her entire family is often forced to conform to its mandates by extension. (b) Service members are required to be available to the military at all times, and for whatever duty, however inconvenient, unpleasant, or hazardous. The family must adapt to this reality, which often translates into prolonged separations, frequent relocations,

disruptions to the career of the spouse not serving in the military, school system irregularity for the children, the risk of death or disability to the main provider of the family, and general uncertainty about the future. On a more positive note, the military provides its members and their families with a social welfare net unparalleled in the civilian sector, except perhaps in some religious orders. This safety net consists of such substantial benefits as job security, housing and food subsidies, free medical care, educational benefits, low-cost life insurance, and subsidized retirement plans. Given these distinctive features of military life, it is not surprising that the demographics and trends of military families sometimes differ dramatically from those that characterize their civilian counterparts. This entry describes military families, their benefits, and the challenges they face in contemporary U.S. society.

Characteristics of the Military Family

Marriage

The military provides significant support for single-earner families. Military compensation is to some extent need-based. Although the base salary for enlisted soldiers is low, soldiers with families to support are allocated tax-free housing awards. The amount of the award is based on the zip code in which the soldier is stationed, thus reflecting the actual cost of living in a given area. Similarly, service members with families are provided with allowances for food, and are entitled to free medical care and subsidized childcare. The military also pays service members a moving allowance when relocation is ordered. Again, this amount is based entirely on need: the formula is based on the weight of the family’s possessions and the number of miles to be traveled. A by-product of this need-based system of compensation is that the married soldier receives pay in partially prebudgeted form, with money set aside for housing and groceries separately. In this same spirit, senior enlisted personnel are expected to ensure that junior enlisted soldiers provide for their families. For example, sergeants often help new recruits find affordable off-post housing. This house hunting is often carried out in uniform, during the course of a normal day of duty, and often by order of a still-higher

ranked enlisted soldier. Two qualifications should be made here: (1) This family-protective policy is a recent innovation. The military was a conscript force from 1948 to 1973, during which time the normal soldier, in demographic terms, was a young, unattached male serving only for a short time. Family-friendly policy in the military has improved continuously since the advent of the all-volunteer force in 1973, often in response to crises in housing or education. (2) The family-friendly policies of the military are based on a narrow definition of family. No material provisions are made for same-sex couples or heterosexual cohabitators. These policies are thus favorable only to heterosexual married couples and implicitly assume a traditional breadwinner-homemaker model.

The reinforcement of the traditional family model extends beyond financial compensation. Some of the hardships inherent to military life are detrimental to the career of the nonmilitary spouse. Many military posts are located in otherwise remote areas where there may be a lack of employment opportunities. Frequent relocations may prevent the spouse from cultivating the social network and institutional affiliation essential to many high-paying or prestigious jobs. Lastly, the frequent and prolonged absences of the military spouse require that the nonmilitary spouse be prepared at all times to take full responsibility for childcare, a demand incompatible with a high-pressure career. The nonmilitary spouse is effectively assigned a supporting role, an assignment that, according to the little research done in this area, some male spouses find particularly difficult. Perhaps not coincidentally, male service members are more likely to be married than are female service members. In 2002, 42 percent of enlisted women and half of all women officers were married, whereas half of all enlisted men and 71 percent of male officers were married. A contributing factor to this disparity is that men are more likely than women to serve for prolonged periods, and the likelihood of being married increases with seniority. In contrast with the dual-working civilian family norm, the gendered breadwinner-homemaker family model is more common in the military because of such institutional structures. An important exception is the joint-military family (roughly 1 in 10 military marriages), and these marriages are far less likely to have children. The

military's structural conditions and lack of support for cohabitation thus lead to high marriage rates at younger than average ages, even though mate selection is impeded (for men) because of the gender imbalance in the military and strict rules that prohibit romantic relations between service members of different ranks.

Children and Parenting

Service members tend to have children earlier in the life course in comparison with civilians. Many recruits marry and have children before the end of their first term of enlistment. Because of lack of seniority in the military, their pay is low, which is compounded by the fact that they have little experience with budgeting at this point in their lives. As a result, even though they receive some important financial subsidies from the military, they often experience financial difficulties.

Military personnel are usually required to relocate every few years, often to assignments abroad. This policy has both negative and positive consequences for the children of military families (who often refer to themselves as "military brats"). Military children benefit from well-funded Department of Defense schools and living abroad provides the opportunity for second-language acquisition. On the other hand, this distinctive lifestyle can have negative effects on a child's development. Frequent relocations, for example, interrupt the social and educational developmental process for some military children.

Domestic Problems

"The family," Richard Gelles and Murray Strauss wrote, "[is] our most violent institution with the exception of the military in time of war." As noted earlier, many institutional, legal, and economic forces in the military isolate the nonmilitary spouse and ensure her (in most cases) dependence on the service member. Further, the military is an institution where young men (in most cases) are taught to solve problems through aggression and violence. The military invests heavily in domestic violence-prevention programs. Its counterpart to the civilian Child Protective Services is particularly well funded. Families also have much less of a right to privacy than their civilian counterparts, which

facilitates aggressive intervention by social services as well as by superior officers. It is, however, unknown whether the military's additional safeguards against domestic violence compensate for the additional risk factors inherent to military life. Although some studies conclude that domestic abuse is more widespread in the military than in the civilian sector, other studies have come to the opposite conclusion.

Divorce

The divorce rate in the United States increases after war. After World War II, there was a dramatic and unprecedented surge in the divorce rate. By 1950, the rate had subsided to levels approximately equal to that of the immediate prewar period. The rate of divorce after World War II was not equaled again until the 1970s and the advent of widespread female employment and no-fault divorce. Does service in the military increase likelihood of divorce? It is difficult to compare military and civilian divorce rates for several reasons. Approximately a third of new enlistees fail to complete their first term of service, and of those who do, most do not reenlist for a second term. Thus, junior enlisted personnel may separate from the service (just) before divorcing. Nevertheless, some (inconclusive) evidence suggests that the rate of divorce might be lower in the military than in the civilian sector. After all, the military provides legal, social, and economic support for marriage in a way unmatched in the civilian sector. In addition, no conclusive evidence supports the hypothesis that frequent deployments adversely affect marital outcomes, although deployments involving combat are linked to a higher likelihood of divorce.

In sum, available evidence suggests that the experience of combat generally has a negative impact on military families; however, the military attempts to counteract this with policies that both promote and protect the family. Most military service takes place during times of peace, so families appear to benefit overall from such compensatory policies.

Fictive Kinship in the Military

There are concepts of family operative in the military that do not meet the U.S. Census criteria for

"family" (individuals related by birth, marriage, or adoption). Some family ties are illegal or unrecognized. As noted earlier, cohabitators in the military receive no support or recognition, and same-sex couples are in violation of military law. On the other hand, there exist institutionally supported family-type relationships between otherwise unrelated soldiers. Just as families are power systems with more or less clearly defined roles, so is the military, with many of the same consequences, both good and bad. Military sociologists have carefully studied the role of male bonding as it relates to combat motivation. The consensus among military sociologists after World War II was that soldiers fought not for ideology but, rather, for their buddies. Military authority, taking the lessons of sociology to heart, has now in effect mandated brotherhood among soldiers at the level of the small unit. This is particularly prevalent in combat units where female soldiers are excluded. This mandate is carried out through the creation of "buddy teams" and through sustained and intense rhetoric. Similarly, the commander of a unit often uses the language of a distant and authoritarian father. The concept of family is thus overlaid on the rigid hierarchy of military life.

Daniel Burland and Jennifer Hikes Lundquist

See also Fictive Kinship; Job Stress, Relationship Effects; Work-Family Conflict; Work-Family Spillover; Workplace Relationships

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MINDING THE RELATIONSHIP

Minding the relationship refers to a theory of relationship maintenance and satisfaction. The name of the theory, “minding,” emphasizes that relationship satisfaction is primarily a matter of how partners think about a relationship; happiness in a relationship is created in the minds of the partners. The theory suggests that relationship satisfaction may be sustained over long periods through positive habits of cognition and communication between partners. Minding Theory incorporates five basic recommendations: self-disclosure, respect, positive attributions, reciprocity, and continuity. This entry discusses the Minding Theory and its five basic recommendations.

Self-disclosure refers to sharing personal information about oneself with a partner. It is central to Minding Theory that satisfied partners, over time, will gradually disclose more intimate information to each other. One effect of this disclosure between partners is to promote a deeper knowledge of each other’s past experiences and current emotions. Another purpose of disclosure is to increase trust between partners, assuming that when disclosure becomes more intimate, partners treat new revelations respectfully. Finally, continuing disclosure allows partners to grow together over time through the continued sharing of new insights, desires, and experiences.

Also central to Minding Theory is the principle of respect and acceptance. In a satisfying relationship, as disclosure increases, partners will be able to respect what they learn about each other. When new information is revealed about a partner, Minding Theory recommends that even if this information is negative, a sense of respect for the other should be retained. Ideally, the information is incorporated into the partner’s existing beliefs about the relationship without damaging the overall positive nature of these beliefs. Some discoveries may be too negative for one partner to continue holding onto these positive attitudes, for example, a disclosure of long-term infidelity or dishonesty. Because Minding Theory predicts that relationships are based on how partners think about each other, information that severely damages the positive mindset about a partner should also endanger relationship satisfaction and long-term stability.

The third principle of minding is that partners in a stable and satisfying relationship will tend to make positive attributions or explanations for each other’s behaviors. The theory recommends that partners generally explain each others’ actions in a positive way. For example, if Sam is late to a dinner date, Chris may initially assume outside factors must be involved rather than immediately blaming Sam for thoughtlessness. The tendency to positive attributions may be especially important when a partner’s actions may be ambiguous or awkward, such as giving a well-meant but badly chosen gift or making a clumsy gesture of affection. A minding partner will perceive and acknowledge the good intention. A simpler way of putting this is to say that partners should give each other the benefit of the doubt. It is important in minding to respect information about a partner and to attribute positive motives to the partner’s behaviors.

The first three principles of Minding Theory, as discussed, describe ways of developing a particular way of thinking about a partner. During disclosure, partners develop a positive view of each other. Respect encourages partners to maintain this positivity when learning new information about each other. This constructive view of a partner makes it easier to create positive attributions for his or her behavior. The final two Minding Theory principles, reciprocity and continuity, are about the practical nature of maintaining a satisfying relationship.

The principle of reciprocity assumes that disclosure, respect, and positive attributions are most helpful to a relationship when both partners are practicing them. When one partner is not open to intimate sharing with the other, cannot respect what is known about the other, or cannot maintain a generally positive view of the other’s behavior, this may damage the stability of the relationship. No matter how hard one person tries to establish a positive foundation for the relationship, Minding Theory predicts that a lack of matching response from the other will ultimately undermine the overall quality of the relationship.

The final component of Minding Theory is continuity. Minding is not just essential at the beginning of a relationship or when a relationship is in danger of ending. To achieve long-lasting relationship satisfaction, the theory stipulates that the process of sharing, respect, and positive attributions

should continue throughout the life of the relationship. There will be points in any long-term relationship when partners are stressed and one or more of the minding elements suffer. The theory would suggest that during those times, the sense of togetherness and stability that minding supports will also suffer. Only when partners begin minding again with regularity will the relationship recover its previous strength. If partners have never fully engaged in the minding components, these ordinary relationship stressors may easily precipitate relationship crises or break ups.

Minding Theory is based on the assumption that relationships are most likely to last over time when they provide emotional satisfaction to the partners. Marriages or other partnerships that are based on other factors, such as social status or financial stability, may be long-lived for other reasons that have little to do with minding. Minding Theory would suggest, however, that even partnerships formed for reasons other than emotional satisfaction can still be sources of this satisfaction if partners begin to practice the components of minding. Minding Theory was also conceived primarily as a method of explaining long-term satisfaction and maintenance of romantic relationships, but can be applied to other types of interpersonal relationships.

Julia Omarzu

See also Attribution Processes in Relationships; Cognitive Processes in Relationships; Maintaining Relationships; Reciprocity of Liking; Self-Disclosure

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MISATTRIBUTION OF AROUSAL

Misattribution of arousal occurs when people incorrectly identify the source of their physiological arousal. For example, one might incorrectly attribute elevated heart rate to the presence of a person sitting close by, when this physiological response may actually be caused by some recently ingested caffeine. Although many variables may influence which of several possible sources is acknowledged as the cause of arousal, in the end, two primary factors are necessary for misattribution to occur: physiological arousal and at least two possible sources of that arousal (the true cause and the misidentified cause). Given this simple recipe, the misattribution of arousal may occur during transient interactions as well as in more enduring relationships. This entry discusses the theoretical and experimental origins of the misattribution of arousal effect and how the misidentification of emotions can influence social relationships.

Emotion Misconstrued

One result of misidentifying the source of arousal may be the mislabeling of emotional arousal. In a classic study, Stanley Schachter and Jerome Singer suggested that emotion is experienced when both physiological arousal and a cognitive label for the experience co-occur. It matters not whether the arousal precedes or follows the emotional label for the experience of an emotion, just that they are jointly experienced at some point. For example, imagine that a person enters a situation expecting joy and is subsequently aroused. According to this model, this person will experience joy because that label was most available when the arousal was experienced. Although in this instance the emotion (joy) occurs with the onset of arousal, one might also imagine a situation in which arousal precedes the cognitive labeling process. For example, a person might experience an elevated heart rate while sitting in a coffee shop and not attach an emotional label to the arousal until another person sits nearby at another table. In this case, the caffeine-induced arousal might be misattributed to the more salient environmental cue of

the other person, resulting in the attachment of an emotional label (e.g., attraction, love, lust) to the experienced arousal. In this instance, the arousal precedes the emotional label and the true source of the arousal may not be prominent in the person's mind as the situation unfolds.

The impact of the salience of possible sources of arousal and the subsequent mislabeling of emotions has been examined extensively over the years. In Schachter and Singer's experiment, participants were placed in a situation where the source of their arousal could be attributed to multiple sources. Schachter and Singer reported that subjects who did not have an accurate explanation for the cause of their arousal were more likely than others were to mimic the behavior of another person (e.g., euphoric) who was present. This imitation has been interpreted as the result of the misattribution process that resulted in participants' mislabeling of emotion. That is, participants in this situation employed the most salient cue available to interpret their experience—the confederate's behavior—and thereby produced an emotional label that was consistent with the confederate's behavior. Although Schachter and Singer's model is no longer viewed as a viable explanation of emotion, their initial inquiry spawned numerous studies demonstrating that people actively interpret their social situations, consider plausible explanations to label their experiences, and at times settle on the most cognitively available explanation.

Arousal and Attraction

The suggestion that people might mislabel their emotional responses in social situations has served as fertile ground for the study of attraction. For example, why do people feel attracted to another person? Is it because of a unique constellation of traits the other possesses or might this reflect misidentification of the true source of arousal? In an early study, Donald Dutton and Arthur Aron had an experimenter (either male or female) interact with male participants after crossing a 230-foot gorge over a bridge constructed of wooden boards and rope. After a short interview, participants were given the experimenter's phone number to call for additional information about the experiment. Other participants were met after crossing a

small footbridge across a pond on campus and the same procedure was followed. Participants who crossed the rope bridge were more likely than were the footbridge participants to call the female experimenter. These results have been interpreted as the males' misattributing the source of the arousal (the scary bridge) to the female experimenter and labeling their experience as attraction rather than fear. One might argue that the source of the arousal was clearly available in this setting, but nevertheless, the men acted in a fashion suggesting they substituted one source label for another. This study has been replicated widely over the years in both laboratories as well as in field settings.

In numerous demonstrations of the misattribution effect, a common theme emerges: arousal is experienced but a likely source of the arousal is discounted or minimized. Therefore, the true impact of the earlier arousal on later behavior and emotional labeling is not accurately assessed; the emotional response to a later situation may be mislabeled entirely. Such mislabeling because of source substitution is consistent with a traditional application of Schachter and Singer's model and usually is paired with the belief that the true source must be ambiguous. However, as suggested earlier, arousal appears to influence assessments of interpersonal attraction even when the ambiguity of the true source varies widely. For example, the link between arousal and attraction has been demonstrated in a variety of settings where the arousal source is diverse and ambiguous, including movie theaters, amusement parks, zoos, and lab settings using aerobic exercise. A meta-analysis of 33 studies confirms a moderately strong relationship between arousal and attraction.

Alternative Explanations for Misattribution

Several plausible alternatives to a misattribution explanation for the link between arousal and attraction have been proposed. For example, the *response-facilitation model* suggests that arousal will enhance the dominant emotional response to a person or a situation. Therefore, if one is predisposed to be attracted to another person, the experience of arousal in the presence of this person would increase the emotional response to them.

Similarly, if the dominant response to one's roommate is disgust, then arousal following exercise would enhance those feelings when encountering him or her. Absent from this model is a need for the source of the arousal to be ambiguous. Therefore, arousal will augment the dominant emotional response regardless of how salient the true source of the arousal is.

A different explanation of the link between arousal and attraction (the Excitation Transfer Model) emphasizes that arousal does not quickly dissipate after being experienced because the sympathetic nervous system takes some time to quiet down. Therefore, arousal from one source may persist following its initial experience. This lingering arousal may enhance later emotional reactions to others but cannot be too salient for the effect to occur. For example, the residual arousal left over from a frightening encounter may augment or intensify attraction to another person if enough time has passed since the arousing event.

Lastly, Craig Foster and his colleagues offer a two-stage *judgment and adjustment model* that integrates the results from the many studies examined in their meta-analysis. The first stage of their model (judgment) allows for arousal to have an automatic effect on attraction regardless of source salience. The second stage (adjustment) represents the period that follows the initial impact of arousal. During this stage, people may alter their initial assessment of attraction (or repulsion), if aware of the arousal and if motivated to change.

Misattribution Research Applied to a Broader Context

Although feelings of attraction to another person may involve arousal, the judgment and adjustment model suggests that there are opportunities to negate (or make negligible) the impact of arousal. For example, one might resist an initial attraction if it is interpreted as coming from an external source. However, one might also ignore these cognitive brakes and accept the feelings of attraction. Perhaps this is a place where personality variables or previous learning histories influence decision-making processes. Or, possibly, this is where alcohol comes into play. Ultimately, this two-stage explanation of the misattribution effect suggests

that human cognitive processes are able to override their initial emotional reactions, if so chosen.

Emotional responses other than attraction should also be considered when applying misattribution to human relationships. For example, arousal may augment emotional responses such as anger or hate. Augmenting these emotional responses may lead to aggressive or violent acts directed against other people involved in an arousing situation as well as individuals encountered after the event. Again, using the judgment and adjustment model, it might be predicted that arousal induced by vehicle jousting in rush hour traffic would increase the likelihood of aggressiveness against other commuters, work colleagues, or loved ones after arrival at home. However, as noted earlier, the model also predicts that people can decide whether or not to act upon their emotional states.

Can the misattribution of arousal effect extend to leisure or mildly competitive activities? If one assumes that arousal is a component of these situations, then simply participating in the activity may influence emotional evaluations of others present during the activity as well as persons encountered immediately following the activity. For example, emotional responses might be enhanced toward companions in a robust tennis match or an exhilarating scuba dive.

Finally, although people may recognize that certain situations produce arousal, being overly attentive to the experience of arousal may interfere with performance on some tasks. For example, math exams can elicit high arousal for individuals who believe they lack the aptitude for quantitative reasoning. Talia Ben-Zeev and her colleagues found that female participants were able to overcome the arousal associated with stereotypes of poor female performance on math tests when they were permitted to attribute their arousal to an external source. Under certain circumstance, then, misattribution of arousal may weaken rather than calcify socially harmful stereotypes.

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See also Anger in Relationships; Arousal and Attraction; Emotion in Relationships; Excitation Transfer Theory; Interpersonal Attraction; Mate Selection; Physical Environment and Relationships; Stress and Relationships

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MONEY AND COUPLE RELATIONSHIPS

Contrary to what many people believe, romantic relationships bear the imprint of economics. *Money*, or economic resources such as earnings or income from stocks, affects whether romantic relationships are formed, how people experience those relationships, and whether they dissolve. This entry defines *couple relationships* as romantic, typically sexual relationships between two individuals. Because most research on the connection between couples and money focuses on married couples or couples who are living together, rather than dating, this entry follows suit.

Forming Couple Relationships

It is well established that married couples enjoy higher incomes than do same-sex or opposite-sex couples who are living together. However, scientists have shown that *getting married* is linked to people's monetary situations, with people who are financially well-off being more likely to marry. Conversely, those who have little money or are poor are less likely to marry, with some never marrying. These conclusions stem from scores of studies that analyze information from thousands of people representative of the U.S. population, or large subgroups of the population, as well as studies based on lengthy interviews with a small number of individuals; the former is termed *quantitative* and the latter *qualitative* research.

Why is money related to getting married? There appears to be a cultural belief that one must be financially secure to wed and that marriage signifies that one is no longer struggling economically. Specific factors include having the money for a wedding and reception, a house, being debt-free, and not living paycheck to paycheck. Scientists have also found that, despite increasing commitment to equality between men and women, some people, both men and women, pay more attention to the man's economic situation than to the woman's in deciding about marriage. In other words, men's monetary standing has a stronger positive impact on marriage than does women's, suggesting a continued cultural emphasis on men as primary breadwinners.

Now that living together, or what is also termed *cohabitation*, has become commonplace and, indeed, the typical path to marriage, many family scientists have been studying the linkage between money and cohabitation as well as money and the movement into marriage among cohabiting couples. Qualitative research shows that many opposite-sex cohabitators explicitly state that the ability to save on expenses is an important and logical reason to move in with a romantic partner, given that the couple is usually already spending so much time together. They report that moving in with a partner allows couples to save money by combining resources and splitting a variety of expenses such as groceries, gas, electricity, and rent.

At the same time, cohabiting couples hold higher economic expectations for marriage than

for cohabitation. In other words, even after moving in together, the decision to get married is connected to economic circumstances: Marriage is more likely to occur when the couple is well-off in job stability and earnings. In addition, more emphasis is again placed by both men and women on men's economic capacity to be a breadwinner than on women's, although one recent study indicates that women's earnings are becoming increasingly important in the decision to marry.

Scientists are increasingly focusing on poor women or couples who have had children outside of marriage. Having children while single or cohabiting has become increasingly common: Nearly 40 percent of children today are born in these circumstances. Policymakers are interested in what can be done to increase the chances that these children grow up in a two-parent, married family. This interest is controversial and based on some research that suggests such a circumstance may be best for children, although this is not always the case. When a marriage is marred by domestic violence or overt conflict, for example, children are better off if their parents part ways. Further, as discussed in this entry, monetary problems make relationships vulnerable to break up.

Similar to research on couples in general, low-income unmarried mothers say that money is an issue when they think about marriage. They expect their male partner to be a reliable breadwinner; inability to do so is an important basis for these mothers' hesitation to marry. Thus, couples are hesitant to marry unless economic stability has been achieved, whether they have children or not. Scientists have also shown that the partners of low-income women, not surprisingly, tend to be disadvantaged themselves. They typically have low education, making it difficult to be optimistic about their capacity to obtain well-paying jobs in the current U.S. economy.

Couple Dynamics

When two people live together in a romantic relationship, whether or not they have formally married, money influences how each experiences the relationship, including their sense of satisfaction. The issue that has received the most attention by researchers, however, is the connection between

money and the division of household labor in heterosexual marriages or cohabitations. Many scientists have focused on who does the housework, and why, based on the notion that the partner with less economic power, traditionally the female, will take on the bulk of household and childcare duties.

Although an increasing proportion of women are earning as much or more than their husbands (about one third), husbands still earn more in most marriages. Gender inequality in earnings holds among cohabiting couples, too, although the disparity is somewhat less sharp. An additional point is that earnings differences become more pronounced when a couple has children. This is because many women cut back at work or leave the workforce entirely for a time upon childbearing.

As a result, some scholars argue that women reap greater economic benefits from marriage than men; sharing economic resources increases a woman's standard of living while she is caring for young children, although she is also sacrificing the accumulation of additional employment experience. Even when she is fully employed, some income discrepancy usually remains because of women's lower earnings in the labor market compared with men in general, even when both have the same education and work experience.

Division of Housework

Scientists have drawn on Exchange Theory to understand the division of household labor. This theory posits that the individual who brings more money into the household will have more bargaining power in the relationship. Power essentially refers to who is more likely to get one's way when it comes to decision making about major purchases or the division of household labor.

Research provides general support for this idea. Among gay couples, the wealthier and more educated man enjoys greater power, although this appears less likely to hold in lesbian couple relationships. In heterosexual couples, women decrease time doing housework when they earn relatively more money, perhaps purchasing substitutes such as help with childcare and housework, but still perform the majority of the household work compared with their male partners. Yet one scholar recently demonstrated that wives' relative earnings

compared with their husbands' does not explain how much housework they do. Rather, it is women's absolute earnings that matters: The more a woman earns, the less housework she does. Research also shows that when husbands or wives perceive the division of housework to be unfair, marital satisfaction for both spouses is reduced, putting couples at greater risk of divorce.

Financial Arrangements Among Couples

An emerging focus of research is the extent to which different types of couples *pool* their incomes. That is, do they combine their incomes fully, keep some money separate, or keep all money separate? It is important to emphasize, however, that all couples living together share expenses in one way or another even if their incomes are not combined into joint checking or savings accounts. In this case, each partner pays a share, often proportionate to their earnings, for joint expenses (e.g., mortgage, utilities, children's needs) and pays for independent purchases (e.g., clothing) separately.

Married couples are most likely to fully pool, about three quarters, although cohabiting couples are not far behind at approximately 50 percent. Research also suggests that Blacks, the elderly (likely for tax purposes or to qualify for Medicaid), those who marry at older ages, and couples in which at least one partner has been divorced are less likely to pool economic resources; when partners earn a comparable amount, they are more likely to pool incomes. Some scholars have found that when married couples do pool *and* the husband earns more money, the husband tends to have more control over the couple's economic resources. Although data are lacking about historical trends, arguably pooling was much more common in the past when women were less likely to be employed.

Turning to the matter of relationship quality, pooling money can be a source of tension or conflict: One partner may not agree with the way the other is spending money he or she perceives as jointly owned. In some cases, dual-earner couples begin their marriages with pooled economic arrangements, but later decide that it is best for their marriage to establish separate accounts.

Two other areas of research are relevant to the topic of income arrangements. Recently, some

researchers are examining the linkage between debt and marital satisfaction. Taking on large amounts of consumer debt (e.g., credit cards, installment loans, or overdue bills) appears to decrease satisfaction, whereas completely paying off this type of debt increases marital satisfaction. Only large increases in consumer debt are associated with declines in marital satisfaction; this could be a result of longer work hours, and thus less time spent together, to try to pay off debt, as well as arguments about money when couples are under financial stress. Interestingly, mortgage debt does not appear to affect marital satisfaction. A likely explanation is the economic and tax advantage of home ownership. Research has shown that homes constitute the most valuable asset for most married couples.

An area about which little is known concerns dating couples. Who should pay for dates? Although many people still believe that the male is responsible for paying the bill, a 1996 study of college students suggests that women are more likely than men to believe that the person initiating the date should pay. Furthermore, younger students tend to hold less traditional views about paying for dates and do not expect it to necessarily fall to men to do so.

Ending Couple Relationships

It is well known that levels of divorce are quite high, with estimates suggesting that about 50 percent of marriages are likely to end in divorce. The incidence of relationship dissolution is even higher among cohabiting couples. What role does money play in these patterns?

Simply put, the key scientific finding is the opposite of what encourages the formation of couple relationships and particularly marriage. Whereas good economic circumstances encourage marriage, precarious ones make couples vulnerable to break up and divorce. This linkage has been replicated time and time again. For example, scientists have consistently shown that the likelihood of divorce is inversely related to measures of economic well-being such as family income and educational attainment and positively related to economic hardship.

Thus, people who are economically advantaged are more likely to marry and more likely to stay

married. Consider the following estimates, though they draw on education rather than actual income, a measure that scientists often use if necessary to indirectly tap economic standing: 60 percent of the marriages of women without high school degrees will end, compared with only one third of the marriages of women with college degrees or more.

Relationship Quality

Why do disadvantaged economic circumstances translate into higher rates of couple dissolution? Scientists have made progress in unearthing the mechanisms behind such patterns, using both qualitative interviews and analyzing large surveys. The simple answer is that economic distress affects marital quality, with money being protective of couple relationships via interactional and psychological processes. For example, perceived economic hardship is negatively related to relationship quality, with low income and employment uncertainty associated with marital conflict and psychological distress. A study focusing on Black married couples finds that perceived economic adequacy—measured by sufficient income for food, clothing, medical care, leisure, and some extra money left at the end of the month—is connected to marital satisfaction. In addition, scientists have shown that economic pressures harm marital satisfaction by promoting hostility in interactions and decreasing supportive behavior of husbands toward wives.

Cohabiting couples are subject to the same stresses engendered by lack of money. A qualitative study suggests that financial constraints are a source of relationship conflict that affects relationship quality. Couples fight about money when money is tight and not enough to pay all the bills at the end of the month, stressing the relationship. Money, or rather lack thereof, is thus problematic for their relationships and the sense of a stable future, indicating a pathway by which financial difficulties decrease the chance of marriage. In the event that financial circumstances improve, cohabiters report that their relationships improve too.

The financial consequences of divorce differ by gender. Study after study has shown that divorced women fare poorly economically compared with divorced men. Their total incomes usually decline more than men's do when a marriage ends because men typically earn more than women do, and men's

postdivorce incomes are lower than divorced men's even after accounting for child support payments.

The greater instability of cohabiting than marital relationships is a growing focus of research. Additionally, now that cohabitation is such a common family form, scientists are increasingly asking the same questions about the break ups of cohabitations as they have asked about divorce. For example, researchers have long documented the economic consequences of divorce for men and women. Recently, researchers have asked the identical question about what happens economically when cohabiting couples break up: The upshot is similar to divorce. Compared with men, women experience a steeper decline in economic well-being, and have less money, when a cohabiting relationship ends.

Conclusion

A theme throughout this entry has been gender. Despite women's massive entrance into employment during the last several decades and attitudes about gender becoming increasingly egalitarian, when it comes to couples and money, things are not equal. Couples consider the male's economic situation more than the female's when it comes to thinking about and getting married, housework and childcare responsibilities still primarily fall to women, and the economic fallout from breaking up is worse for women than for men. In same-sex couples, the partner having more wealth or a traditionally masculine job wields more power and, not surprisingly, does less work in the home.

Although these may be choices that couples make, consciously or not, it is fascinating fodder to family scientists. In the last several decades, new family forms are being constructed, with decreasing cultural pressure to conform to a traditional or single model of family life. Couples are thus freer to write their own scripts for their relationships. And yet these scripts are still marked by gender difference.

Love, passion, marriage: One might not immediately think about money when contemplating the meaning of romantic relationships. But money is part of the picture all the same. It plays an important role in the formation of couple relationships, how couples divide their time in housework

and employment, how they organize their finances, and whether and why relationships fall apart.

People who are economically well-off are more likely to marry (although they now usually cohabit first), raise children within marriage, and stay married. Those at the economic margins may remain single, cohabit and perhaps cohabit again, have children in cohabitation or dating relationships, and are more vulnerable to the break up of their marriages and live-in relationships. Money can't buy happiness, but it does help to buy marriage, reduce housework for women, and keep divorce at bay.

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See also Biological Systems for Courtship, Mating, Reproduction, and Parenting; Compassionate Love; Falling in Love; Intimacy; Marriage, Expectations About; Romanticism

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MOOD AND RELATIONSHIPS

Moods are affective states that can be every bit as intense as emotions, but are not directed at a target and thus are often experienced in a more prolonged fashion. Emotions, on the other hand, are of shorter duration and largely depend on the onset and offset of a specific event. In some cases, moods may be the residual of an emotion, such as the lingering anxiety that persists even after the original threat has subsided. Affective states such as serenity or irritation are examples of "pure" moods.

Our moods constitute powerful influences on how people think about themselves and the outside world. As such, moods also shape perceptions of the processes in human relationships. At the same time, various relationship processes can lead to the experience of positive and negative moods. This entry discusses the reciprocal influence moods and close relationships exert on each other.

How Moods Shape Perceptions of Relationship Processes

Moods influence perceptions and evaluations of others in such a way that good moods lead people to perceive and evaluate others more favorably, whereas bad moods lead people to perceive and evaluate others less favorably. It is thus not surprising that moods influence judgments of the physical attractiveness of potential dating partners in predictable ways: Attractive and unattractive others alike look better when perceivers are in good moods and worse when they are in bad moods. Moreover, this congruency extends to the perception of behavior: When in a good mood, perceivers interpret the behavior of others more positively than when in a bad mood. For example, the same smile that is perceived as friendly when one is in a good mood may be considered awkward when one is in a bad mood.

The effects of moods on judgments of attractiveness are not entirely the result of mood congruency because moods can also have a direct influence on the behavior of others. When people are in a good mood, they tend to smile and disclose more; when in a bad mood, people may come across as more passive, uncomfortable, unfriendly, and perhaps even disgruntled and hostile. However, whereas expressing happiness can invite positive behaviors from others, it can also be met with distrust, especially by others who feel that they are somewhat undesirable.

Moods influence perceptions and judgments, especially of others who are somewhat atypical. Making sense of atypical others requires additional time and effort and allows judgments to be infused with positive and negative affect. For example, because couples tend to be well-matched in physical attractiveness, judgments about them can be made with ease because they meet people's expectations. However, judgments about couples who are mismatched in attractiveness require additional processing time and allow affect to come into play. Specifically, happy moods lead to particularly favorable impressions of couples that are mismatched in attractiveness whereas sad moods lead to particularly unfavorable impressions of mismatched couples.

Going beyond happiness and sadness, one of the most well-established findings in the social

psychological literature is that people are most attracted to others who are similar to oneself in their attitudes and beliefs. However, romantic moods brought on by interacting with an attractive other profoundly decrease the importance of attitude similarity. When people are in a romantic mood, they feel greater attraction to others who do not share their attitudes, leading to the conclusion that these others are perhaps more similar than it appears. Love appears to be blind, indeed.

In addition to shaping perceptions of others' attractiveness, moods influence a variety of processes in ongoing relationships. These processes include how close people feel to their partners, the extent to which they provide help and support that benefit their partners, perceptions that their needs are being met, and the explanations they generate for relationship conflicts.

Happy moods promote feelings of closeness and sad moods attenuate them. For that to occur, happiness and sadness do not have to result from processes within the relationship. Feelings of closeness increase or decrease even when the respective moods are brought on by events outside the relationship. For example, simply watching a movie with a happy ending may improve feelings of closeness to one's partner whereas watching a movie with a sad ending may decrease those feelings. However, not all sad endings may lead to a decrease in feelings of closeness. A sad mood brought on by thoughts of relationship loss (for example, thinking about losing a partner to death) can lead to increased rather than decreased feelings of closeness.

Providing support and help to a close other is both expected and commonplace in close relationships. Although good moods have been shown to lead to more helping in general, whether people are willing to help their romantic partners also depends on expectations that providing help is rewarding and is likely to lead to enhanced positive mood. At the same time, helping may become less likely when there is a chance that it might interfere with a good mood. Expectations of this sort are especially important in relationships characterized by compassionate love. In these types of relationships, behaviors such as providing verbal support are considered to be especially good examples of "compassionate love acts."

People are naturally concerned that their relationships meet their needs without paying too

much attention to whether their partner treats them fairly in such matters as the division of labor. However, negative moods elicited by relationship distress often compel people to more closely scrutinize the extent to which they are getting a fair shake than they would in the absence of a negative mood. Conducting such mood-induced scrutiny can transform the relationship from one that revolves around meeting each other's needs to one in which the partners instead focus on issues of fairness and equity. If this scrutiny suggests a lack of fairness, partners will be unhappy and the relationship will be marked by conflict.

It has been said that when it comes to conflicts in a relationship, the question is not whether a relationship will experience a conflict but, rather, *when* will a conflict occur and how it will be resolved. Resolution of conflict hinges importantly on how partners explain why it arose in the first place. Sad moods may shape these explanations in pessimistic ways. Specifically, when people feel sad, they are more apt to blame themselves for the conflict and are more likely to think that it was caused by global and nonspecific causes that are difficult to change, especially when the conflict is serious. As a result, sad moods lead to the expectation that there may be little that can be done to resolve the conflict. Happy moods, on the other hand, tend to have a somewhat counterintuitive effect. Although one might suspect happiness would make people more generous and accommodating, happy people are more likely to attribute the causes of a conflict to their partners or the situation than to themselves. Expressions of anger can lower the chances that a conflict will be resolved in a constructive way. This is especially the case when a person responds to a partner's expressions of anger in a reciprocal fashion. Such negative affect reciprocity generally contributes to an exacerbation of an existing conflict.

How Relationship Processes Affect Moods

Just as moods shape perceptions of a number of relationship processes from initial attraction to conflict resolution, what goes on in relationships also influences moods. Sharing positive experiences or simply telling one's partner about positive things that happened give rise to positive affect. Feelings

of closeness and relatedness, perceptions of fairness and equity, and receiving social support have also been causally linked to the experience of positive affect in close relationships. On the other hand, depressed moods often result from attachment anxiety, a perceived lack of intimacy, and relationship breakups. Anger and, to some extent, guilt can result from perceptions of inequity as well as the experience of conflict. Although these feelings may more appropriately be considered emotions directed at another or the relationship, they may leave an affective residue akin to moods that then can shape perceptions of just about everything, including other aspects of the relationship.

A sense of relatedness tends to produce good moods, as does a sense of autonomy and a sense of competence. In addition to being the foundation for good moods, a sense of relatedness, autonomy, and competence tends to provide the basis for, among other things, more positive sexual experiences that can lead to further mood enhancement. Happiness and contentment further result from the perception that one is being treated equitably in the relationship. However, people experience negative affect in the form of emotions and moods when they feel underbenefited in their relationships—that is, when they appear to receive less than expected on the basis of contributions to the relationship, while their partners seem to receive more relative to his or her contributions. Being overbenefited also may lead to the experience of negative affect, albeit to a lesser degree. People who feel that they are receiving more than they deserve given their contributions while their partners receive less often experience feelings of guilt.

As one might expect, receiving support from close others in times of distress generally results in improved moods. Interestingly, the extent to which support is received depends on the severity of the problem. When it is particularly stressful, people are more likely to ask for support directly and thus are more likely to receive particularly helpful forms of support. Under such circumstances, people experience improved moods along with a greater sense of being cared for by partners.

The nature of affective bonds with partners also has important consequences for moods. Securely attached individuals who feel that their partners can be trusted and provide a sense of comfort experience feelings of happiness and contentment.

Anxiously attached individuals who feel that their partners do not reciprocate their romantic feelings tend to experience anxiety and worry. Moreover, anxiously attached individuals are relatively poor at providing support. Although they sometimes provide more help than securely attached individuals do, their support is often inept or self-centered. As a result, they often deprive their partners of the emotional benefits of helpful and effective caregiving, which can lessen the emotional benefits they receive in return.

Attachment security in combination with confidence that one can effectively deal with negative moods also plays a role in dealing with conflict and romantic breakups. Securely attached individuals approach conflicts in a more constructive manner to the extent that they feel confident about their ability to manage their negative moods. Generalized expectancies for the regulation of negative moods also play a role when it comes to dealing with the emotional reactions to distressing events, such as a divorce or romantic breakup. Although most people experience depressed moods as a result of a breakup, individuals with a high degree of confidence in their ability to manage a depressed mood tend to employ more effective coping strategies and consequently experience less long-term depression than do individuals with relatively low negative mood regulation expectancies.

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See also Adult Attachment, Individual Differences; Closeness; Communal Relationships; Conflict Resolution; Emotion in Relationships; Loss; Negative Affect Reciprocity; Social Support and Health

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MORALITY AND RELATIONSHIPS

The nature of personal relationships depends to a considerable extent on the moral precepts and norms accepted by members of the community in question. This entry is not concerned with the particularities of what is considered right or wrong in a particular culture, for cultures differ, but with the way in which the nature of morality impinges on that of personal relationships. In the real world, morality is different from the set of rules that it appears to be at first sight, and this affects the nature of relationships.

What Is Morality?

Moral behavior usually implies behaving positively to others. It is easy to see how selfish and self-assertive behavior arose in the course of biological and cultural evolution, for individuals who looked after their own interests would succeed in competition with their peers, but how could prosocial behavior (that is, behavior that benefits others but not necessarily the self) to potential competitors have arisen? Because early humans lived in small groups that competed with each other, it would have been to individuals' interests to behave positively and cooperatively with members of their own group because they would be promoting the success of their own group in competition with others and thus their own access to resources. Thus, conflict between competition and cooperation with ingroup members is a necessary concomitant of living in groups. Moral rules maintain a balance between cooperation and competition. But there is no cause to behave prosocially to outsiders, and moral rules may not apply to them. Early in human history the ingroup was probably defined by familiarity but the boundary can be influenced in other ways.

Certain moral rules are probably common to all cultures. Variants of the so-called Golden Rule (Do-as-you-would-be-done-by) seem to be

recognized in all cultures: If it were not so, it is difficult to see how the culture could survive. It is useful to distinguish such moral “principles,” which are common to all cultures, from “precepts,” which have some degree of cultural specificity. Most precepts are compatible with the Golden Rule but apply to a specific type of situation. For instance, “Do not steal from your neighbor” is compatible with the Golden Rule, because one does not want to have one’s own possessions stolen, and is probably accepted in all cultures. But the Judeo-Christian precept not to covet your neighbor’s wife is clearly not applicable to any culture that does not recognize the institution of marriage: In some cultures, women are inseminated by a number of partners, and in other cultures, women have only temporary sexual liaisons. Children must be looked after, and it is seen as morally right that parents should look after their children unless other practices, such as adoption or fathering by the mother’s brother, have been institutionalized.

Precepts governing conduct in relationships differ between cultures and between relationships of different types within any one culture: uncles, for example, but not cousins, may expect respect. Precepts also change over time. For instance, a few decades ago in Western cultures, it was considered grossly improper for a couple to live together if they were not married. For a variety of reasons, including the ready availability of birth control, it became more common in the decades after World War II: As it became more common, it became more respectable, and as it became more respectable, it became more common. Now premarital cohabitation is even sometimes advocated as a wise precaution before full commitment. Such a dialectical relation between what people do and what they are supposed to do is probably the most important mechanism for both the maintenance of and change in the moral precepts governing personal relationships.

To be effective, moral precepts must be seen as absolute. But that they differ between societies and change over time suggests that they need not be. Are they followed consistently in real-life relationships? Whatever we feel about what should happen, it is evident that they are not. The potential for selfish assertiveness in every individual and the complexity of social life ensure this. Some conflict between competitive assertiveness and prosociality

is almost inevitable, and social life ensures that we can rarely be single-minded. Even the mother–child relationship involves conflict, the mother being caught between the child’s demands and her own needs. In that case, the conflict has a biological base, but the complexity of modern society makes conflict almost ubiquitous. For instance, exchange is basic to most human relationships: One partner performs a service for the other in expectation of fair reciprocation, perhaps at a later date. Such exchange provides an explanation of the source of many human virtues: Fair exchange demands honesty, trustworthiness, and so on, and one avoids an individual who is known to tell lies. But often the costs incurred and rewards received are not measurable in the same currency. The suitor brings his beloved a bunch of flowers but expects not flowers in exchange but recompense of another sort at a later date. So how can one assess whether an exchange is “fair”? More than that, what matters is not whether an exchange is actually fair but whether it is perceived to be fair by both parties. And there are a number of criteria for fairness—equality, equity (to each what he or she deserves), and social justice (to each according to his or her needs). The potential for disagreement is always present.

Another source of conflict concerns incompatibility between rights claimed and precepts held: Thus, teenagers may claim rights incompatible with parental morality, and inciting racial hatred may be seen as incompatible with freedom of expression. Wherever the partners in a relationship differ in religion or ethnicity, conflict is potentially present. For these and other reasons, moral conflict between alternative courses of action is frequent. One has to choose one course or the other, but may not be entirely happy with the propriety of one’s choice. Thus, we are faced with an anomaly: Moral rules must be seen as absolute but can change with time and situation and cannot always be followed. Too often, perhaps, we invent reasons why “just this time” we should break the rule.

Consistent prosociality is improbable also for functional reasons. An individual who behaved prosocially all the time would never succeed in competition with his or her fellows. Conversely, if competition between group members were unrestrained, the group would disintegrate or lose out in competition with other groups, and its members

would suffer. A balance is necessary between the numbers of prosocial and selfish individuals in the group and between selfishness and prosociality in each member. Here lies the major function of moral codes—to maintain an appropriate balance.

Why Do We Behave Morally?

Why do we behave morally? The moral principles, precepts, and norms are incorporated into the way in which we see ourselves, our self-concepts. One's self-concept includes matters of age, sex and occupation, and aspects of one's relationships, as well as whether one sees oneself as honest, kind, courteous, and so on. In most potentially conflictful situations, conscious deliberation is unnecessary: Moral precepts in one's self-concept ensure appropriate behavior "automatically." An individual who sees himself to behave improperly experiences guilt and a "bad conscience." A bad conscience results from a discrepancy between what one sees oneself to be doing and the precepts incorporated in the self-concept. Individuals try to maintain congruence between their self-images, how they see themselves to be behaving, and how they perceive others to perceive them. A person who sees himself as honest but is accused of dishonesty feels uncomfortable and may try to prove his honesty, or discredit his accuser, or claim that he was behaving honestly "really," perhaps inventing a story in justification. Whether or not he is deceiving himself, in these ways, he overcomes the guilt he may have felt. In any case, minor infringements of the moral code are condoned by others with such sentiments as "After all, we are all human" or "He is doing the best he can."

Of greater significance are cases where departures from the moral code are accepted by others without question. This can happen in several ways. As noted earlier, moral codes govern only behavior to members of the same group. Soldiers are permitted and commended for killing only members of the outgroup. War is, of course, an extreme case, but racial and religious prejudice are common, and nearly all the time we see ourselves as members of one group or another, and tend to favor its members over outsiders. We are more favorably disposed toward members of our own firm, school, team, or nation than we are to outsiders, the

boundaries of the ingroup being where we and our peers see them at the time. Relations with in-laws may be hampered by their unfamiliar values and customs.

Various devices are employed to emphasize or change the boundaries of the ingroup. In wartime, the whole panoply of nationalism emphasizes the differences between the ingroup and the enemy, and denigrates the latter. In the everyday, most groups advertise their identity and relationships with ingroup members may be marked by special methods of greeting, customs, dietary restrictions, and many other ways.

Duty to members of the ingroup may become an overriding concern. The soldier feels an irresistible duty to his buddy, comrades, platoon, or country. Duty to help a friend in need is a defining characteristic of friendship and can override personal needs and duty to nonfriends. In politics, duty to colleagues in the party causes politicians to vote against their consciences (condoned as "political necessity"). And chief executives have conflicting duties to shareholders, employees, customers, and suppliers and their families.

Again, moral rules apply only to those who are seen as "full persons." In many societies (and in our own until not so long ago), women were not seen as full persons. In some cultures, wives can be treated by their husbands in a manner unacceptable in our own: The institution of marriage has different rules from those that pertain in Western cultures. In many cultures, including our own, children are exploited as lacking full rights. And in our own, lawbreakers can be deprived of their liberty in prison: This is seen as an inevitable consequence of the institution of the law, which is necessary for the well-being of society.

As another possibility, rules may change with the situation. Thus, though bargaining in business may pervert the Golden Rule, operating not with *Do-as-you-would-be-done-by* but with *I'm-going-to-get-the-best-out-of-you-because-I-know-that-you-are-trying-your-best-to-get-what-you-can-out-of-me*. This is half-heartedly condoned as "business ethics" and approved of by economists as benefiting the consumer. One hopes the businessperson uses quite different precepts when getting home to his or her family in the evening.

However, gross prejudice against an out-group, gross manipulations of group boundaries, and

gross distortions of the precepts are constrained by the law. The rules can be bent, but not too far.

Thus, we have a series of anomalies. Moral precepts must be seen as absolutes, yet minor infringements can be dealt with by the actor without guilt. In particular contexts, infringements can be condoned or encouraged because they are advantageous to the society. But major infringements are constrained by the legal system. And the law itself must be seen as absolute, and yet can be changed as circumstances change. Thus, personal relationships must be conducted within a complex system of cultural rules. However, although rules can be bent, this in no way implies that breaking the rules is the best option for individuals and society.

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See also Ethical Issues in Relationship Research; Exchange Processes; Guilt and Shame; Trust

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MOTHER–CHILD RELATIONSHIPS IN ADOLESCENCE AND ADULTHOOD

Throughout adolescence and into adulthood, mothers' relationships with their children grow more distant. They spend less time together, and children turn to other social ties (e.g., friends, romantic partners) for many supportive and social functions. Nevertheless, mothers remain central in children's lives, and vice versa. Throughout life, the mother–child relationship is the primary intergenerational tie, ahead of relationships with fathers, in-laws, grandchildren, or grandparents. In studies examining

social networks, most mothers and adult children list the other party among their most important social ties. Yet, relationship qualities vary as the child progresses from puberty through the transition to adulthood and into midlife, when the mother grows older and approaches death. This entry highlights differences between children's relationships with mothers and fathers during adolescence and adulthood, examines changes in the nature of the mother–child relationship across this period, and reports some of the contextual factors contributing to differences between particular mother–child relationships.

Differences Between Relationships With Mothers Versus Fathers in Adolescence and Adulthood

In adolescence and adulthood, qualities of relationships between mothers and offspring are often compared with qualities of relationships between fathers and offspring. Relationships between mothers and their children tend to be both more positively and more negatively emotional than do relationships between fathers and children. Throughout adolescence, mothers report more intimacy, greater knowledge of their children's daily activities (or parental monitoring), and more frequent conflicts than do fathers. In early adulthood, offspring typically have more frequent contact with mothers than with fathers and are more likely to turn to mothers for advice and emotional support than to fathers. Likewise, throughout adulthood, offspring report stronger positive and negative feelings, or greater ambivalence, toward mothers than toward fathers. In late life, offspring are more likely to care for mothers when they suffer health declines of old age than when fathers suffer such declines.

Theorists postulate several reasons for the greater intensity of ties between mothers and children in adolescence and adulthood. Qualities of the relationship from early childhood may continue into adolescence, with mothers more emotionally connected to offspring than fathers. For example, during adolescence, mothers tend to be more involved in day-to-day parenting, providing more frequent opportunities for supportive

exchanges as well as conflicts with offspring. Similarly, mothers are “kinkeepers” for the family after offspring enter adulthood. Mothers are more likely to organize holiday gatherings that connect far-flung progeny. Mothers keep track of relatives’ whereabouts and convey such information to offspring. Further, scholars have argued that relationships between mothers and grown children are dyadic in nature, involving only the mother and each child, whereas relationships between fathers and grown children are typically triadic in nature, mediated via the mother. Thus, a typical interaction between grown children and married parents involves a telephone conversation between child and mother, with the mother putting the father on the phone or conveying the gist of the conversation to the father afterward.

Although relationships with mothers are more intense than are relationships with fathers throughout life, the mother–child relationship is not static from puberty to old age. Changes occur in this relationship across those decades.

Changes in Mother–Child Relationships Across Adolescence and Adulthood

Longitudinal data examining the relationship between mothers and children across adolescence are abundant. For example, the adolescence literature substantiates a linear decrease in maternal involvement with children from early to late adolescence. Mothers also typically share values with adolescent children and engage in conflicts regarding more minor issues such as curfews and hair styles. Longitudinal studies examining the mother–child relationship after adolescence are scant. A few longitudinal studies find continuity in qualities of this relationship from adolescence into young adulthood. For example, mothers and adolescents who have positive relationships at age 15 are likely to report similarly positive relationships at age 26. Such associations in relationship quality attenuate over larger gaps in time; thus, associations of relationship quality from age 11 to age 26 or from age 15 to 35 are less strong. Thus, continuities in relationship qualities are limited to relatively short periods, and relationships between mothers and children are characterized by fluctuations during adolescence and adulthood. It is

unclear when and why relationship qualities change, but several current ongoing national longitudinal studies (e.g., Add Health) involve mothers and children who are soon entering adulthood, and researchers will be able to contribute new findings to an understanding of how mothers and children’s relationships change over time.

Methodological innovations in the past decade have already contributed to an altered understanding of mother–child relationships in adolescence and adulthood. For example, through the 1990s, researchers believed that conflict between mothers and adolescents peaked in early adolescence around puberty. These studies included only the mother and one child per family, however, and assumed the family patterns generalize across families. Yet, approximately 80 to 90 percent of families have more than one child. Recently, scholars have focused on within-family patterns. These analyses have revealed that peak conflict with mother varies by birth order. For example, first-born children show a peak in conflict with their mother around age 13, whereas second-borns show such a peak at age 11. A within-family design reveals a different age for peak conflict than that obtained with between-family designs. Likewise, research using within-family designs in adulthood have revealed different patterns of maternal preference for which child should provide care in late life than between family designs suggested. Between-family designs suggest mothers select offspring based on gender and prefer daughters, but within-family designs document maternal preferences for a child who shares their values. In sum, studies relying on between-family designs hold inherent assumptions that the relationship with the mother is similar for all children in the family; studies that include more than one child in the family challenge such assumptions.

Although cross-sectional designs are limited by the inability to describe change, such studies do provide insights into how relationships between mothers and children may vary from adolescence into late life. For example, mothers generally report positive ties to offspring during the transition to adulthood (when offspring are approximately aged 18 to 25), particularly if those offspring have left home. Most U.S. offspring leave the maternal home in early adulthood to pursue an education, to enter the military or other employment, or for other reasons (although some return to their mother’s home

at later times). Mothers and offspring transition from daily contact involving shared living conditions to a relationship allowing latitude in frequency of contact, sharing of information, and regulation of emotional exchanges. Mothers of young adults tend to contrast their current positive view with conflict in the adolescent period. Likewise, a study of African-American females found that those who had left home in late adolescence reported less negative relationships with mothers than did similar-aged adolescents living at home or in transition to leaving home.

Maternal well-being also may be affected by their views of how their progeny turned out. Mothers seem to experience satisfaction offering advice and help to young adults who are following normative and successful trajectories, finding their way in education, relationships, and early work experiences. When offspring suffer problems with such normative transitions into adulthood, mothers tend to experience stress. Young adults also typically report strong ties to mothers and report benefiting from financial and emotional support. In sum, maternal involvement is generally strong and positive for both parties in young adulthood.

As mentioned previously, when mothers incur health declines in old age, offspring often become caregivers. Although providing care to the mother can generate role confusion and distress for both parties, such caregiving is so common, it constitutes an almost normative right-of-passage for middle-aged Americans. Thus, the adolescent, young adult, and maternal end-of-life stages of this relationship involve predictable and common events shared by many mothers and children. From young adulthood into midlife, relationship patterns are more difficult to capture because of the many life changes (e.g., marriage or divorce, birth of children and grandchildren, entering or leaving the workforce) that mothers and children experience across these decades.

Contextual Factors Shaping Mother–Child Relationships in Adolescence and Adulthood

Gender

Gender of offspring may play a key role in the nature of mother–child relationships in adolescence and adulthood. In adolescence, the

familial constellation sets a backdrop for whether maternal relationship qualities vary by child's gender. In mixed-sex sibling sets, dads are more involved with sons and moms are more involved with daughters. When siblings share gender (i.e., all girls or all boys) and in one-child families, mothers and fathers may show a pattern of involvement with adolescent children based on other features of their tie, such as shared interests.

Nonetheless, research reveals that the mother–daughter relationship in adolescence may be particularly intense. Mother–daughter dyads generally involve higher levels of intimacy, sharing, and confiding than do dyads involving fathers or sons. The level of conflict in the mother–daughter dyad also is more intense throughout adolescence than in dyads involving sons or fathers. Moreover, mothers and daughters are more likely to resolve those conflicts via compromise than are dyads involving fathers or sons.

The mother–daughter tie remains the most intense intergenerational ties in time, intimacy, and investment throughout adulthood. Feminist scholars have suggested that daughters do not individuate from their mothers in young adulthood (as sons do) because of women's shared investment in relationships. Throughout adulthood, in comparison with sons, daughters report more frequent contact with mothers, greater feelings of intimacy, and more tensions. Mothers and daughters share an investment in family and are likely to be involved in tasks that bring the family together. Middle-aged daughters and their mothers describe shared enjoyment of get-togethers involving the daughters' children, spouse, or siblings. Daughters also are more likely to take on hands-on caregiving of elderly mothers than are sons. Before mothers require such care, however, recent studies report fewer gender differences between sons and daughters in adulthood than were reported in the studies conducted in the late 20th century. That is, sons have increased contact with their mothers, greater intimacy, and are also more involved in decisions regarding health care of mothers. The increased involvement of sons may reflect greater flexibility in gender roles and men's greater involvement in family life observed among the baby boomers and their progeny.

Marital Status

Maternal marital status also may shape relationships between mothers and children in adolescence and adulthood. When mothers are not married (i.e., never married, divorced, widowed), their offspring are typically their most important social ties and their relationships may intensify. For example, relationships between adolescents and nonmarried mothers may grow more intense rather than more distant throughout adolescence. But if the mother remarries during this period, the relationship tends to grow more distant. Likewise, widowed mothers in late life place greater demands on offspring than do married mothers. Indeed, widowhood is the single factor that best explains why offspring are more likely to care for frail mothers than for frail fathers; fathers are more likely to have a living spouse who provides care.

Offspring marital status is also linked to qualities of the tie to mother in adulthood, but the pattern of findings is complex. Some studies find the relationship grows closer upon offspring marriage, other studies find that it grows more distant, and still other studies find no changes. These findings suggest that marriage affects different mother–offspring relationships in diverse ways. This lack of clarity may reflect other factors that contribute to variability in the tie, such as geographic distance and cultural values or other individual or relationship differences.

Geographic Distance

Geographic distance between mother and grown child is the structural factor that most clearly determines frequency of contact and exchanges of support. Approximately half of U.S. offspring reside within 50 miles of their mothers, allowing face-to-face visits and exchanges of assistance. Residence far from mother does not vary by offspring gender but, rather, seems to reflect economic circumstances such as educational opportunities, jobs, or military service.

Culture and Ethnicity

Finally, culture and ethnicity shape qualities of relationships between children and mothers in adolescence and adulthood. For example, in Asian

families, adolescents report considerably less conflict with mothers than in U.S. families. In African-American families, conflict patterns are similar to those observed in European-American families. Conflict is relatively frequent, low in intensity, and occurs over mundane issues. Yet, studies of African-American mothers also find that they experience conflicting expectations for autonomy and closeness with daughters, stemming from the hope that their daughters will be self-reliant but remain loyal and attached to family in adulthood. In families that have recently immigrated to the United States, mothers and adolescents experience greater conflict if the offspring is more acculturated to the United States than the mother is. Cultural factors interact with other structural factors as well. In farm families, relationships between sons and fathers may be stronger than relationships between daughters and mothers because of the patrilineal pattern of work and inheritance. Likewise, the implications of geographic distance for the relationship may be associated with each party's beliefs about filial obligation or familialism.

In sum, although relationships between mothers and offspring vary across adolescence and adulthood, relationships between mothers and children tend to remain strong during this period. Indeed, the mother–child tie remains dominant throughout life.

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See also Father–Child Relationships; Intergenerational Family Relationships; Kinkeeping; Mother–Child Relationships in Early Childhood; Parenting

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MOTHER–CHILD RELATIONSHIPS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD

The mother–child relationship is a unique entity. The relationship starts before the infant is born and normally exists even after the death of either partner by remaining in the mind of the living partner. This long-lasting relationship provides the context for learning what it is to be a human being. The relationship will play a substantial role in determining the child's social and emotional development. For the mother, the relationship will provide a lasting source of emotional connection and an opportunity to connect with the future. The mother–child early relationship, years 0 to 5, lays the foundation for the evolution of the sense of contributing to society for the mother and the intergenerational transmission of beliefs and values for both mother and child. The relationship is the context for learning, regulation of behavior, and other relationships. Whether positive or negative, most adult-age children can identify the character of their relationship with their mother and recall the way it influenced their lives.

Although the early role of the mother is mainly protective until the age the child can both walk and talk, the mother takes on a role of promoting the child's exploration while providing safety as necessary. This entry discusses the fundamental components of the early child–mother relationship, including the introduction of Attachment Theory, sensitivity to developmental challenges for the child, and monitoring of the child's general course.

History and Importance of the Relationship

Several components of a relationship are important for understanding the mother–child relationship.

First, the relationship exists based on the past, present, and future. An important feature is the mother's past history of relationships and well-being. Attachment Theory proposes that when caregivers, usually the mother, respond supportively to their child's signs of distress (fussiness, crying, hunger), children develop an expectation or trust that a specific person can assess their needs and be depended on to provide comfort, food, or stimulation. This expectation is referred to as *secure attachment*. Adults who have secure attachment histories and only moderate life stress bring to the parent–child relationship the ability to be emotionally available to the fetus and child. A mother needs to prepare a place in her family or friend network for the new child; she needs to imagine herself as the mother with all the roles that involve caring for the child. When a mother has had a history of poor (insecure) relationships with her own parents, particularly her mother, she has less of a foundation for making herself available to the child. As David Winnicott declared in the 1940s, there is no such thing as an infant, only an infant and a caregiver.

Attachment Theory: Central to the Relationship

Attachment Theory as presented by John Bowlby is the basis for understanding both the biological and psychological significance of the mother–infant relationship, in which there is total dependence on one member of the dyad. The infant's survival and well-being depend on being cared for by a caregiver. In the beginning, care provided in a sensitive manner requires the caregiver or mother's preoccupation with the dependent infant.

In infancy, the mother controls the interaction and should respond in ways that provide consistency, predictability, and emotional availability. The mother needs to monitor the infant's cues and behaviors and to gradually follow the child's lead in the interaction. Managing the young infant's distress is a primary aspect of the mother–child relationship because the infant has not matured enough to get out of the highly distressed (crying) state. The infant needs external calming to bring his state down to either an awake responsive level or to a sleep state. When his caregiver responds to his distress, the baby is also learning to trust his

environment, and if the mother is indeed responsive, the baby is likely to develop a sense of secure attachment through the repeated responsiveness of the mother or caregiver.

During this early time, the mother is the mediator of the child's world. Psychologically during the pregnancy and for the first months, the mother and baby are one and what pleases the baby pleases the mother. At around 6 month of age, the infant begins the discovery of his or her physical self; fascination with hands and feet keep a young baby's undivided attention. The mother–child relationship begins to have more of a dyadic balance as the child's sense of self emerges.

A condition of establishing the mother–child relationship is the woman's own developmental level. A strong mother–child relationship is best achieved when the woman is emotionally ready to put aside her own needs and be available to attend to another's need. A mother who has experienced an emotionally supportive, trusting relationship has an advantage. Generally, the early mother–child relationship greatly contributes to attachment security or insecurity; however, evidence also shows a type of “earned security” where an individual can learn the lesson of trusting another person through an adult relationship or therapy. Attachment Theory predicts that once security has been achieved with one person, usually the mother, the concept of trusting another can be generalized to new relationships. The supportive care of women during their pregnancy, labor, delivery, and early postpartum by a trustworthy adult will contribute to promoting “good enough mothering” and a positive mother–child relationship, especially for women whose early relationship history did not foster the capacity for trusting others.

Evidence indicates that when mothers work full time during the baby's first year, they may demonstrate less sensitivity to the child. The rationale for why full-time working mothers may be on average less sensitive is related to the time they have with the infant; hours spent watching and responding to the infant are fewer, and therefore, the mother has less of a chance to observe and know her child. When a woman has a history of undependable relationships, little capacity to trust others, and many life stressors, this negative life experience renders her less able to make room for the baby in her emotions. Responsive mothering takes practice; this

acquaintance process takes time, and the mother's capacity to take in the baby's needs is primary.

Being emotionally available to the child means having a capacity for monitoring the child. Louis Sanders proposed a developmental model of the early mother–child relationship that has four distinct stages in the early months of life. The first two stages are the launching pad. The first stage (birth to 3 months) involves homeostasis. The mother is sensitive to the expressions of the baby's need for food, sleep, or activity and provides contingent caregiving acts to meet those demands. Sanders called the second stage (4–8 months) the social-emotional period. During this time, the infant is more responsive to the mother's voice and face and smiles when eye-to-eye contact is made. The foundation for future interaction is set at this time, and the infant becomes social and responsive to the caregiver. The signaling of need by the infant or mother and the dyadic responses are all carefully worked out during caregiving times when the baby is awake during such events as feeding, bathing, and diaper changes.

An important part of the early relationship between the mother and child creates the social-emotional relationship in which both the mother and child reciprocally influence the behavior of the other in a way that is potentially rewarding for each of them. Arnold Sameroff has called this *process transaction* in contrast to interaction, where the behavior of each transforms the response of the other so that both are changed. During the process of interaction, the dyad—the caregiver and the infant—learn to adapt, modify, and change their behaviors in response to each other. The baby's positive emotional responses reward mothering acts, but if the baby is irritable and negative or nonresponsive, the baby's emotional responses make mothering more difficult. For example, it has been demonstrated that when infants cry frequently, mothers tend to become more distant, such as trying to comfort the child with verbal responses from across the room.

Developmental Changes in the Relationship

Initially, the child needs hands-on mothering along with the emotional connection to survive, where in time the relationship prepares the child for becoming

a functional, responsible, socially appropriate adult. The mother–child relationship changes over time framed by the tasks of the developing child. In the early months, the mother–child relationship is largely determined by the mother. For example, the child largely depends in infancy on the adult caregiver for basic care, for temporal regularity, and for decision making, whereas in the preschool ages, the child begins to become independent of the primary caregiver while sustaining a mental model that sustains them during long periods of separation. By early school years, the child gains mastery and learns healthy competition but still needs structure, limits, and rules. During the school-age years, the child explores the outside world and develops a strong sense of self. By the years 8 through 12, the child is developing a sense of self that involves mastery, reliance, control, esteem, and emotional literacy. Children play an increasing role in decision making, so by preteens they are making some of their own decisions and accepting the consequences for them by adolescence.

Mary Ainsworth's research with the Strange Situation demonstrated how the behaviors of young children differed in secure versus insecure attachment patterns, and similar findings have recently been demonstrated in older children. After identifying from a questionnaire whether the school-age child had a secure or insecure attachment, the two groups of children were given a series of photographs to view. Some photos were familiar, such as pictures of their mothers, and some were new or novel. The researchers found that secure versus insecure children processed information differently; the secure children attend more to novelty than the insecure children. Secure attachment frees the child to move on to the next landmark of development, exploration, and learning. From the early relationship, the child develops a secure "mental map" of the relationship. If the child experiences the relationship as positive, responsive, and nonintrusive, a mental template is formed that is generalized beyond the mother–child relationship. The child brings this attachment schema of feeling secure or not into new developmental challenges. The resulting mental template can provide direction and support even without the physical presence of the mother. Evidence suggests the internal working model of self and others, based on the adolescent and mother's relationship,

is associated with the adolescent emerging as an emotionally healthy adult.

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See also Adult Attachment Interview; Attachment Theory; Family Relationships in Childhood; Mother–Child Relationship in Adolescence and Adulthood; Strange Situation

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MOTIVATION AND RELATIONSHIPS

Motivation refers to the reason or reasons why people behave and are moved to action. Human

intention, will, and desire—all words used to capture motivation—have fascinated psychologists since the field of psychology began. At the heart of both research and theory on motivation is the idea that humans have an intrinsic need for social connection and relatedness. The desire for human connection is so strong that psychologists Roy Baumeister and Mark Leary have posited that humans have a fundamental “need to belong,” a need that is found in all cultures. Infants show an uncanny readiness to seek out and bond with other people, and adults continue to connect with close others throughout the life span. When asked about their life goals, most people list happy and fulfilling social relationships as most important, and those who neglect to place social needs among their top life goals tend to be less happy and healthy.

In the past several decades, psychology and related fields have witnessed considerable gains in understanding the central role of relationships in human motivation. Researchers have conducted many studies that span different kinds of relationships from parent–child relationships to romantic relationships, encompass different phases of relationships from newly developing dating relationships to long-term marriages, and include people at different developmental stages from infancy to old age. This entry examines the factors that influence the motivation for relationships, highlights several specific motives studied by psychologists, presents two prominent classification systems for social motives, discusses the ways in which close others can influence and shape our motives, highlights important changes in social motives across the life span, and reviews different types of methods and measures that researchers use to study motivation in human relationships.

Where Does the Motivation for Human Relationships Come From?

The human desire and need for connection has deep evolutionary roots and is present from the moment of birth. John Bowlby proposed that infants are born with an innate system called the “attachment behavioral system” that motivates them to seek proximity to caregivers in times of need. This system protects human beings of all

ages from threats, but is most directly and transparently observable during infancy. A key idea from Bowlby’s theory is that infants use their caregivers as a secure base: Only when infants are confident and secure that their caregivers will be there for them in times of threat or need can they act on their motivation to explore and learn about the world. The desire to form and maintain social bonds has both survival and reproductive benefits. Groups can share food, provide mates, and help care for offspring. Cues that indicate possible harm, such as illness, danger, nightfall, and disaster, seem to increase the need to be with others, underscoring the protective value of group membership. In the human evolutionary past, people who formed attachments were more likely to reproduce than were those who failed to form them, and long-term relationships increased the chances that offspring would reach maturity and reproduce in turn.

Other important influences on the human need for connection are not rooted in evolution. For example, sociocultural norms dictate that “normal” people ultimately settle down with a partner and have children, whereas single or childless people are seen as abnormal. People internalize these pressures, likely influencing their desire to find lifelong partners and raise families. There are also proximal factors based on an individual’s current social and cultural environment that influence the motivation to form relationships with romantic partners or friends. For example, a teenage boy who just moved to a new town may befriend the first boy whom he meets to cope with his sense of loneliness, but a popular girl in the same school may be choosier about the types of friends whom she lets into her inner circle as her affiliation needs have already been met.

What Kinds of Motives Do Psychologists Study?

Two particularly important social motives have been studied across a variety of relationship contexts. Dan McAdams defines the *intimacy motive* as a preference for close, warm, and communicative experiences with others, whereas the *power motive* is defined as the preference to feel strong and have influence over others. In a series of studies

of close friendships, people with high intimacy motivation reported interacting with and disclosing more to their friends, better listening skills, and more concern for their friends' well-being. In contrast, people with high power motivation reported trying to take charge of situations with their friends, make plans, and persuade others.

Two other motives studied by psychologists involve people's desires to maintain particular psychological states. *Self-enhancement motives* refer to people's desires to maintain positive views of themselves. When people are guided by self-enhancement motives, they are motivated to interact with other people who make them feel good about themselves, reflecting their need to be valued and admired by others. In the realm of interpersonal relationships, research has shown that people are more satisfied with their dating and marital relationships when their partners hold positive views of their qualities and traits. *Self-verification motives*, however, refer to people's desires to confirm and sustain their existing views of themselves. When people are guided by self-verification motives, they are motivated to interact with other people who confirm their self-concepts, reflecting their needs for consistency. For example, research has also shown that in marriages, people are more committed to spouses whose views of them are consistent with their own self-concepts, even when those self-concepts are negative. Both self-enhancement and self-verification motives likely guide people's behaviors in close relationships, and people may be guided by different motives in different situations or with different interaction partners.

How Do Researchers Classify Social Motives?

People pursue many different kinds of motives and goals in their social interactions. For example, people seek out close others to alleviate boredom, to obtain information about the world, to build their social networks, or to boost their own self-esteem, just to name a few. One useful distinction is whether a person acts to obtain positive outcomes (*approach motives*) or to avoid negative outcomes (*avoidance motives*). In the social domain, people can pursue approach motives such as to obtain intimacy, have fun, or grow as a person, or

they can pursue avoidance motives such as to avoid conflict, rejection, boredom, or loneliness. For example, at a party in her new college dorm, a student with strong approach social motives may focus on meeting new people and having a good time, whereas a student with strong avoidance social motives may spend his time monitoring his actions and focusing on ways to avoid rejection. As discussed by Shelly Gable, the distinction between approach and avoidance social motives has been used to understand a variety of topics in close relationships including sacrifice, sexuality, and relationship commitment. Across all these topics, approach motives generally lead to better social outcomes than do avoidance motives. For example, on days when people make sacrifices for a romantic partner for approach motives (such as to connect with or please their partners), they experience more excitement, enthusiasm, and overall relationship satisfaction. But, on days when they sacrifice for avoidance motives (such as to avoid the partner's anger or disappointment), they experience more guilt, hostility, and relationship conflict.

Another useful distinction is whether a person is motivated to perform a behavior that is a chosen and satisfying end in itself (*intrinsic motives*) or is motivated to perform a behavior for instrumental purposes or as the means to another end (*extrinsic motives*). For example, a man who has intrinsic motives may put energy into maintaining his marriage because he shares fun and pleasurable times with his partner, whereas a man with extrinsic motives may do so because he feels obligated to reciprocate the home-cooked meals and comfortable lifestyle his wife provides. Research by Edward Deci and Richard Ryan has shown that couples who are intrinsically motivated to remain in their relationships report greater feelings of love and faith in their relationships than do couples who are extrinsically motivated.

How Do Other People Influence and Shape Our Motives?

People do not make decisions about how to act in social situations in a vacuum. Interaction partners have a powerful influence on the choices that people make and the motives that guide behavior. An important influence on motivation in social

situations concerns the nature of the relationship between the interaction partners. One important distinction made by Margaret Clark and Judson Mills is between *communal relationships* (e.g., most typically, these are relationships with friends, family members, and romantic partners) and *exchange relationships* (e.g., most typically, these are relationships with strangers, acquaintances, and business partners). In communal relationships, people generally help another person out of a genuine concern and sense of responsibility for that person's welfare, whereas in exchange relationships, people tend to help another person to the extent that he or she has already helped them in the past or if they expect to receive help in the future. In short, the motivation to help other people depends largely on the nature of the relationship between interaction partners.

In romantic relationships in particular, partners have particularly strong influences on one another's motives. Because the things that affect one partner often affect the other, romantic partners are especially likely to consider each other's needs and concerns when making behavioral choices. For example, a woman may decide to sacrifice her girls' night out on the town to stay home and care for her sick husband. Or, a man may decide to forgive his girlfriend for making a nasty remark in front of his friends because the long-term peace and happiness of his relationship is his primary goal. When people make decisions such as these, they enact what Harold Kelley and John Thibaut referred to as a *transformation of motivation*, in which their own self-interested desires are replaced by motives that consider the need to coordinate with their partner's wishes and priorities and focus on the long-term future of their relationships. In short, people's social motives can be shaped both by their partners and by their own broader concerns about their relationship.

How Do Social Motives Change Over the Life Span?

Individuals shift their priorities and goals over the life course, including their goals that concern social interactions. According to Laura Carstensen, two central social motives follow different developmental trajectories. One essential human motive

is to seek information about the self and the social world (*the knowledge trajectory*). The fact that infants and children learn so much in the first few years of life reflects the readiness at birth for a great deal of social learning. The knowledge trajectory starts high during the early years of life and declines gradually over the life course as people accrue more knowledge and their futures grow shorter. The second class of human motives is emotional in nature and includes such motives as the desire to feel good, establish intimacy, and verify the self (*the emotion trajectory*). The emotion trajectory is highest during infancy and early childhood when emotional trust and relatedness are initially established, and then rises again in old age when future-oriented strivings are less relevant. Although both of these social motives operate throughout life, with age or other transitions such as moving from one place to another, knowledge-focused motives lose their importance and emotion-focused motives gain importance. As a result, the types of social partners that people choose and the dynamics of social interactions change in fundamental ways. For example, whereas a young child may try out different social behaviors to learn about himself and his role in the social world around him (e.g., by asking his mother many questions), an elderly woman may be more focused on connecting to and maintaining intimacy with those around her (e.g., by writing letters and placing phone calls to close friends).

How Do Researchers Study Motivation in Relationships?

Researchers use many different types of methods to study motivation in human relationships. One type of research involves the use of *cross-sectional surveys*, in which participants report on their social motives at one point in time. Gable has asked participants, at one point in time, to rate their motives in their dating relationships during an upcoming academic quarter. For example, participants indicate the extent to which they intend to try to "deepen my relationship with my romantic partner" (to assess approach social motives) and "avoid conflicts and disagreements with my romantic partner" (to assess avoidance social motives). A

second type of research involves the use of *daily experience surveys*, in which participants report on their social motives repeatedly over a fixed period of time (e.g., everyday for 14 consecutive days). Researchers using these methods are particularly interested in how people's social motives may change from one day to the next depending on variations in the social situation (e.g., how much conflict they experience on a particular day). A third type of research involves the use of *longitudinal surveys*, in which participants are tracked over a period ranging from several weeks to many years. For example, Carstensen has looked at how the same people pursue different kinds of social motives at different points in the life course.

The measures that people use to assess social motives also vary. One type includes *open-ended measures*, in which participants are asked to write or talk about the types of motives that they pursue in their social interactions. From their responses, researchers create coding schemes to distill the large number of responses into a smaller number of meaningful themes, for example themes that focus on intrinsic or extrinsic motives. A second type includes *close-ended measures*, in which participants indicate the extent of their agreement with a list of goals determined ahead of time by the researchers themselves. For example, M. Lynne Cooper and her colleagues developed a close-ended measure of sexual goals, asking participants to indicate the extent to which they engage in sex for approach goals (e.g., "I have sex to feel emotionally close to my partner") and avoidance goals (e.g., "I have sex because I don't want my partner to be angry with me"). A third type of measure includes *implicit measures* of social motives, based on the idea that people may not always have conscious access to their own motives. For example, in some studies using implicit measures, participants look at ambiguous pictures and respond to a set of statements by indicating how they might think or feel in the situation depicted in each picture (e.g., a man taking a test or a woman attending a party).

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See also Approach and Avoidance Orientations; Attachment Theory; Belonging, Need for; Goals in Relationships; Life-Span Development and Relationships; Quantitative Methods in Relationship Research; Self-Verification

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MULTIGENERATIONAL HOUSEHOLDS

The relationship of families to housing and of housing to family dynamics has interested many social scientists. The concept of multigenerational households has been used in at least two different ways. One is three or more generations in one housing unit or compound or several generations in close proximity. The second meaning includes, as is said in Asian countries, "close enough that the soup doesn't get cold" in transit; in Europe, living in apartments or houses in the same complex; in Central and South America, in the neighborhood, in apartments, and on the farm in a compound. In the United States, living within 1 hour or 100 miles of travel is seen as within easy access for family activities and caregiving. Living in the same dwelling conveys a much closer interaction and shared living, although when there is sufficient wealth many families create areas of privacy and independence within the dwelling. Demographers have been impressed with the decline of multigenerational households as young people have more opportunities. Housing and living arrangements for families and individuals reflect values, available incomes, housing policy, lifestyle choices, and regional and rural-urban opportunities and socioeconomic status. U.S. housing choices are also based on idealization of rural life, seen in an attraction for the suburbs of cities, rather than the central cities. Many fewer U.S. families aspire to live in the big cities than do those in Europe or the developing world. This entry discusses multigenerational households and reviews the history; current practices both in the United States and other countries; and the demographic, social, and economic forces affecting these practices now and in the near future.

Prevalence of Multigenerational Households

Historically, multigenerational households have been associated with family businesses, especially farming and shopkeeping, and current multigenerational households are often associated with shared business or vocational interests. Historians have argued about whether multigenerational households were ever dominant in Western society, with a general consensus that households

often contained boarders and apprentices, but that coresidence was limited to certain periods of life such as early marriage and widowhood. Today, there is a strong preference for relatively healthy elders to live independently and not reside with their children. Coresidence between adult children and their elderly parents has become less common over the decades. Currently the expansion of household structures has been in many more single people living alone. With the increase in longevity, determinants such as health problems, death of former caregivers, financial hardship of both the old and the young, and loneliness, there may be a renewed need for coresidence. When there are few supports for the elderly family care, transfers or sharing of property may encourage such shared living arrangements. The underlying inheritance and in vivo transfers of material resources including housing and other financial instruments may support some members sharing a common residence or location and providing care and support across the generations, especially if supported in the legal structure.

Tradition of Multigenerational Households

The traditional family referred to in much of the multigenerational household literature has been the stem family that has one adult child and one side of the parental generation coresiding and often working together. In many places, the stem family includes the oldest son and his nuclear family living with his parents. In China, the multigenerational house design was usually a single or double hollow square courtyard that provided some separation among the families living there and most commonly included the eldest son's family and any younger or unmarried siblings of his. In Asia in general, the adult children's sense of moral obligation to care for their parents stems from their deep respect and gratitude. There is a belief that parents deserve to be cared for in their elder years by their children as a form of repayment. This filial piety combined with reciprocal affection facilitates the inner workings of the family support system allowing care and security for the elderly parent.

In Central and South America urban areas, having apartments and compounds adjacent or close is

relatively easy, and families may build houses that have separate quarters but connecting doors and access. In small rural communities, the separation among households may amount to little, and people come and go with little notice. In Brazil's big urban centers, large extended families often live within easy walking distance in apartments frequently with the elderly persons close or adjacent to one of the younger adult children. Entertainment may happen in someone's large apartment, but more frequently meeting at a local restaurant brings everyone together.

In Europe, families and close friends often live in the same neighborhood or rural community and may choose to buy vacation homes or trailer park sites in the same place for vacation. The Druze in Israel often work in construction, the military, or education, but maintain a large home in their villages that can accommodate several related families in adjacent structures or within the structures. Some of the houses are always under construction to meet new needs. In Australia, promoting granny flats, which are additions to single-family housing through remodeling, and free-standing units to share the backyard has appealed to some families but has not been as well accepted as hoped by those urban planners who saw promise in such individual solutions to aging care. In the United States, some subcultures such as the Amish and recent immigrants usually try to keep multigenerational households. The Amish build smaller quarters for the grandparents onto farmhouses. The recent influx of immigrants both in North America and Europe suggests many prefer or depend on coresidential living. Some communities within or near big urban areas have houses or apartments that can accommodate larger families and immigrants and are often remodeled to accommodate complex families or individuals who are close family friends or distant relatives sent to them by their families in the home country.

Current Issues in Multigenerational Households

Changing housing markets also make available new options. As middle-class families have bought larger and larger houses, the ability to provide short-term housing for adult children and grandchildren becomes easier. The young adult who a

generation ago would have been unhappy without his or her own apartment now may move to a suite with bath at home after college and be quite content. Similarly, the divorced mother and her children may seek support by returning home, at least temporarily. In addition, some parents find their houses full of their grown children's possessions when they are moving to follow work and mobility opportunities. Doubling up of both generations and siblings happens because of economic or mobility pressures. Though perhaps not the preferred living arrangement, housing shortages and high-cost housing create situations in which shared living arrangements are practical. There is a lingering concern from the long-term assumptions that nuclear households reflect appropriate independence and success that question such practical multigenerational households. In the United States, political rhetoric and programs to promote single home ownership exist even for the poor. Unemployment, which threatens families with loss of their house, may result in moving in with kin or friends. In 2008, the vast unraveling of the mortgage and realty markets may make doubling up a necessity.

Among some minority groups, for example African Americans, such events as family reunions, sending children to their grandmothers for summer vacations, and practices such as aunts being important caregivers in times of stress continue multigenerational ties even without regular coresidence. Although these practices are not limited to minority groups, they are especially useful in keeping family ties and helping networks.

Multigenerational living arrangements depend on infrastructure and community planning. In the United States, local zoning laws frequently isolate different types of housing, and owner-occupied single-family homes predominate. Active older adult communities often prohibit young or even teenage children from staying with their relatives for more than short visits. Elderly adults who chose these communities for their amenities may have a difficult time unwinding these financial arrangements when they are needed to care for their grandchildren over long-time commitment.

In Russia, families lived together because few housing choices were available and pooling of resources was useful. Now many more housing

units have come on the market in cities and those with the means tend to live in nuclear family units, but still try to be close for visiting. Economic and cultural conditions in Europe have continued to produce more multigenerational households in the south of Europe and few in the northern countries. Among the wealthy and upper middle class, having more than one home is a strategy that allows some multigenerational contact without living together full time. Also the ability to create nursing home environments within a household may allow elders to be at home longer or to share a home during the highest needs for care.

Functions and Stresses of Multigenerational Households

Multigenerational households continue to serve important functions, particularly at resource-scarce times or when wealth is available to make them comfortable and convenient. These households make the flow of care and intergenerational transfers of goods, services, and monetary benefices relatively simple. However, interactions within these households may be more complicated, especially when generations have different outlooks or conflicts that are not easily resolved. With the continual pattern of change in family structure, it is critical to closely examine multigenerational households, intergenerational bonds, and family relations from a theoretical perspective. Multigenerational living arrangements can be complex, with intense accumulation of demands placed on its members and family discourse. Successful multigenerational relationships are built upon mutuality and shared respect. Changing the expectations for the essentially adult dynamics of parents and their grown children is not automatic and requires some re-socialization of both parties to the relationship. Exploitation or violence against elders may be a problem in multigenerational households, especially when there are limited resources or long-term conflicts. Solidarity within a multigenerational household allows families to give each other feedback and exchange help and support, although they may also experience conflict and ambivalence.

Grandparent-Headed Multigenerational Households Today

Recently, more attention has been placed on the grandparents' role within these multigenerational households, after the U.S. Census in 2000 revealed a large number of households in which grandchildren were coresident with grandparents, often without parents. Grandparents who are coresident with their grandchildren are more likely to give both routine and extended care to their grandchildren. They often give more help to younger mothers and are important in minority and low-income households. Having a living grandparent (especially a grandmother) is often noted as a protective factor for children at risk.

In sub-Saharan Africa, the AIDS epidemic has left children with none but their grandparents or other older relatives or neighbors to care for them. These skip-generation households might not seem to be what is usually meant by multigenerational households, but as these families try to support themselves and care for each other, they are key to hopes for survival in Africa. In Kenya and South Africa, grandmothers and older female relatives have primarily covered the care and sponsorship of these orphans. Young children may also care for frail elderly relatives who no longer have living adult relatives. The few nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and state-sponsored orphanages are not able to meet the growing needs for caregiving. In villages, many extra huts are available and not everyone may share the same space, but the few elders try to care for the children and to grow enough food to feed them, often using limited energies and strength with hoe-based gardening.

Conclusion

Multigenerational households are still important for addressing intergenerational relationships and caregiving where resources in the larger society are less dependable and when stressful events require more resources. Proximity is a predictor of helping and caring and for the coresidents the opportunity is real. Both caring for elders and elders caring for grandchildren and the adult caring for disabled or troubled child are simplified

with coresidence in multigenerational households or near proximity of households.

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See also Caregiving Across the Life Span; Extended Families; Families, Definitions and Typologies; Intergenerational Family Relationships; Kin Relationships; Reciprocity, Norm of; Resource Theory

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MUTUAL CYCLICAL GROWTH

Jennifer Wieselquist and her colleagues developed a model of *mutual cyclical growth* to explain the across-partner associations among commitment, prorelationship behavior, and partner trust. The model combines concepts identified by Caryl Rusbult and her colleagues in their work on commitment with concepts identified by John Holmes and his colleagues in their work on trust. These analyses are complementary, in that both models rest on the principles of Interdependence Theory. This entry reviews the mutual cyclical growth model, explaining an important aspect of relationship regulation—how close partners influence one another during extended involvement, with each person's motives and behaviors in turn affecting the other's motives and behaviors. Key variables in the model are dependence, commitment, prorelationship behavior, and trust.

Dependence, Commitment, and Prorelationship Behaviors

According to Rusbult's investment model, people develop increasing *dependence* on their relationships as a function of (a) high *satisfaction level*—to the extent that their most important needs are gratified in the relationship (e.g., companionship, security, sexuality); (b) poor *quality of alternatives*—to the extent that their most important needs could not be gratified independent of the relationship (e.g., by a specific partner, the general field of eligibles); and (c) high *investment size*—to the extent that they invest numerous important resources in the relationship, either directly or indirectly (e.g., time, effort, shared friendship network, joint material possessions).

As people become dependent, they develop feelings of commitment to the relationship. *Commitment level* represents long-term orientation toward a relationship, including intent to persist and feelings of psychological attachment. Strong commitment entails motivation to “make a relationship work” not only by persisting in the relationship, but also by engaging in prorelationship acts such as (a) accommodation—when a partner enacts a potentially destructive behavior (e.g., criticism, irritability), committed individuals inhibit the impulse to react destructively in turn and instead behave in a constructive manner; (b) sacrifice—when partners' interests conflict, committed individuals engage in otherwise undesirable behaviors or forgo otherwise desirable behaviors for the good of the partner and relationship; and (c) affirmation—committed individuals work to elicit the best in their partners, even when doing so is effortful or costly. Many of the behaviors that people enact so as to sustain a relationship—including accommodation, sacrifice, and affirmation—are termed *prorelationship acts*, in that such behaviors to some degree are costly or effortful, yet promote the well-being of a partner or relationship.

Diagnostic Situations, Trust, and Dependence

Situations that call for prorelationship acts—for example, situations in which a partner “behaves badly,” or situations in which partners' interests conflict—have been termed *diagnostic situations*.

Dilemmas of this sort are “diagnostic” in that the manner in which people behave in such situations is indicative of their motives. For example, when John sacrifices a long-awaited opportunity to go out with his friends and instead helps Mary plan an upcoming party, Mary can discern the strength of his commitment, in that he has placed her needs and interests above his own. According to Holmes’s model of trust, people develop increased trust when they observe a partner behave well in diagnostic situations—when they observe the partner enact costly or effortful prorelationship acts. *Trust* is thus relationship-specific and represents the strength of one’s conviction that a partner will be responsive to one’s needs, now and in the future. As such, Mary’s trust in John reflects the strength of John’s commitment to Mary.

As partners develop enhanced trust in each other, they are also likely to become increasingly dependent on each other: Trusting partners feel more satisfied with their relationships, and are more willing to drive away attractive alternatives and invest important resources in their relationships. Thus, as Mary develops trust—becoming increasingly confident that John will be responsive to her needs—she becomes more comfortable being dependent on John, which in turn yields strengthened commitment, which in turn causes her to exhibit prorelationship acts. When John perceives such acts, he develops increased trust in Mary, which in turn makes him more comfortable becoming dependent on Mary, which strengthens his commitment . . . and so on, in a pattern of temporally extended, mutually reinforcing across-partner influence. This model also helps explain deteriorating relationships, in that if any component of the model is weakened—for example, if Mary encounters tempting alternatives, or if she stubbornly refuses to enact prorelationship behaviors, or if she finds that she cannot trust John—the mutual cyclical process will stall or reverse, as partners’ motives and behaviors feed back on and influence each other in a negative manner.

Conclusion

Given that each person’s motives and behaviors affect the other, mutual cyclical growth is a process through which partners tend to develop and sustain roughly equal levels of dependence, commitment, and trust, and tend to exhibit roughly reciprocal prorelationship acts. Indeed, mutuality and reciprocity tend to be characteristic of well-functioning relationships. The model also illuminates crucial processes in ongoing relationships by integrating important interdependence principles from two traditional theories—Rusbult’s theory of how partners develop commitment and Holmes’s theory of how partners come to trust each other.

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See also Accommodation; Affirmation; Commitment, Predictors and Outcomes; Interdependence Theory; Investment Model; Maintaining Relationships; Trust; Willingness to Sacrifice

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N

NARCISSISM, EFFECTS ON RELATIONSHIPS

Narcissism, or self-love, has a complex series of consequences, both negative and positive, for relationships. This makes it an important topic of study for investigators, practitioners, and students in the area of human relationships. Narcissism can interfere with the ability or desire to form close, caring relationships with others. Although primarily destructive for relationships in the long term, during the initial relationship stages, narcissism can also promote relationship functioning. Interactions with narcissistic individuals are often described as exciting and enjoyable in the beginning. For example, a narcissist may be perceived, at first, as a confident, charming new romantic interest or an exciting, charismatic political leader. These positive perceptions, however, often become negative as the relationship progresses. This entry includes a brief description of narcissism, a view of relationships from the narcissist's perspective, and a view from the perspective of the other(s) in the relationship with the narcissist.

What Is Narcissism?

The term *narcissism* is derived from the Ancient Greek myth of Narcissus, popularized in psychology by Sigmund Freud. Narcissism is a personality trait that is characterized by a positive, grandiose, and inflated view of the self. Narcissists see themselves

as better than others on traits such as social status, ability, creativity, and physical appearance. Narcissists also have an elevated sense of entitlement and believe that they are special and unique. Narcissism is also related to a lack of interest in forming emotionally close relationships with others. Finally, narcissism is linked with efforts to enhance and defend self-esteem. That is, narcissists seek opportunities that will make them look and feel successful and attractive. In its most extreme form, narcissism becomes narcissistic personality disorder (NPD). This is a rare clinical condition that shares characteristics with narcissism.

Narcissism has consequences for a wide range of relationships. A good deal of research has examined narcissism in dating relationships, new or emerging relationships (i.e., acquaintanceships), and leadership and work relationships. There has been relatively little research on narcissism and parenting, marriage, sibling relationships, or long-term friendships. In general, the outcomes of narcissism are similar across the different relationship types; for example, narcissists' charm and confidence are useful for both finding dating partners and obtaining leadership positions.

The Narcissist's Perspective

From the narcissist's perspective, relationships are needed for maintaining and elevating self-esteem. This leads to an interesting paradox in narcissists' relationships. On the one hand, narcissists do not desire emotional closeness with others; on the

other hand, relationships are useful for inflating the narcissists' self-image. Relationship partners can serve this self-esteem enhancing function in several ways. For example, the narcissist can find an admirer or group of admirers, or associate with high-status people.

Narcissists are skilled at starting relationships. This skill allows narcissists to manipulate others into fulfilling their self-esteem needs. Narcissists tend to be confident, socially adept, charming, and manipulative. They report having relatively high numbers of dating and sexual partners and are likely to rise into leadership positions.

Once narcissists initiate relationships, however, they are problematic partners. Narcissists are relatively low in relationship commitment and more interested in finding other, better relationship partners. Narcissists are game-playing as well; for example, they tend to alternate between displaying and withdrawing commitment to a partner. They also are likely to set off two or more partners against each other. At worst, narcissists can be physically and sexually aggressive. This often occurs when narcissists feel threatened or rejected, or do not get their way. For all these reasons, narcissists' relationships tend to be short. When they do get married, the outcome is mixed. Some evidence indicates that narcissists can be satisfied and committed in some circumstances, but also are prone to be physically abusive and sexually unfaithful.

The Partner's Perspective

When relationships are formed with narcissists, they typically start out well. Narcissists are often attractive when first encountered. They are liked when only seen in short video clips of behavior; they are liked in initial group meetings; and they emerge as leaders in short-term groups. The beginning of dating relationships with narcissists can be satisfying and exciting. Over time, however, social ties with narcissists become less positive. In work groups, this is often a consequence of narcissists' self-focus and selfishness, including counterproductive and unethical behavior. In dating relationships, this is a result of narcissists' unwillingness to form emotionally close relationships coupled with a host of destructive behaviors such as emotional control, game-playing, dishonesty, infidelity, and

even aggression. The long-term consequences of narcissism are often highly negative, and those who form relationships with narcissists can suffer for extended periods.

Additional Issues

There are small gender differences in narcissism, with men showing somewhat higher levels. This gender difference is larger in NPD. In relationships, however, men and women with high narcissism scores act in similar ways.

Some limited evidence indicates that narcissists can change for the better in relationships. This change may be brought about by a shift toward taking a caring or connected orientation toward the partner or group. Nevertheless, individuals with high levels of narcissism are unlikely to change in relationships. Because narcissism is often accompanied by higher levels of self-esteem and positive emotion, there is little motivation to change. There are also few clinically validated treatments for NPD, although there are suggested psychodynamic, cognitive behavioral, and behavioral therapies. Narcissists' response to relationship break up and rejection can vary. Evidence indicates that narcissists respond to rejection with anger and aggression and that they are able to distort their memories of rejection so that their self-esteem remains intact.

W. Campbell and Laura Buffardi

See also Leadership; Personality Traits, Effects on Relationships; Psychodynamic Theories of Relationships; Psychopathology, Influence on Family Members; Self-Esteem, Effects on Relationships

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NEED FULFILLMENT IN RELATIONSHIPS

One reason humans find relationships particularly rewarding is that they serve to fulfill needs. Needs are those necessary conditions and elements that are essential to individuals' physical and psychological well-being. In his seminal 1938 book, Henry Murray provided a set of nearly 30 specific needs that individuals seek to have met in their lives. Of these, many are interpersonal in nature, including the needs for affiliation, autonomy, dominance, nurturance, play, recognition, rejection, and sex. Similarly, other early theorists such as Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers highlighted the importance of relationships in fulfilling love and belongingness needs and as a source of unconditional positive regard in self-actualized individuals. This entry discusses need fulfillment from several theoretical perspectives and reviews the empirical findings regarding need fulfillment within the context of romantic relationships.

Theoretical Perspectives

Numerous theoretical perspectives and research findings have noted the importance of the fulfillment of interpersonal needs. For example, Edward Deci and Richard Ryan's Self-Determination Theory highlights the importance of relatedness needs (i.e., the need to be connected to others) along with needs associated with autonomy and competence. Fulfillment of this fundamental "need to belong," according to Roy Baumeister and Mark Leary, is an important motivation at the core of much research and theory on many types of relationships, including romantic relationships, friendships, and group dynamics. In short, from a wide range of perspectives, a diverse set of human needs have been identified, and many are linked to interpersonal relationships.

From an evolutionary perspective, many basic human motivations have social and relational

dimensions. To survive and reproduce, organisms must have certain needs met, such as the acquisition of food, safety for oneself and kin, opportunities for mating, and subsequent caretaking of offspring. From this perspective, the continuation of the species is due to humans' abilities to fulfill social needs that promote survival and reproduction.

The Self-Expansion Model, proposed by Arthur Aron and colleagues, is based on the assumption that humans have a fundamental motivation to seek opportunities that facilitate personal growth, promote the development of self-identity, and enhance social and material resources. From this perspective, relationships play an important role in the fulfillment of self-expansion goals because interaction with relationship partners is a primary avenue through which these goals are met. For example, relationships with others serve as a source of self-identity, and knowledge and access to resources are increased through one's relationship partner. Likewise, interactions with a relationship partner may be associated with novel and exciting activities (e.g., having someone to share new experiences with), further enhancing self-expansion.

Furthermore, Interdependence Theory, articulated by John Thibaut and Harold Kelley, is based on the notion that interactions between individuals yield outcomes for those parties involved in the interaction. In other words, people get things that they desire from their relationships. Within a developmental context, as interpersonal needs are met within relationships, those relationships begin to take on more importance to the participants. Over time, individuals begin to rely on their partners for fulfillment of specific needs, thus building a pattern of interdependent interactions between partners (i.e., they depend on each other for need fulfillment). To illustrate, imagine a relationship between George and Susan in which George's needs for intimacy are met through his continued interaction with Susan (e.g., she is a good listener and provides the warmth and closeness he desires). Likewise, George may facilitate the fulfillment of Susan's companionship needs (e.g., she enjoys spending time and engaging in activities with him). As George and Susan's reliance on each other for the fulfillment of their desired needs increases over time, their relationship is strengthened.

The fulfillment of needs within the relationship has a direct impact on individuals' satisfaction in

the relationship; those with their expectations for need fulfillment may experience those relationships more positively. Likewise, if alternative relationships cannot (or are not anticipated to) fulfill needs as well as a current relationship, reliance (called “dependence” in this theory) on the current relationship is strengthened. For example, if George’s intimacy needs are being fulfilled by Susan, and those needs for intimacy could not be met as well in another relationship, satisfaction is increased and alternatives are decreased, and that relationship is likely to persist. In a sense, from an Interdependence Theory perspective, commitment to a relationship and subsequent continuation (or termination) of a relationship is a function of the extent that the relationship fulfills one’s needs, via satisfaction and alternatives (two important components of Caryl Rusbult’s Investment Model of Commitment).

Need Fulfillment in Romantic Relationships

These various theoretical perspectives have given rise to specific needs that are hypothesized to be central in relationships and have been measured in many studies of close relationships. For example, working from an Interdependence Theory perspective, Stephen Drigotas and Caryl Rusbult identified six important relationship needs: intimacy, sexual, emotional, companionship, security, and self-worth. Likewise, Self-Determination theorists suggest the importance of three primary human needs: autonomy (the need to feel in control of one’s behavior), competence (the need to feel effective and capable), and relatedness (the need to feel connected). Similarly, Karen Prager and Duane Buhrmester organize needs along two primary dimensions: communal needs and agentic needs. *Communal needs* relate to social interaction, such as intimacy, affection, fun/enjoyment, nurturance, and sexuality, whereas *agentic needs* include those that relate to the self, such as self-esteem, order/structure, recognition, power/influence, and achievement.

Beyond identifying and organizing types of need fulfillment, research on close relationships has focused on the associations between need fulfillment and interpersonal processes. For example, the fulfillment of intimacy needs in marriages has been shown to be associated with enhanced communication skills and relationship satisfaction.

Likewise, need fulfillment is a good predictor of relationship outcomes such as the decision to remain in or leave a romantic relationship. As shown in a longitudinal study of dating relationships, partners reporting that they relied on their relationship for the fulfillment of sexual, emotional, companionship, security, and self-worth needs at one point in time were more likely to still be in their relationships 6 weeks later. Interestingly, the need fulfillment of “leavers” (i.e., those “dumping” their partners) was significantly lower than for those who were abandoned in their relationships (i.e., those “dumped” by their partners) and those whose relationships persisted, suggesting that having one’s needs go unfulfilled in a relationship precipitates the decision to end that relationship. In addition, a study assessing these same needs indicated that a lack of need fulfillment was associated with susceptibility to engage in relationship infidelity (i.e., cheat on one’s partner).

Furthermore, the fulfillment of relationship needs is associated with well-being and the experience of positive and negative emotions. For example, fulfillment of the needs identified by Drigotas and Rusbult has been shown to be associated with heightened positive emotions and lowered negative emotions, although these associations were found to be lower for those in long-distance relationships. Similarly, fulfillment of autonomy, competence, and relatedness needs is associated with greater well-being, self-esteem, and positive emotions, whereas a lack of fulfillment of these needs predicted experience of negative emotions. Need fulfillment is also associated with low anxiety and avoidance levels in relationships; those with secure attachment orientations report higher levels of relationship need fulfillment.

Benjamin Le and Allison K. Farrell

See also Belonging, Need for; Evolutionary Psychology and Human Relationships; Goals in Relationships; Interdependence Theory; Investment Model; Self-Expansion Model

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NEGATIVE AFFECT RECIPROCITY

Negative affect reciprocity (also called *reciprocation of negativity* or *mutual escalation*) refers to the tendency for one person's negative behavior to instigate another's negative behavior. It references a pattern of behavior between two people in relationship to each other, where one person's negative actions, such as criticism or an angry facial expression, are followed by another's similarly valenced actions. Repeated patterns of negative reciprocity turn into *negative spirals*, continued patterns of reciprocity that work to create a poor relational climate and bring about other negative consequences within relationships. This entry discusses the nature and effects of negative affect reciprocity in a variety of personal relationships, focusing on the behaviors that may be involved and the characteristics of relationships likely to have high levels of negative affect reciprocity.

What Behaviors Are Negative?

Negative affect (also called *negative emotion*) may be manifested during interaction in intimate relationships in many ways. The five primary negative emotions or affects are anger, shame/guilt, fear/anxiety, contempt/disgust, and sadness. Anger and contempt are sometimes studied together as *hostility*, and shame and sadness are sometimes viewed together as *despair*.

Whereas these emotions can arise from interacting with others, particularly in difficult situations, the emotions themselves can also lead to behaviors

such as negative forms of *conflict* (e.g., coercion, aversion, or invalidation), *nonverbal behavior*—including silence and frowning, *defensiveness*, *physical aggression* or *violence*, *belligerence*, which can occur with verbal or nonverbal messages—and *withdrawal*, or leaving an interaction either physically or mentally. Additionally, negative affect can show up as criticism, disagreement, disapproval, interruptions, put downs, threats, ignoring, changing topics, and denials of responsibility.

Patterns of reciprocity may begin while a person is speaking or listening to another. So, for instance, one friend may be listening to another's problems with her boyfriend, and the listener may begin to sigh. The speaker may reciprocate the sigh—or some other largely negative behavior—in response. The primary characteristic of affect reciprocity is that one person's negative behavior leads to another's negative behavior, and the second person's behavior is not likely to have occurred if the initial action had not taken place. Patterns of behavior-affecting-behavior can continue or spiral over time, creating long-term and problematic cycles for relational partners. So, when a child yells at his mother, and the mother responds with criticism, the son may respond with an angry retort, and so on, turning it into an interaction that is both undesirable on its own and that can have long-lasting effects.

Who Is Affected?

Behavioral reciprocity is common across all interpersonal interactions (i.e., exchanges that occur between people, such as the mother/son discussed). People in close relationships depend on each other to meet their needs and goals, and reciprocity—both negative and positive—tends to be more pronounced when people know each other well or cohabitate. As people's lives and behaviors become enmeshed, there are more opportunities for—and consequences of—patterned interaction.

Most research on reciprocated affect has been conducted with heterosexual “romantic” couples. Researchers have also looked at reciprocated affect in other familial relationships, including the greater likelihood that siblings will reciprocate each other's negative behaviors than reciprocate their friends' negative behaviors. Most notably, there has been a

focus on reciprocity in parent–child relationships. For example, negative reciprocity is particularly likely between a child and his or her mother during encounters that involve criticism or discipline and between fathers and their children at play.

Other work looks toward the *outcomes* of mutual escalation (i.e., when one behavior leads to another, which leads to another and another, the pattern escalating in intensity or frequency of negative affect), particularly on children. Research suggests that, because children learn about affect from their parents primarily, reciprocity patterns exhibited in the household—both negative and positive—condition children for affective patterns with others later in life. Some scholars argue similarly that negativity between two people in a family—such as the parents—can “migrate” to other family members. Mutual negativity between parents can even lead to parental abuse of their children. Parents’ negativity reciprocity has also been linked to greater youth delinquency, poor interaction skills, and even mental illness. In some families, the negativity has led to or is created by high levels of stress. Although negative reciprocity can occur in many circumstances, a combination of high stress and affect reciprocity can be particularly volatile.

Negativity reciprocity appears particularly pronounced when children reach adolescence. Perhaps because of the greater emotional intensity that occurs during puberty, reciprocity of both positive and negative behavior is even more likely than during early childhood. Negative reciprocity when children are teens has been found to influence parenting skills and problem solving negatively (i.e., difficult behavior spirals may create environments where other competencies become harder to enact). Moreover, negativity reciprocity during adolescence predicts similar behavior later in adulthood. Thus, its effects can be found beyond the interactions in which such patterns occur.

What Predicts Negative Reciprocity?

Reciprocity is the most common response to negative behavior across relationships. But reciprocity is more likely in relationships that have certain qualities. Research has focused on three:

unhappy relationships, violent relationships, and relationships in which one or more people are alcoholic or substance-addicted.

Negative Affect Reciprocity and Relationship Satisfaction

Researchers have found that dissatisfied couples are more likely than are satisfied couples to reciprocate each other’s negative behavior. Whereas the causal link between dissatisfaction and negative affect reciprocity is unclear, some evidence indicates that dissatisfaction may lead to negative reciprocity. When people are unhappy in their relationships, they tend to notice, evaluate unfavorably, and respond in kind to their partner’s negative actions. Conversely, negative reciprocity can shape the nature of relationships over time, *leading to* greater dissatisfaction. Behaviors that occur consistently become part of the relational script (i.e., predictable patterns of behavior), influencing partners’ expectations for each other and helping form a larger conception of relationship that is judged as more or less satisfying.

As noted, negative reciprocity tends to occur in all relationships, regardless of satisfaction level. One explanation for why negative reciprocity is less frequent and less harmful in satisfying relationships concerns satisfied couples’ greater ability to escape from negative patterns by using positive affect to de-escalate the negative spiral. For instance, if a wife frowns at her husband when he comes home late, instead of responding by replying with criticism, a more satisfied husband might go up to his wife and hug her, stopping the reciprocity and changing the affective climate.

Expressions of positive (or even neutral) affect may work by “soothing” their recipient, and this change in affect can be particularly important when the recipient is male, as males’ greater tendency toward physiological arousal in negative interactions is at the base of many harmful communicative patterns in couples’ relationships. Despite the potential to de-escalate negative patterns of behavior, and the likelihood that those in satisfied relationships will break the cycle with positive or neutral behaviors, even satisfied couples do not often do so.

Negative Affect Reciprocity in Abusive or Violent Relationships

Because negative reciprocity can develop easily in relationships, and because it can be hard to break, researchers have been keenly interested in its manifestation in relationships that are already prone to negative behavior, such as abusive relationships. The tendency to reciprocate negative behavior is more likely in violent rather than non-violent marital or intimate relationships, especially during conflict. Moreover, patterns of reciprocity usually last longer between physically aggressive couples because nonviolent couples exit negative affect reciprocity patterns more easily than do violent couples.

Negativity escalation does not happen always or with all negative behaviors, but it is a strong trend and occurs most often in the form of withdrawal matched by withdrawal. Some researchers argue that withdrawal patterns are particularly harmful to relationships because conflict remains unresolved, and greater hostility may emerge later as a consequence. Other forms of negative reciprocity appear to be common, particularly for men who are in unhappy, violent relationships. Such men may react more negatively and predictably than do any other group, although men in happy, but violent, relationships are also likely to reciprocate their female partners' negative behaviors.

The tendency to react to a partner's negative behavior with similarly negative behavior—particularly during conflict interactions—may be based on the level of anxiety or arousal some couples feel during those interactions. Whereas most people tend to feel aroused/anxious in difficult interactions, for some people in violent relationships, heightened arousal levels make controlling their reactions more difficult, and this may be more pronounced for males. Other researchers point to the ways in which certain couples think about or make sense of each other's behaviors. Specifically, people in physically aggressive relationships tend to pay considerable attention to their partners' behaviors, and they may be more likely to blame their partner for any perceived "misbehavior." Such ways of thinking increase the likelihood of reciprocity, although this is just one of many potential causes for physical aggression.

Negative Affect Reciprocity and Alcohol Use

For aggressive couples in particular, alcohol often increases the extent of negative affect reciprocity. As with most people, alcohol use impairs their ability to think in ways they would without the alcohol. For example, a woman who has been drinking may be more likely to see her partner's behaviors toward another woman incorrectly as flirtatious rather than friendly. This cognitive impairment is one of the forces behind the increased tendency to react to negativity with negativity. Such impaired cognition is particularly likely in men who are in aggressive relationships, although it occurs for both sexes. Other reasons that have been given for negativity reciprocity and alcohol use include the tendency for alcohol to make some people more coercive, impulsive, dominant, and antisocial, all ways of being that may encourage additional negativity.

Consuming alcohol does not predict negativity reciprocity in all cases. Long-time, steady drinkers, for example, are less likely than are those who drink "episodically" to reciprocate behaviors. Episodic drinkers are also more violence-prone than are steady drinkers, so reciprocity of violent behavior may be more common in relationships with episodic alcohol consumption. The strongest patterns of negative reciprocity when alcohol is consumed are in relationships where physical abuse is common, particularly when the violence-prone drinking partner is male.

Valerie Manusov

See also Conflict Patterns; Emotion in Relationships; Hostility; Marital Satisfaction and Quality; Parent-Child Relationships; Relational Aggression; Substance Use and Abuse in Relationships

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NEGATIVE INTERACTIONS DURING LATE LIFE

The beneficial effects of social relationships on mental and physical health across the life span are well documented. Yet, close relationships do not always function as sources of support and companionship. They can also be a source of conflict, demands, and disappointments. Negative interactions with social network members tend to occur less often than positive interactions do, but the effects of negative interactions appear to be more potent. These observations have given rise to a literature on the nature and effects of negative interactions. Individuals of all ages occasionally experience tensions and frustrations in their

relationships. This entry reviews the literature on negative social interactions in later life, a time when having to deal with declining health, loss of relationship partners, and other difficult life circumstances may precipitate or magnify the impact of negative exchanges. The entry begins by exploring the implications of negative exchanges for health and well-being in later life, and then examines variations in both exposure and reactivity to negative exchanges.

Impact of Negative Social Interactions on Health and Well-Being

Research that examines the impact of negative social interactions on health and well-being has often compared the effects of positive and negative interactions. A point of departure for such work has been the extensive body of evidence documenting health-related benefits of social ties. Across the life span, structural (e.g., network size, frequency of social contact) and functional (e.g., perceived support availability and quality) aspects of social networks significantly affect health and well-being. Social network members often provide emotional and instrumental support that dampens the adverse effects of life stress and provide opportunities for companionship and shared activities. Not surprisingly, people who have meaningful social relationships report less depression and susceptibility to chronic disease, and greater life satisfaction and longevity. The generally positive impact of supportive social relationships extends into later life; research with older adults indicates that supportive ties have a beneficial impact on mental and physical functioning.

Yet, interactions with social network members are not exclusively positive. Some network members, despite good intentions, engage in selfish, insensitive, or simply clumsy behavior at times. Analyses of social network composition indicate that although most network members function predominantly as a source of positive exchanges, many function as a source of both positive and negative exchanges, and a vexing minority function solely as a source of negative exchanges. These negative exchanges have the potential to elicit negative affect and arouse stress in their own right, thereby threatening well-being.

Negative interactions can take many forms. A review of the literature, however, suggests that they can be classified in four relatively broad categories. Although some degree of overlap exists across these categories, the categories have been validated and found to have distinctive effects in representative samples of older adults. These categories are insensitive or critical behavior by others, intrusive or unsound advice provided by others, failure by others to provide tangible or instrumental support in times of need, and rejection or neglect by others. These are directly parallel to four broad categories of positive exchanges that are consequential for well-being: emotional support, informational support, instrumental support, and companionship.

Although these different kinds of negative interactions can occur at any point in the life span, age differences may exist in the life contexts in which they tend to occur and the specific factors that precipitate their occurrence. For instance, older adults often experience stressful life events and transitions that elicit feelings of loneliness and emotional distress and that increase their needs for support and companionship. Events such as marked declines in physical functioning, the loss of loved ones, and residential relocation involve major life changes that may create long-term needs for support and care by social network members. If social network members are unable or unwilling to provide needed social support and companionship, older adults may be especially likely to experience emotional distress and feelings of rejection or neglect.

Research indicates that negative exchanges arouse considerable distress, as evidenced by strong associations with negative affect, depressive symptoms, and feelings of loneliness among older adults. Even though negative exchanges generally occur less frequently than positive exchanges, the adverse effects of negative interactions on health and well-being appear to outweigh the beneficial effects of positive interactions. This disproportionate impact of negative exchanges, referred to as the *negativity effect*, may be attributed to several factors. One explanation is that negative exchanges violate a fundamental expectation that close network members can be counted on to be supportive and caring. Another explanation is that negative exchanges can serve as sources of acute or chronic

stress. In fact, studies examining different kinds of daily stress have found that stressors of an interpersonal nature (e.g., disagreements and misunderstandings) are among the most distressing. Social relationships in which difficulties persist over time are especially likely to elicit health-damaging negative affect and feelings of stress and to erode perceptions of control among older adults.

Interpersonal stressors also have detrimental effects on physiological processes (e.g., neuroendocrine and immune responses) involved in the human stress system. This may explain why social relationships characterized by recurring problems have been linked to compromised immunological, neuroendocrine, and cardiovascular functioning in later life. Negative exchanges contribute to physical symptomatology, accounting for more variance in physical health symptoms than life stress, daily hassles, or social support. Furthermore, negative exchanges predict more distal health outcomes, such as the onset and progression of physical disability in later life. For example, in one longitudinal analysis of community-dwelling older adults with little to no baseline physical disability, individuals who reported consistent, frequent negative interactions over 2 years were more likely to experience functional declines (e.g., difficulty with activities of daily living).

Moreover, well-intentioned social support can backfire. Providing and receiving instrumental support (material aid, services) appears to be a particularly sensitive issue in later life. Support that recipients perceive to be unwanted, inappropriate, or incongruent with their needs may threaten their feelings of self-efficacy, competence, independence, and overall well-being. For example, among older adults with a physical disability, instrumental support—particularly if overprotective—may foster dependence and reduce confidence in engaging in self-care and physical activities that are essential to preserving physical functioning. Consequently, recipients may feel resentful, and providers may feel unappreciated. Even in the absence of such negative feelings, older adults who need extensive care and close network members who seek to provide such care may experience considerable awkwardness and uncertainty while struggling to negotiate this transition in their relationship. The receipt of instrumental support, ironically—but perhaps not surprisingly from this perspective—has

been shown to predict an increased risk of disability onset and recurrence over time among older adults.

Variations in Exposure to Negative Interactions in Later Life

Although declining health and other circumstances in later life may sow the seeds for misunderstandings and disagreements in older adults' relationships, not all adults are equally vulnerable to negative interactions. Moreover, not all negative interactions experienced by older adults emerge anew in later life; some such interactions reflect problems of long-standing duration in their relationships.

A key factor that influences the nature of older adults' social relationships—and, in turn, their exposure to negative interactions—is the extent to which they are able to selectively manage their social contacts. According to Socioemotional Selectivity Theory (SST), older adults have a growing awareness that their time left to live is limited, and thus are driven to satisfy emotional needs. Consistent with this idea, evidence indicates that as people age, they selectively prune their social networks and shape their social environments to spend time with emotionally rewarding partners. As a result, older adults are better equipped to prevent, resolve, and recover from interpersonal tensions, and hence, report fewer problematic ties. This may explain why, despite declining rates in the frequency of social contacts and reductions in network size with advancing age, relationships in later life tend to be of better quality and characterized by greater emotional closeness and less negativity.

Nonetheless, variability in life circumstances and individual differences may affect older adults' attempts at selectively managing their social interactions and, in some cases, increase their exposure to negative interactions. As previously mentioned, age-associated life events (e.g., declining mobility, widowhood, or residential relocation) may preclude older adults from engaging in rewarding interactions. Thus, older adults may experience feelings of loneliness, rejection, and neglect. Moreover, as older adults develop limiting physical conditions, they tend to rely more on family members than on friends. This shift may elicit

negative interactions, as interpersonal tensions are more likely within the context of kin, rather than nonkin, relationships.

Although changes in life circumstances may precipitate negative exchanges, longitudinal work on negative interactions, though sparse, indicates that among some older adults, negative exchanges are chronic and show stability over time. This, again, may be particularly true to the extent that older adults' networks contain a large proportion of kin. Unlike voluntary ties with friends, kin ties are obligatory and difficult to terminate. Family ties that are unrewarding or persistently problematic may serve as chronic sources of stress. Evidence also suggests that some older adults report negative exchanges across multiple partners (for example, friends, children, *and* spouses), implying that their personal characteristics may play a role in prompting the chronic interpersonal difficulties experienced in later life. Traits such as depressive tendencies, neuroticism, poor social skills, and lack of self-esteem may make some older adults more vulnerable to negative exchanges, as is true in younger age groups. Furthermore, declines in cognitive functioning may render some older adults more susceptible to chronic negative interactions. For example, evidence suggests that declining cognitive inhibition and executive dysfunction contribute to socially inappropriate behavior and negative social interactions. These individual differences and life circumstances may increase older adults' exposure to negative interactions, and may influence their ability to deal with such interactions when they occur.

Variations in Reactivity to Negative Interactions

When confronted with acute or chronic interpersonal tensions, older adults may engage in a number of coping strategies. These strategies typically fall into one of two categories—problem-focused or emotion-focused. Problem-focused coping involves efforts aimed at changing the stressful situation itself, such as confrontation, seeking a compromise, or seeking support from others about how to handle the situation. Emotion-focused strategies are internally directed and aimed at reducing negative emotions elicited by

the event, such as trying not to think about the event, trying to reframe it to feel less stressful, or trying to suppress emotional distress. Whereas younger adults are more likely to use problem-focused coping, older adults tend to use a mixture of strategies. This is due, in part, to older adults' enhanced ability to regulate their emotions and differentiate among multiple strategies for coping with stressors. Accordingly, older adults report less negative affect and anger in response to negative exchanges and remain distressed for shorter periods than do younger age groups.

Moreover, the type of coping strategy employed depends on the person's coping goals or objectives, which also may differ across the life span. Like their younger counterparts, older adults' interpersonal goals range from problem resolution and ending the aversive pattern of interactions, to reducing emotional distress. But, unlike their younger counterparts, older adults may assign special importance to the goal of maintaining harmony and goodwill in their relationships. This helps explain why older adults are more likely than are younger and middle-aged adults to respond to negative interactions with conciliatory coping strategies (e.g., forgiveness, self-blame, and less avoidance). Older adults' use of coping strategies geared toward preserving harmony have been shown, in turn, to predict less emotional distress and greater perceived goal success.

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See also Aging Processes and Relationships; Couples in Later Life; Friendships in Late Adulthood; Life-Span Development and Relationships; Loneliness; Social Support and Health; Stress and Relationships

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NEGOTIATION

Negotiation refers to the communication to reach agreement between two or more conflicting parties. Parties may be, for example, husband and wife, parent and child, colleagues in the same department, or a house owner and an interested buyer. Oftentimes, parties represent or even involve larger groups of people, as in the case of negotiation between the representatives of labor union and corporate management. In negotiation, parties perceive their interests to be opposed to those of their counterpart. Such negotiation can be formal, as in the case of union–management negotiations, or more informal, as in the case of a husband and wife negotiating responsibility for household chores.

Regardless how formal or informal, negotiation involves a set of basic principles and psychological processes that will be briefly discussed in this entry. One key first element of most negotiations is that they involve, at least potentially, several issues rather than one single issue. Husbands and wives discuss responsibility for household chores and may discuss income and child care. Unions and management discuss wages as well as health care, pension plans, vacation time, and training and development. In short, negotiations often concern multiple issues, and in case they do not, parties can bring new issues to the table, or break issues into several smaller ones.

Creating Value in Negotiation

Negotiating about several issues at the same time can have interesting advantages. A famous story is told by a pioneering scholar of negotiation, Mary

Parker Follett, about two sisters quarreling over an orange, who end up splitting the orange in two equal parts. One sister squeezes her part, throws away the peel, and drinks the juice. The other squeezes her half, throws away the juice, and grates the peel to flavor a cake she is baking. Had these sisters talked about their interests they could have reached a mutually more beneficial agreement (the entire peel to one sister, all the juice to the other) than they reached by quarreling over one single issue—the orange.

Another illustration of the benefits of discussing multiple issues comes from the Camp David negotiations between Israel and Egypt in 1977. Since the Yom Kippur war in 1973, Israel had occupied the Sinai Desert, which Egypt wanted back. Instead of dividing the desert in more or less equal parts, it was decided that Egypt would get back the desert to satisfy its historical claims and restore its reputation in the Arab world. But, critically, Egypt would keep the desert demilitarized so that Israel's need for security was satisfied. Both parties thus achieved a better deal by talking about reputation as well as about security, rather than focusing on the single surface issue of who gets what part of the Sinai Desert.

Agreements that take advantage of the fact that the various issues involved in a conflict may not be equally important to all parties are called *integrative agreements*. In integrative agreements, parties concede on issues that are unimportant to oneself but important to the other (e.g., the peel, reputation among Arab neighbors) but stand fast on issues that are important to oneself but unimportant to the other (e.g., juice, security). Compared with simple “split-the-difference” compromises or victory-to-one settlements, studies have shown that integrative agreements tend to be relatively stable, create positive feelings of satisfaction and pride, and install a sense of self-efficacy, allowing parties to approach later negotiations in a more optimistic, problem-solving oriented manner. In addition, parties are more committed to their part of the bargain and more motivated to honor their promises. Integrative agreements create more value to both parties than any other type of agreement. This in turn fosters stability, harmony, and sometimes even economic prosperity; failure to reach (integrative) agreements may create frustration and conflict, distrust and weakened social ties, and

may hurt economic progress. In the long run, failure to agree and continue conflict may lead to relationship dissolution (e.g., divorce, employees leaving an organization).

Psychological Principles in Negotiation

Many scholars in psychology and other social sciences have tried to understand when and why people fail or succeed in reaching integrative agreements. Pioneering work was done by Sidney Siegel and Lawrence Fouraker, Harold Kelley, and Dean Pruitt, among others. These authors created experimental situations in which two persons negotiated over several issues (e.g., the price of the car, delivery time, method of payment), some of which were valuable to the seller but not to the buyer, and some of which were not valuable to the seller but were important to the buyer. By trading the less important issue for the more important one, buyer and seller were able to earn more personally and collectively than by splitting the difference on these issues. But because each party entered the negotiation without knowing what was valuable or not to the counterpart, they were unaware of the possibility to trade off and do well collectively—they had to uncover this possibility through negotiation. This is exactly what the researchers were interested in: Why do some individuals discover the integrative possibilities and others do not?

This pioneering work showed that individuals and groups have great difficulty achieving integrative agreements. According to a structural-motivational account, this is primarily because negotiators simultaneously face a cooperative incentive to reach agreement with their counterpart (i.e., agreement is better than no agreement) and a competitive incentive to do well personally. Whereas cooperative incentives motivate negotiators to make and reciprocate concessions, to lower their demands, and to exchange information openly and accurately, competitive incentives motivate them to withhold and retract concessions, to remain tough in their demands, and to deceive and mislead their counterpart. By implication, if cooperative incentives become relatively more important and available than competitive incentives, negotiators will engage in more

cooperative behavior and are less likely to reach a mutually harmful stalemate.

Cooperative incentives gain or lose prominence relative to competitive incentives because of aspects of the negotiation setting. *Power* is one example. When a negotiator has a good alternative to the current negotiation (e.g., someone else already made an attractive offer), this may fuel the competitive incentive to increase personal outcomes from the negotiation. Or when a negotiator has a punitive capacity, as in international conflicts where some countries have bigger armies than others, such power preponderance may induce a tough stance to elicit concessions from the other, rather than making concessions oneself. Put differently, when power increases relative to one's partner, negotiators generally become reluctant to make and reciprocate concessions. When power is less than that of one's counterpart, the motivation to cooperate and concede increases. Especially when concessions are made on issues that are important to the low-power party, the likelihood of reaching integrative agreement is reduced.

Another factor influencing the balance between cooperative and competitive incentives is *time pressure*. Time pressure may emerge because the goods (e.g., fish or fruit) that are being negotiated may deteriorate, or because an external or self-imposed deadline is approaching (e.g., the market closes at 5 PM; divorce papers are being filed and take effect soon). Time pressure focuses parties on agreement and, in general, fosters concessions and cooperative exchange. Again, if time pressure fosters concessions on important issues, the likelihood of reaching integrative agreement is reduced.

When negotiators operate on behalf of a constituency, as when a small group of workers negotiates on behalf of a union, they need to consider their own (and perhaps their counterpart's) needs and desires, as well as those of their constituents. Research has shown, for example, that negotiators tend to comply with their constituents' desires—when the constituents take a competitive stance toward the other side, representatives negotiate more competitively than when their constituents are eager for an agreement. Interestingly, there is considerable evidence that when constituent goals and desires are unknown or unclear, negotiators tend to assume they should compete rather than cooperate. The mere fact that an individual

represents one or more others generally increases toughness and competitive behavior.

Dual Concern Theory

Bargaining strength, time pressure, and accountability to constituents all lead negotiators to focus on their own outcomes and resist making concessions. Other variables have been shown to influence the extent to which negotiators are mindful of the outcomes of their counterpart. For example, when negotiators are friends or spouses, they may be particularly concerned about their counterpart's outcomes, so they won't jeopardize their relationship. Or when negotiators expect to work together in the future, they are more motivated to search for an agreement that satisfies their counterpart. Dual Concern Theory, developed by Dean Pruitt and Jeffrey Rubin, summarizes these tendencies among negotiators. When concern for own outcomes is high (e.g., there is high power) and concern for other's outcomes is low (e.g., one does not expect to work together in the future), negotiators engage in tough, competitive behavior aimed at dominating the partner. They are reluctant to make concessions, and do not consider others' demands and needs. When concern for own outcomes is low (e.g., time pressure is high) and concern for others' outcomes is high (e.g., the other is a friend), negotiators engage in conciliatory behavior aimed at pleasing the partner. They are willing to make (unilateral) concessions, and cater to the others' demands and needs. When parties engage in mutual force—when each has high concern for own outcomes and low concern for their partner—the negotiation is likely to end in a mutually harmful stalemate, and integrative agreements are unlikely. Likewise, when parties engage in mutual yielding—when each has low concern for own outcomes and high concern for the partner's outcomes—the negotiation is likely to end in a quick, fifty-fifty compromise. Again, integrative agreements are unlikely. The theory predicts that integrative agreements come about when each party has a high concern for both own and other's outcomes. In this situation, negotiating parties resist making concessions because doing so hurts personal interests but they want to make concessions to help the other's interests.

This dilemma leads negotiators to search for creative solutions that integrate both own and other's interests optimally.

Bounded Rationality in Negotiation

Dual Concern Theory is all about motivation and not about the cognitive underpinnings of integrative negotiation. Cognition and information processing are, however, critically important in negotiation. Individuals cannot process all relevant information—they are bounded in their rationality because cognitive ability is limited, and not all relevant information is or can be made available. Also, negotiators may try to mislead and deceive each other, and thus, some of the available information is deliberately inaccurate and cannot be trusted. To deal with this cognitively taxing task, negotiators tend to rely on cognitive heuristics—mental shortcuts that help them make fast and satisfactory judgments and decisions. Thus, negotiators may act on the basis of stereotypes—union representatives may assume management representatives are reluctant to give raises, much as management representatives may assume that union representatives are unaware of macro-economic developments and increasing competition.

Max Bazerman and Maggie Neale developed their Behavioral Decision Approach, in which they discuss many of these cognitive shortcuts and how they affect the likelihood of integrative agreements. An example is the “fixed-pie” assumption—at the outset, negotiators tend to assume that what is important to them (e.g., juice, in the orange-sharing example) is equally important to the other party, and what is irrelevant to them (e.g., peel) is equally irrelevant to the other. Given the fixed-pie assumption, it makes no sense to search for an integrative agreement; all a negotiator can do is to try to get the biggest share of the pie (or orange). And this is indeed what has been found many times: Most negotiators, novices and experts alike, tend to begin with a fixed-pie assumption and search for victory or, when fairness concerns prevail, fifty-fifty compromises. Only when negotiators realize that their fixed-pie assumption is erroneous do they start searching for integrative agreements.

Levels of Information Processing

Recent studies have invoked the notion that negotiators may switch between more automatic information processing—in which case relying heavily on cognitive heuristics—and more systematic information processing. Under systematic information processing, the influence of cognitive heuristics attenuates and negotiators are more likely to reach integrative agreements. Negotiators engage in more systematic information processing when they have low rather than high power, when time pressures are mild rather than intense, and when they are held accountable. These and other factors thereby help negotiators achieve more mutually beneficial, integrative agreements. Taken together, the combination of high concern for own outcomes, high concern for others' outcomes, and a willingness to engage in deep and deliberate processing of information appears to be the optimal mix to arrive at mutually beneficial, integrative agreements.

Carsten K. W. De Dreu

See also Communication, Norms and Rules; Conflict Resolution; Fairness in Relationships; Group Dynamics; Interdependence Theory; Mediation, Marriage Dissolution; Power Distribution in Relationships; Reciprocity, Norm of

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NEIGHBOR RELATIONS

Once an important component of social life, relationships with neighbors may be decreasing in importance in the modern world because of people's increased mobility. However, relationships with neighbors can still be an important source of friendship and practical assistance. This

entry discusses the factors that facilitate interactions with neighbors and the benefits that may be gained from positive relations with neighbors.

Predictors of Interacting With Neighbors

A variety of factors predict how extensively people interact with their neighbors. The best predictor of how frequently people interact with their neighbors is residential stability—how long the individual has lived in the neighborhood and the average length of time that his or her neighbors have lived in the neighborhood. Investment in the neighborhood, primarily indexed by home ownership, also predicts more frequent interactions with neighbors. On average, rural residents interact more frequently with their neighbors than do urban residents. Older people, especially those who have retired, also interact more frequently than others with neighbors. People with higher incomes know more of their neighbors, but on average, visit them less frequently than do persons with lower incomes. It appears that more affluent people are less likely to invest time and effort in relationships with neighbors, perhaps because of the many options for social relationships that are open to them.

Close proximity to neighbors increases the probability of becoming acquainted, such as living next door in an apartment complex. Involvement with neighbors is higher if other family members also live in the neighborhood. Family members may introduce each other to their immediate neighbors, thus broadening each family's network of acquaintances. Fear of victimization is among the strongest deterrents to interacting with neighbors. Thus, neighborhoods with high levels of crime tend not to foster close relationships among neighbors. Neighbors may, however, be united by common concerns that they face by virtue of their shared environment, such as pollution, crime, poor school quality, and limited access to services and retail outlets (e.g., the absence of grocery stores in inner-city neighborhoods). Under certain circumstances, neighbors form strong bonds as a result of joint efforts to address neighborhood problems.

Benefits of Neighbor Interactions

Neighbors can be important sources of help in times of need. Practical support (for example,

babysitting, or a ride to the doctor's office) is often provided by neighbors. People who live in neighborhoods with a stronger sense of community tend to experience a greater feeling of belonging and report lower levels of loneliness and isolation than do those in neighborhoods without cohesion. Older adults who can rely on their neighbors report greater feelings of autonomy and well-being when factors such as limited mobility, deteriorating health, and financial constraints might otherwise lead to social isolation. In particular, older women living alone (often following the death of a spouse) come to rely on the neighborhood as an integral part of the social network, with a higher sense of belonging to the neighborhood associated with more social support, lower stress, and better physical and mental health. Importance of neighborhood social ties has been established for younger age groups as well. Studies on adolescents suggest that the neighborhood serves as the center of activity for many young people, and a neighborhood sense of community protects against feelings of loneliness even when accounting for connectedness with family and school.

People who live in low-income neighborhoods are more likely to experience depression than are people who live in more affluent neighborhoods; however, those with high social support from their neighbors are able to cope effectively, even in adverse neighborhoods. A famous study found that people who are involved in their community and have ties with others in their neighborhood and workplace actually live longer, even when the researchers accounted for how healthy the people were at the beginning of the study, and other health-related behaviors, such as smoking and drinking alcohol.

Influence of Neighbors on Behavior

Beyond the benefits of personal relationships with individual neighbors, research has shown that the kinds of people who live in the neighborhood may influence people's lives, even if they do not know these neighbors personally. One of the most consistent findings is that children perform better in school and go on to complete more education if there is a higher percentage of affluent and highly educated people in their neighborhood. Children

experience this educational boost regardless of the affluence or education level of their own families. Neighborhood residents can also influence the extent to which youth engage in delinquent behavior. When neighbors make an effort to know one another, monitor the behavior of each others' children, and report youth transgressions to parents or school authorities, neighborhood rates of delinquency are lower than when neighbors avoid becoming involved with one another. One study found that when neighborhood involvement improved over a 5-year period, parents in the neighborhood subsequently began to supervise their children more closely and to express more warmth toward them. In turn, children's behavior improved significantly. Neighborhood involvement of this type is more likely to develop in neighborhoods high in residential stability.

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See also Community Involvement; Contextual Influences on Relationships; Interracial and Interethnic Relationships

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NEUROTICISM, EFFECTS ON RELATIONSHIPS

Whereas some people are calm and emotionally stable, others are extremely nervous and emotionally volatile. Most people fall somewhere between

these two extremes. This dimension of personality is captured by a characteristic called *neuroticism*. Many researchers who study relationships are interested in how neuroticism is associated with interpersonal functioning and with how it affects the stability and quality of romantic unions. This entry provides background on neuroticism and summarizes research linking this trait to relationships, particularly romantic relationships.

What Is Neuroticism?

The broad personality dimension of neuroticism captures individual differences in the tendency to experience negative emotions such as anxiety, anger, and sadness. Individuals who are relatively high in neuroticism are easily distressed. Neuroticism also involves a negative self-image and chronic patterns of thinking associated with distressing emotions. People relatively high on this dimension have a negative outlook on life, themselves, and the people in their social worlds.

Neuroticism is considered a fundamental personality trait because it appears in nearly all models psychologists use to classify personality characteristics. For example, many psychologists currently argue that five broad domains can be used to organize the most important personality characteristics. These so-called Big Five are Neuroticism, Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, and Openness to Experience. Likewise, neuroticism is one of the three major traits in the personality model developed by Hans J. Eysenck, and traits that are synonymous with neuroticism appear in other popular models of personality created by Raymond Cattell and Auke Tellegen. In short, neuroticism is one of the most discussed and studied adult personality traits in psychology.

Neuroticism is a fairly stable individual characteristic by adulthood. Individuals who are high (or low) in neuroticism in their 30s tend to be high (or low) in neuroticism in their 40s. This does not mean that some people do not change in their levels of neuroticism, nor that individuals do not become more emotionally stable as they mature; it simply means that there is a good deal of consistency in this trait for most adults. In other words, if a person is high in neuroticism at one point in

time, then it is likely she or he will be high in neuroticism in the future.

Aspects of neuroticism are evident in even very young children. Some infants and young children are easily upset, whereas others are calmer and harder to distress. In both young children and adults, it appears that the same neurobiological system underlies the general tendency to become emotionally distressed. This system is called the *behavioral inhibition system*, or the *behavioral avoidance system*, and appears to govern one's overall sensitivity to a potentially punishing stimuli. Individuals with a strong behavioral inhibition system are more sensitive to threat and therefore are more likely to experience anxiety and other negative emotions.

Researchers are beginning to map the neurological pathways, brain structures, and genes that underlie neuroticism. Indeed, evidence from twin studies indicates that individual differences in neuroticism are partially genetic in origin. For example, identical twins are much more similar in their levels of neuroticism than are fraternal twins. All in all, neuroticism is an important personality trait that has a significant biological basis.

Neuroticism and Romantic Relationships

Given that neuroticism appears to be a fundamental individual difference, there is considerable interest in understanding how this personality characteristic is associated with relationships, especially romantic relationships. Studies have examined the association between neuroticism and marital quality for more than 70 years. For instance, Louis Terman and his associates published one of the first psychological studies of marriage in the 1930s, and they used terms such as *emotionally stable* to describe men and women who were happily married. Since that time, dozens of studies have examined the association between neuroticism and marital outcomes. The sheer number of studies illustrates the interest in this topic, but can make it difficult, even overwhelming, to summarize the research.

Fortunately, researchers can use a statistical technique called *meta-analysis* to summarize the results of a large number of studies. Meta-analytic techniques essentially average information across

the available studies and make it easier to gain a broad perspective on a research topic. These techniques provide a systematic and quantitative summary of findings across studies. Benjamin Karney and Thomas Bradbury conducted a meta-analysis in 1995 and found that neuroticism was negatively associated with marital satisfaction and marital stability. As scores on neuroticism increased, both marital satisfaction and marital stability decreased. In 2004, Daniel Heller and his associates conducted a more recent meta-analysis based on 40 studies and found that neuroticism was negatively correlated with marital satisfaction. Heller and his colleagues noted that the association between neuroticism and marital satisfaction was among the largest of all of the Big Five traits. Thus, there is consistent evidence that neuroticism is negatively associated with marital satisfaction and stability.

Recent research has tried to better understand the nature of the association between neuroticism and relationship satisfaction. One promising approach is to make a distinction between the *actor* and *partner* effects of personality traits. Actor effects occur when an individual's level on a trait affects that individual's level on a relationship attribute: for example, the degree to which a husband's level of neuroticism is associated with his own level of marital satisfaction. Partner effects occur when an individual's level on a trait affects a relationship partner's level on a relationship attribute; for example, the degree to which a husband's level of neuroticism is associated with his wife's level of marital satisfaction. Both kinds of effects are potentially important; however, the existence of partner effects provides good evidence that personality traits are associated with interpersonal processes, dynamics that are particularly interesting to relationship researchers.

The estimation of actor and partner effects requires the application of a specialized statistical procedure that can only be applied to studies that assess both members of a romantic relationship (e.g., wives and husbands). Relatively few studies have specifically examined actor and partner effects for neuroticism compared with the number of studies that have simply documented associations between neuroticism and relationship outcomes. Nonetheless, several studies have indicated that neuroticism has both actor and partner effects when predicting measures of relationship

satisfaction. Emerging evidence indicates that neuroticism has interpersonal effects insofar as partners of individuals who are higher in neuroticism appear to be less satisfied with their relationship when compared with partners of individuals who are lower in neuroticism.

The presence of both actor and partner effects for neuroticism raises a fundamental question: Why is neuroticism linked with relationship quality? Researchers are just beginning to answer questions concerning the precise mechanisms linking personality traits to relationships. John Caughlin and his associates found that measures of neuroticism were associated with interpersonal negativity: Individuals higher in neuroticism were more hostile and critical of their romantic partners. Similar findings have been reported by other researchers who found that neuroticism was related to interactions involving hostility and interpersonal negativity. Thus, it appears that one reason why neuroticism has partner effects for predicting relationship dissatisfaction is that more neurotic individuals seem to engage in more negative interactions with romantic partners when compared with less neurotic individuals.

In sum, neuroticism is linked with lower relationship satisfaction and more negative interpersonal behaviors within relationships. Given these findings, it is not surprising that several studies have linked neuroticism to an increased risk of divorce. Moreover, according to a recent meta-analysis by Brent Roberts and his colleagues, the risk for divorce associated with neuroticism appeared to be larger than the risk for divorce associated with low socioeconomic status.

Neuroticism and Other Kinds of Relationships

In comparison with the fairly large literature demonstrating associations between neuroticism and aspects of romantic relationships, less evidence links this trait with other relationships. One important relationship involves the bond between parents and children. Grazyna Kochanska and her associates found that mothers who scored high on neuroticism were observed to have interactions with their infants that were less positive than were mothers who scored low on neuroticism. Similarly, researchers in Finland found that neuroticism was

linked with less parental nurturance. This work is more or less consistent with earlier work that studied how depressed mothers interacted with their children. Some evidence links neuroticism to difficulties in parent-child relationships.

Research relating neuroticism to adult relationships besides romantic dyads and parent-child relationships is relatively scarce. One collection of studies found that neuroticism in men (but not women) was linked with diminished social status in groups such as fraternities and college students living in the same dormitory. The authors suggested that high scores on neuroticism violated gender norms for men, which may account for diminished social status. Another study found links between neuroticism and conflict in friendships, a result that appears consistent with work on romantic relationships. It is likely that research linking neuroticism to important relationships beyond romantic unions will accumulate in the coming years.

Future Directions

Although researchers know a considerable amount about neuroticism and relationships, there are many unanswered questions and areas for further study. Three issues seem to stand out. First, additional work will continue to specify the mechanisms that link neuroticism to experiences in relationships. Second, future work will move to integrate studies of broad traits like neuroticism with other individual differences that have been implicated with relationships such as attachment styles, rejection sensitivity, and self-esteem. This avenue promises to help researchers develop a richer and more comprehensive understanding of the links between individual characteristics and relationships. Last, there will be continued attention to the biological underpinnings of neuroticism. Indeed, a major goal for further research is to develop a precise understanding of how biological, psychological, and contextual factors work together to shape human relationships.

M. Brent Donnellan

See also Agreeableness; Conscientiousness, Effects on Relationships; Dyadic Data Analysis; Extraversion and Introversion; Marital Satisfaction and Quality; Marital Stability, Prediction of; Personality Traits, Effects on Relationships; Temperament

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NEWLYWEDS

Newlyweds are recently married couples, and newlywed research generally focuses on the first 2 to 4 years of marriage. This early stage of marriage is one of transition, requiring adjustment to being a committed couple, negotiation of new roles, and development of an intimate foundation for the future. About 50 percent of first marriages in the United States are expected to end in divorce, and the divorce rate peaks within the first 4 to 5 years of marriage. Thus, young marriages are at risk for distress and divorce within the first 5 years, and the seeds for later negative outcomes appear early in the newlywed stage.

This entry describes characteristics of newlyweds, common problems and challenges that newlyweds face, and factors that predict changes in satisfaction. Although an emerging literature focuses on marriage in non-Western countries, this entry focuses on couples from North America. In some U.S. states, Canada, and many other countries, marriage between same-sex partners is legally sanctioned, but almost all research on newlyweds is concerned with heterosexual unions. Thus, this entry focuses on heterosexual newlywed couples.

Characteristics of Newlywed Couples

Marriage rates have been steadily declining since the early 1970s, and the rate of cohabitation as a first conjugal union has been increasing. Despite declines in marriage rates, more than half of all men and women are married, and about 80 to 90 percent of people are expected to marry at some point in their lives. Newlywed couples are engaged for an average of 9 months and over half cohabit before marriage. About one third of newlywed couples receive premarital counseling, which is overwhelmingly church-based. Marriage is common in all cultures and ethnic groups in the United States, and marriage rates are similar for Caucasian, Hispanic, and Asians. African Americans are less likely to marry, and do so at an older age than do couples from other racial groups. Overall, couples are delaying the decision to marry and the average age at marriage has steadily increased; the average age at marriage in the United States is 25.5 years for women and 27 years for men.

Marital Satisfaction in Newlyweds

Newlyweds are almost universally happy in their relationship and experience high levels of love and commitment that are relatively stable during the first year of marriage. However, satisfaction and affection then steadily decline for most, although not all, couples. Much of the research on newlywed marriage focuses on understanding predictors of the erosion of loving feelings, which can be grouped into four classes of variables: static historical and sociodemographic factors, enduring personal dispositions, external stresses and strains, and dyadic interaction processes.

Historical and Sociodemographic Predictors

Relatively static factors such as history of parental divorce, difficult family-of-origin experiences, marrying at a younger age, a shorter dating period, and cohabiting before marriage are associated with negative marital outcomes. Some researchers argue that cohabitation is associated with less religiosity and more permissive attitudes, which are likely to be associated with seeing divorce as a viable option, thus, it is not cohabitation per se that leads to less stable marriages. Others have noted that the timing of cohabitation and level of commitment when cohabitation decisions are made matters. Couples who cohabit after becoming engaged do not seem to experience the same increase in risk for divorce as do couples who live together before becoming engaged.

Enduring Personal Characteristics

Individuals enter relationships with certain enduring dispositions, or personality traits that affect how they manage their relationships. For example, relative to five major personality factors (i.e., the popular Big Five model), newlyweds who are prone to experiencing negative emotions (i.e., neuroticism), less agreeable, less extraverted, less conscientious, and less open, tend to have less satisfying relationships. Spouses who are more prone to negative emotions (i.e., neuroticism) are also more likely to experience steeper declines in their satisfaction over time. Attachment insecurity (i.e., anxiety about availability of their partner or avoidance of intimacy and dependence) is also associated with less satisfying marriages, and with steeper declines in relationship satisfaction.

How spouses think about and process information about their relationship also predicts changes in satisfaction. For example, newlyweds who hold idealized (but not unrealistic) views about their relationship or about each other are happier and more supportive toward each other during the first few years of marriage. Spouses who generate benevolent explanations (i.e., attributions) for partners' negative behavior are also more satisfied. Spouses who reconstruct memories of their relationship and who believe the relationship has improved, even when it has not, also experience less decline in satisfaction.

External Stresses and Strains

External stresses and strains—events or circumstances external to the dyad that pose some difficulty or challenge—can also negatively affect newlywed marriage. Stress may arise from chronic ongoing difficulties such as difficult family relationships, or acute stressors or life events such as job loss or family illness. Chronic or acute stress makes it difficult to successfully manage the challenges of newlywed marriage. Stress may drain energy and divert time and resources away from maintaining the newlywed relationship. It is more difficult for couples to resolve conflict well, to be supportive, and to forgive transgressions when they are also dealing with other substantial problems. Stress arising in relationships with friends and family can be potent risk factors for marital distress; however, if functioning well, and if there is overlap in spouses' social networks, family relationships and friendships may support the developing newlywed marriage.

Another important life event that may create stress is the transition to parenthood. Although the transition to first parenthood may happen at any stage of marriage, newlyweds who are happier in their relationship are particularly likely to choose to have children earlier in their marriage (i.e., within the first few years of marriage, but not before marriage). Becoming parents results in steeper declines in marital satisfaction compared with nonparent newlyweds, but these declines are offset to the degree that couples began their marriages feeling more satisfied and they planned to become parents.

Dyadic Interaction Processes

Dynamic processes, such how newlyweds interact with each other, how they resolve conflict, and how they support each other are established early in marriage and predict stability and changes in satisfaction, regardless of initial levels of satisfaction.

Affection

Following their wedding, newlyweds begin spending less time together in recreational activities, become less affectionate (e.g., kissing and hugging), discuss intimate matters less frequently, and do fewer nice things for each other. The

erosion of positive behaviors and the establishment of negative interaction patterns set the stage for later dissatisfaction and dissolution. In a longitudinal study of marriage, Ted Huston and his colleagues found that patterns of behavior established as newlyweds presaged marital outcomes 13 years later. Spouses who experienced less loving feelings, who showed less affection, and who saw their partners as unresponsive in the first 2 years of marriage were later more likely to divorce or to be unhappily married. Thus, early differences as newlyweds distinguish those couples who go on to have successful and stable marriages in the long term and those who do not.

Conflict

Early in marriage, couples report the most significant sources of conflict are managing tempers and moods, financial concerns, dealing with in-laws, and communication. These areas remain problematic at least through the first few years of marriage, but conflicts around in-laws become less frequent and severe as the marriage progresses, and other issues such as managing household chores and sexual problems become more prominent. These temporal patterns suggest that some issues, such as dealing with in-laws, are generally resolved or become less salient, but that other issues, such as dealing with bad moods and communicating effectively, are likely to persist.

The way newlyweds cope with marital conflict is more important for relationship satisfaction than what they argue about. Researchers have investigated newlyweds' communication skills by bringing them into the laboratory to record and code their behavior and emotions displayed while discussing a conflict. The interaction between what couples say and their emotion predicts trajectories of satisfaction. When spouses are relatively more negative (e.g., devaluing the partner, justifying, denying responsibility, demanding, and invalidating) and less positive (e.g., being open and direct about needs and attitudes, compromising, paraphrasing, asking interested questions, and showing understanding) during problem-solving discussions in the lab, experience declines in satisfaction only when their conversations also lack positive emotions (e.g., interest, affection, humor). Thus, poor conflict resolution skills are not uniformly problematic for relationships and only lead

to faster declines in satisfaction when humor, interest, and affection are also uncommon in couples' conflict discussions.

Aggression

About half of all newlyweds report some physically aggressive behavior within the past year. Physical aggression is usually reciprocal, minor (e.g., shoving and slapping), and infrequent (e.g., once or twice in a year). Low levels of physical aggression remain relatively stable over time, generally occur during conflict, and are more likely when newlyweds are experiencing high levels of stress. More severe levels of physical aggression decline fairly quickly over the first few years of marriage.

Mutual aggression is common in newlywed couples but it is detrimental to the developing relationship and predicts divorce 4 years later. Physical aggression is more related to dissolution of marriage, whereas negative behaviors such as contempt and criticism are more related to couples staying unhappily married.

Social Support

Early research predicting marital change from couples' interactions was based on the idea that resolving conflict well is the cornerstone of a stable and satisfying marriage. Although the way newlyweds resolve problems is undoubtedly important, low-to-moderate associations between early conflict-related behavior and later marital success indicates that other important marital domains contribute to stability and satisfaction. One area that has garnered increasing attention is how newlyweds seek and provide support. Newlyweds' support behaviors are unrelated to initial levels of marital satisfaction, but predict marital change over time. Open and direct expressions of concerns and responding to partner's concerns with understanding, validation, and interest are related to less decline in relationship satisfaction during the first 2 years of marriage, independently of how newlyweds resolve conflict.

Future Directions

Two important areas of future research are exploring differences in newlywed marriage for same-sex couples, for couples in nondominant cultural and

racial groups, or for interracial couples. Relationships of same-sex couples do not differ in many important ways from those of heterosexual couples, but critical tasks facing same-sex couples, such as family acceptance and coming out, could affect marital adjustment. There is a small literature on cultural differences in marriage, but little psychological research on cultural differences in the transition to marriage and predictors of marital change for newlyweds. Early predictors of distress and instability are being established, but marital researchers know relatively little about how these processes unfold over time and how changes affect the developing relationship. Researchers are studying newlyweds who are at relatively similar stages in their relationships (e.g., beginning first marriages, without children, and at similar ages) and following them over time. Repeated assessments of relationship factors using multiple methods—interview, self-report, physiological data, and observational data—will allow for a richer picture of how relationships develop in the early years. Understanding the development of newlywed marriage will be crucial to helping couples develop effective ways of relating to each other and maintaining positive behaviors that maximize chances of relationship success.

Rebecca J. Cobb

See also Early Years of Marriage Project; Marital Satisfaction and Quality; Marital Stability, Prediction of; Marriage, Transition to; Processes of Adaptation in Intimate Relationships (PAIR) Project; Remarriage

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NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION, STATUS DIFFERENCES

Many of our social interactions can be described along a dominance, power, status, or other dimensions suggestive of higher versus lower position. Our work environment is characterized by hierarchies with people in different statuses. But also in intimate relationships, power or status differences between partners (e.g., differences in earning power, differences in dominant interpersonal behavior) are not rare. Even in unstructured groups of people with initially equal status, status hierarchies form readily. Some hierarchies are quite pronounced, such as in the military, and others are quite flat, such as in many nonprofit organizations. Some hierarchies are explicit such as the differences in executive decision-making power between a CEO and an office clerk, and others are more implicit, such as the differences in influence on the decision to watch a particular movie among a group of friends. What is common to all hierarchies is that there is a dominance, power, or status difference among group members. Though there are differences between these concepts, for convenience this entry uses the term *status* to describe all these aspects of vertical position. *Status* has been defined in many different ways. It can be defined as having or striving for privileged access

to restricted resources (e.g., money, time) or as having or striving for influence over others. A hierarchy is defined as the status difference among two or more individuals. It has to be noted that a high-status position per se cannot exist alone because it necessitates somebody with low status.

This entry discusses whether and how people are able to infer the status of their social interaction partners, how people use nonverbal behavior to make status inferences, and which nonverbal behaviors people in actual high-status or low-status positions typically express.

Nonverbal Behavior: Definition and Importance

Nonverbal behavior encompasses communication without words. The distinction between verbal and nonverbal communication is not always easy to make. In verbal communication, each word has a specific meaning and people can be held accountable for what they say. Most nonverbal communication, however, is ambiguous with respect to meaning. Situational aspects such as the relationship between the conversation partners or the topic they are talking about can greatly influence the meaning of specific nonverbal cues. Some of the most commonly investigated nonverbal behaviors are facial expressions, eye gaze, body movements (such as gestures), posture, touching behavior, and vocal behavior, such as tone of voice, speech modulation, or speech duration, just to give a few examples.

Whether verbal or nonverbal behavior matters more as a source of information depends on the situation. When a verbal message is unclear or ambiguous, nonverbal cues play a particularly important role. Nonverbal cues become especially salient and important when they contradict the words being spoken or when people doubt the honesty of a verbal communication. Consistent with this, lie detection is more successful when people rely on nonverbal rather than verbal cues. Nonverbal cues are also important in the expression of emotions. In addition to expressing emotions, however, nonverbal cues have many other functions—for example, to signal attention, reflect physical states such as pain, coordinate turn-taking in conversations, reveal personality characteristics,

and signal interpersonal orientations such as friendliness or dominance.

Expression and Perception of Status Through Nonverbal Behavior

Egon Brunswik's lens model has shown itself to be a useful framework for studying expression and perception of interpersonal characteristics such as status. In a lens model perspective, a target's behavior forms the basis of perceivers' judgments about the target's status. If, for instance, a high-status person talks more than a low-status person, speaking time can be considered an indicator of actual status. A perceiver observes the exhibited behavior, for instance, that one person talks more than another, and infers that the person who talks more is higher in status than the person who talks less. Thus, speaking time is used as a cue of elevated perceived status. If perceived status corresponds to actual status, the assessment is called accurate. Within the lens model, one can ascertain which cues are believed to be associated with status (relation between specific cues and perceived status) and which cues are actually associated with status (relation between specific cues and actual status).

Although most of the cues studied within a lens model approach are either verbal or nonverbal behaviors, other cues can work as identifiers of people's status. Appearance can be another cue people use to assess others' status. For instance, high-status people are perceived as taller than low-status people. In the same vein, formal dress is usually associated with expressed and perceived high status.

Expressing Status Through Nonverbal Behavior

Studies looking at nonverbal behavior and actual (as opposed to perceived) status have defined status in terms of personality, structural status (e.g., rank in an organization, socioeconomic dominance, emergent leadership within a group), or assigned status (e.g., in a psychology experiment). In meta-analyses on the expression of status in nonverbal behavior, only a few behaviors have been related to actual status. High-status people show more bodily openness (arms and legs), interact

at closer interpersonal distances, have louder voices, interrupt others more often, and talk more than low-status people do. Studies also show that high-status people have higher visual dominance—defined as the ratio of percentage of looking while speaking to percentage of looking while listening—than do low-status people.

Surprisingly, only a few nonverbal behaviors actually indicate high status on average across studies because people often think that there are many clear indicators of high and low status. Indeed, people use many more nonverbal cues when they try to infer another person's status, as discussed in the following section.

Perceiving Status Through Nonverbal Behavior

Varied research paradigms have been used to study the perception of status. For instance, target stimuli have been schematic faces, photographs of posed facial cues (e.g., smiling versus nonsmiling or lowered versus raised eyebrows), candid photographs of naturalistic interactions, short video clips of people interacting, or face-to-face interactions.

Nonverbal behaviors that are used systematically by observers to assess the status of target individuals have also been investigated in meta-analyses. Perceivers rate targets higher in status if they show more gazing, lowered eyebrows, a more expressive face, more nodding, less self-touch, more touching others, more gestures, more bodily openness, more erect or tense posture, more body or leg shifts, smaller interpersonal distance, a more variable voice, a louder voice, more interruptions, less pausing, a faster speech rate, a lower voice pitch, more vocal relaxation, and more talking. Also, observers use the visual dominance ratio defined earlier as an indicator of high status.

Many of these status–nonverbal behavior relations are influenced by other variables such as, for instance, gender. More specifically, some nonverbal behaviors show parallel differences in gender and in status (e.g., high-status people tend to talk more, men more than women can be found in high-status positions, and men tend to talk more than women, at least in opposite-gender interactions). Nevertheless, this parallelism does not necessarily mean that the status differences in

nonverbal behavior can be explained by underlying gender differences. Furthermore, for a number of behaviors, this parallelism was lacking. More studies going beyond this parallelism and showing causal relations are needed to clarify this question.

That people use a long list of nonverbal behaviors to judge status reflects the existence of clear stereotypes about the nonverbal behavior of high-status (and low-status) individuals. Fewer nonverbal behaviors are characteristic of people with an actual high or low status than there are nonverbal behaviors perceived as indicators of status. Thus, perceivers seem to use nonverbal cues that do not necessarily indicate the status dimension. People harbor expectations—or stereotypes—about which nonverbal cues are related to high or low status. These expectations are not always correct. If this is the case, are people still accurate in judging another person's status?

Accurately Assessing Status

Whether people are able to tell who is the boss and who is not in a social gathering seems important because it can bring about distinctive advantages. For instance, it can improve effective communication (e.g., directly addressing a request to the person who is able to make a decision), prevent social faux pas (e.g., inappropriately addressing a high-status person), or help a person to maneuver in status hierarchies because knowing who has high and who has low status helps one to plan strategic moves.

Although the findings are not unequivocal, it seems that status can be assessed at better than chance level. For instance, better than chance accuracy was found when perceivers judged which of two target people in a photograph was the other's boss. Other research has found that people could assess the status of university employees based on photographs and observers were able to assess targets' assertiveness in videotaped interactions at better than chance level.

So how can we explain that even if perceivers use many invalid nonverbal cues to assess a target's status, they are still accurate in their assessment? First, the potential nonverbal cues targets emit are endless, so in a given study, the investigators might

not have measured genuinely diagnostic cues. To remedy this drawback, future research should measure a more comprehensive list of behaviors, including verbal and nonverbal behaviors and appearance cues. Second, not all cues contribute equally to accuracy. If, for instance, speaking time is more diagnostic for expressed dominance than is gazing, using speaking time correctly and using gazing incorrectly might still result in considerable accuracy. Third, the correct assessment might be based not on single cues but on combinations of different cues. Accuracy would then be a more “Gestalt”-like impression formation process. There is indeed some evidence suggesting that the pattern of how the different nonverbal and appearance cues used to assess status corresponded to the pattern of how status was expressed in these nonverbal and appearance cues. In other words, there is a positive correlation between beliefs and actual status effects. Thus, accuracy is possible because the way people use the array of nonverbal cues to judge status (i.e., how they weight the relevance of each cue to be an indicator of status) corresponds largely to how much each nonverbal cue is a valid indicator of actual status.

Conclusion

The status dimension is inherent to many different social encounters and thus affects how people interact with each other verbally and nonverbally. However, the fact alone of possessing high (or low) status might only marginally explain the exhibited nonverbal behavior. For instance, a high-status leader can adopt a directive leadership style and show behaviors such as frequent interruptions, a loud voice, and averting gaze while the other is speaking. By contrast, a high-status leader can equally well adopt a participative leadership style and show behaviors such as infrequent interruptions, a soft voice, and looking at the other while he or she speaks. Thus, personality factors or the specific motivation or emotion experienced during an interaction can affect the nonverbal behavior on top of, or even more so, than status per se.

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See also Accuracy in Communication; Communication, Nonverbal; Gender Stereotypes; Interpersonal Sensitivity; Power, Predictors of

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NONVERBAL INVOLVEMENT

Nonverbal involvement refers to the behavioral immediacy between people in social settings. Increased nonverbal involvement is a cumulative product of several behaviors, including closer distance, higher levels of gaze, touch, forward lean, more direct body orientation, and greater expressiveness in facial, gestural, and vocal channels. In general, higher levels of nonverbal involvement signal more intense interactions. High involvement may be positive, as in the embrace of lovers, or negative, as in the brawling of enemies. Because nonverbal communication is typically more important in face-to-face interactions than is verbal communication, nonverbal involvement plays a critical role in the formation and maintenance of

relationships. This entry specifically examines the determinants, functions, and dynamics of nonverbal involvement.

Determinants

A variety of factors combine to shape our interactions and, more specifically, our patterns of nonverbal involvement with others. The first and most basic factor is *biology*. During evolution, patterns of high involvement with mates, offspring, and friends were selected because they promoted reproduction and survival. Closer contact and visual attention to others around us also provide opportunities for social support and adaptive information about our surrounding environments. Next, *cultural norms* prescribe specific patterns of behavior that facilitate order and predictability consistent with societal values. For example, in some Asian, collectivistic cultures, individuals tend to be less expressive in public settings than are individuals in more Western, individualistic societies. Third, *gender differences* in nonverbal involvement are the product of both biology and culture. That is, some behavioral differences between males and females are the result of biological hardwiring, but societal norms can also enhance or diminish the expression of those differences. For example, evolution facilitated women's ability to read the nonverbal behavior of others, but the social norms in many societies also promoted greater sensitivity and caring for women than for men. Next, individual differences in *personality* affect stable preferences for nonverbal involvement in interactions. For example, anxious and introverted individuals usually maintain greater interpersonal distances, lower levels of gaze, and less expressiveness in interactions than do nonanxious and extraverted individuals. In effect, biology, culture, gender, and personality constitute the "baggage" that both precipitate and constrain the practical range of nonverbal involvement in specific social settings.

Nevertheless, behavioral involvement is also affected by the physical design of social environments, the norms in the setting, the particular goals of individuals, and the characteristics of interaction partners. This latter set of situational factors introduces considerable variability in the

way that the same people behave across different settings. For example, the "fanny pats" by many masculine sports heroes following a great play are not likely to be seen with the same people after a successful business meeting. The next section discusses the functions of nonverbal involvement, that is, the utility of nonverbal patterns in the give-and-take of interaction in all types of relationships.

Functions

Similar patterns of nonverbal behavior can serve different functions in different situations. That is, the meaning and impact of a particular nonverbal pattern depends on the determinants and situational influences mentioned earlier. For example, at a funeral, a person might console an opposite-sex acquaintance with a hug, but the same hug might be inappropriate in the workplace. Conversely, a particular function may be manifested with various combinations of nonverbal behavior. For example, comparable levels of liking may be expressed with a moderately close, directly facing approach, and sustained gaze, or by a closer adjacent approach, touch, and a much lower level of gaze. Despite the ambiguity of isolated nonverbal behaviors across situations, there are regularities in the functions of the larger, coordinated behavior patterns. A given pattern of involvement also can simultaneously serve multiple functions.

A first and basic function of nonverbal involvement is that of *providing information* to our partners. Before a word is spoken, intentions are nonverbally communicated to our partners. Although people can manage their behavior in trying to cover their intentions, we can usually tell if an impending interaction is going to be positive or negative from expressions, posture, and movement of a partner. Furthermore, during interaction, patterns of nonverbal involvement qualify the meaning of verbal messages. As a speaker's expression, gaze, and gestures change, so does the impact of the specific comments. For example, if a speaker's nonverbal behavior is inconsistent with the verbal content, the listener might doubt the speaker's candor. Sometimes individuals' own behavior informs them about their feelings toward a partner. That is,

people can “discover” their feelings toward a partner *after* reflecting on their behavior toward the person. Nonverbal involvement between partners also provides relationship information to others. As two people walk hand-in-hand, it is clear that they are a couple.

A second function of nonverbal involvement is *regulating interaction*. Nonverbal behavior is critical in facilitating and inhibiting contact with others. From encounters as brief and mundane as walking past a stranger on the sidewalk to greeting a loved one, specific nonverbal patterns promote or discourage additional interaction. The initiation of gaze is a critical step in facilitating an interaction. If a glance toward the other is combined with a more direct body orientation and a smile, the likelihood of the partner reciprocating attention increases. In contrast, avoiding gaze, turning away, and maintaining a neutral expression inhibit contact. Nonverbal behavior even helps regulate the verbal side of interactions. For example, listeners typically look more at speakers than speakers do at listeners because listeners have to monitor speakers' expressions to comprehend the full meaning of the message.

A particularly important function of nonverbal involvement in relationships is *expressing intimacy*. A close approach, smile, touch, and gaze are common elements in the expression of liking and love and often have a greater impact than verbal sentiments do. This may be partially because of the assumption that nonverbal behaviors are more difficult to control than are words. Nevertheless, nonverbal involvement, like verbal intimacy, may be deliberately managed to create a particular impression. For example, a subordinate might smile excessively to “kiss up” to an intensely disliked boss. In general, the closer the relationship, the more comfortable partners are with higher levels of nonverbal involvement.

As relationships develop over time, rapport increases between partners and is manifested behaviorally in three relatively distinct components. First, mutual attention, in the form of increased gaze and a more direct orientation, reflects concern and investment in a partner. Second, positivity, typically shown in increased gaze, touch, and smiling, is an expression of the strong affective attachment between partners. Finally, coordination is displayed in the behavioral

synchrony between partners and the tendency to match or mimic a partner's movements and posture. In romantic relationships, positivity may be high early in the relationship and decline gradually over time. In contrast, coordination typically increases over time, with long-term couples able to anticipate a partner's behavior. Thus, their interactions are smoother and more efficient as they more or less automatically engage in similar, synchronous postures and movements. The changing course of positivity and coordination over time may be a reflection of the change from passionate love early in a relationship to companionate love later in a relationship.

Behavioral involvement may also be applied in *exercising influence*. That is, across all types of relationships, increasing or decreasing involvement can serve in subtly manipulating the partner toward a specific consequence. A close approach, touch, and gaze can increase compliance to a simple request. More powerful and higher-status individuals typically have the prerogative of initiating high involvement toward a less powerful person. For example, a manager's close approach, gaze, and firm grasp of the subordinate's shoulder while giving an assignment is more intense than simply stating the same instructions from across the room.

Another means of exercising influence is providing feedback and reinforcement to others with increased involvement. A combination of a glance, smile, and touch may often be more effective than verbal reinforcement, just as a scowl and active avoidance may be more effective than negative verbal feedback. Nevertheless, in recent years, concerns about teacher abuse in schools and sexual harassment in the workplace have led to prohibition against touch in some settings. Although the goal of protecting vulnerable individuals is laudable, it may come at the expense of the positive benefits of benign, supportive touch in interactions. Even in our everyday interactions with close friends and family members, a gentle touch and a smile can be initiated to manipulate loved ones. Sometimes it is not the intensity of involvement, such as a touch, but rather, its form that is influential. Specifically, one person's influence may increase when that person copies or mimics the postures and movements of a partner.

A final function is that of *managing impressions*. Sometimes people use their nonverbal behavior

strategically to create particular identities or images. Thus, an individual's behavior is not primarily an affective response to a partner but, rather, a display intended to promote a particular impression to observers. For example, at a party, two individuals might hold hands or wrap an arm around the partner to signal that they are a couple. These displays can be mutual and collaborative or primarily initiated by one member of a pair. In the latter case, an arm around the partner may be a signal that this person is already "taken." Sometimes these behavioral presentations are not only deliberate, but also deceptive. A feuding couple, on the verge of divorce, might hold hands and smile at each other at a family gathering to present the façade of a happy marriage. Thus, they collaborate in the display, but both parties know that it is deceptive. A similar circumstance may be seen with deliberate minimal involvement between romantic partners in social settings. Lovers might try to cover their office romance by literally keeping their distance from each other and minimizing gaze when others are present. These deceptive presentations are clear examples of the occasional and meaningful inconsistency between interpersonal behavior and interpersonal affect.

Thus, nonverbal involvement serves a variety of functions in all types of relationships. The give-and-take at the nonverbal level is, however, shaped by the determinants and situational constraints discussed earlier. Nevertheless, there is some regularity in the particular course of nonverbal exchange over time in interactions. The next section examines these dynamic changes.

Dynamic Processes

Although partners' goals, social norms, and even environmental factors influence the course of interactions, there is typically pressure for stability and predictability in our contacts with others. The most common pattern of exchange in interactions among acquaintances, friends, and loved ones may be described as *reciprocation*, that is, the involvement initiated by one person is matched or reciprocated by the partner. This kind of adjustment may be reactive in that the second person responds to the first person's initial behavior with a similar change in involvement. For example, the first person might

lean forward and smile (increased involvement) and the partner responds with increased gaze and a friendly touch. Alternatively, both parties may react simultaneously with scripted exchanges, such as greetings. Simultaneity of behavior and mimicry, another form of reciprocation, are more likely in long-standing relationships than in newer ones. Although reciprocation of increased involvement is facilitated by positive affect toward the partner, such patterns may also be independent of affect and manipulative in intent.

A contrasting pattern of nonverbal exchange may be described as *compensation*. This pattern is more likely when one person is uncomfortable with the partner's involvement level and compensates for it by moving in the opposite direction. For example, a too-close approach by a stranger might result in a person decreasing involvement by turning away and avoiding gaze. Conversely, if a good friend is less involved than usual, the partner might increase involvement by approaching closer, touching, and initiating gaze. In both cases, an inappropriate or uncomfortable level of involvement precipitates a compensatory adjustment toward a more comfortable level of involvement. Again, such adjustments may be more than a simple response to negative affect, that is, they may be strategic reactions to influence the partner. Over time, both patterns promote stability and facilitate comfortable interactions with others. To the extent that these dynamic changes are successful in creating a relatively stable exchange for both partners, the interaction will tend to run its normal course. If they are not successful, the instability is likely to lead to terminating the interaction early.

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See also Communication, Nonverbal; Display Rules; Intimacy; Personal Space; Rapport; Reciprocity, Norm of; Touch

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NORMS ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS

Social norms are rules that both guide and constrain behaviors in social interactions or relationships. Acting as guides, social norms are theorized to be powerful influences on behavior. Some social norms guide behavior across many different interpersonal relationships, with other norms being unique to specific relationships (e.g., marital). Researchers theorize that several types of social norms influence behavior in different ways. This entry describes three common types—descriptive, injunctive, and subjective—and considers how these types help us understand how social norms influence interpersonal behavior.

Descriptive Norms

Descriptive norms provide guidance to what “most” people are doing. It is the norm of what “is” being done by others or what is “normal.” These norms are influential because they provide a guide to what is useful or normative behavior in a situation. For example, if a student is aware that most of her high school peers are dating, this knowledge can act as a descriptive norm for behavior influencing the student’s own wish to date. Descriptive norms do not always lead to positive behaviors. Among friends, risky sexual behavior may be common and a descriptive norm, although the behavior itself is unhealthy.

Injunctive Norms

Injunctive norms refer to what behavior would be approved or disapproved of, or the norm of what

“should” be done. For injunctive norms, the motivation to follow them is to avoid disapproval or gain approval for performing the “right” behavior. There are many examples of interpersonal injunctive norms, for example, a person’s parents might disapprove of premarital sexual behavior and cohabitation. Breaking these norms can lead to disapproval from others, whereas meeting the norm can lead to approval.

Subjective Norms

Like injunctive norms, subjective norms are based on a perception of whether important others would approve or disapprove of a behavior. However, subjective norms are composed of two constructs: normative beliefs and motivation to comply. Normative beliefs are the awareness of whether a particular person would approve or disapprove of a behavior. Motivation to comply refers to how willing one is to comply with the source of the normative belief. If a person is not motivated to comply with a source of normative beliefs, then those beliefs will not be influential, but if motivation to comply is high, those beliefs will be influential. Within interpersonal relationships, subjective norms should influence the behaviors that are performed within the relationship. For example, one study has shown that people in a romantic relationship who received supportive subjective norms from friends and family for remaining in the relationship were more likely to stay in the relationship over time.

Each of these three types of social norms can motivate interpersonal behavior, although they do so in different ways. Before a social norm can motivate behavior, it must first be learned. A social norm can be transmitted in many different ways.

Sources of Relationship Norms

Norms regarding relationships come from many sources. Many descriptive and injunctive norms represent societal level guides for behavior. These norms can be communicated through folklore, cultural tales, religious stories, and the formal or informal education provided to children and adults. Different subcultures, religious groups, ethnic groups, and regions of a country likely have

somewhat different descriptive and injunctive norms.

The media (movies, television, etc.) provide an important source of social norms. Researchers have suggested that the media present a general set of culturally based values. The interpersonal behaviors (descriptive norms) and the behaviors that result in approval or disapproval (injunctive norms) presented in the media are often in line with the general societal norms. However, studies in the United States have found the media overrepresents sex and violence, and adolescents' viewing of sex on television is associated with viewing promiscuity as normal behavior (descriptive norm). This suggests that the media can contribute to social norms, although how this occurs is complicated.

Social norms are also developed by observing the behaviors of others, or by observing how others expect a person to behave. For children, it may be school or neighborhood peers; for college students, it may be fellow students; for military personnel, it may be others in a unit; for some people, it may be coworkers, neighbors, fellow churchgoers; and so on. For example, perceptions of how many of other college students are sexually active (descriptive norm) can be associated with whether a student becomes sexually active. How much approval or disapproval (injunctive norms) would be received from fellow churchgoers for a divorce may predict remaining in a marriage.

Both friends and family can be sources of descriptive, injunctive, and subjective norms. Behaviors exhibited in parents' marriages can be carried on and replicated in a child's own future relationships. In addition, parents may provide injunctive norms regarding whom a child should be friends with or who they should marry. As motivation to comply with friends and family will likely be higher than for more general acquaintances, normative beliefs from these groups should be particularly influential.

Other researchers have focused on norms that develop in a specific context. In a particular situation, unique norms may develop and guide behavior. For example, if you are at a party where others are singing and dancing, you may do the same, but you would be unlikely to engage in these behaviors if no one else was. These types of norms can be context and situation specific but still influential in that context.

Perception Versus Reality in Relationship Norms

Researchers have noted that people are often inaccurate in their perceptions of social norms. For example, students often overestimate how much other students use alcohol and are sexually active. Children may be inaccurate in predicting what behaviors their parents would approve of. College students overestimate approval from friends for remaining in a romantic relationship. Generally, it is assumed that a person's perceptions of social norms, whether these perceptions are accurate or not, will be a strong predictor of behavior within relationships.

When Do Social Norms Predict Behavior?

Understanding how social norms influence behavior is difficult because many different norms may be relevant to behavior and some norms may be incompatible with each other. For example, an adolescent may receive injunctive norms against premarital sex from parents but perceive that most of his or her peers are having sex. To resolve this issue, norms-researcher Robert Cialdini and his colleagues proposed the focus theory of normative influence. This theory argues that the norm that influences behavior is the norm that is most focal or salient when the behavior is performed. For example, if an adolescent is discussing sex with friends, sexual descriptive norm from peers, rather than parental injunctive norms, will be likely to be more salient and influence behavior.

Along with social norms, attitudes, beliefs, values, personality, and other factors have been found to influence cognition and behavior. So how do we predict which variable will influence behavior? Focal theory predicts that more focal social norms will be more likely to predict behavior over more personal variables (attitudes, beliefs, etc.). However, outside a laboratory setting (where how focal a norm is can be manipulated or measured), it is difficult to determine which variable will predict best.

General Norms

Many different norms are relevant to relationships, including norms for friendships, romantic

relationships, coworkers, and so on. There are norms that are idiosyncratic to a subculture, religious group, region, corporation, high school, and so on. Some social norms are relevant in a specific context (wedding norms), but other norms have relevance across many types of relationships and situations. It is not possible to list all of the relationship norms, so this entry discusses certain specific norms that have relevance for many types of relationships and provide examples of how social norms function.

Norm of Reciprocity

Reciprocity is the action of providing benefits back to a person who had previously provided benefits to the person reciprocating. For example, a person given a birthday gift can reciprocate by giving a birthday gift in the future. The norm of reciprocity refers to the finding that people often feel an obligation to reciprocate benefits provided by others.

The reciprocity norm can be descriptive as friends, family, coworkers, and so forth often model reciprocity in gift-giving, helping behaviors, social support, and other beneficial behaviors. The norm of reciprocity can also be injunctive, for those who break the norm may receive social sanction and those who follow the norm receive praise. This norm of reciprocity is argued to be so important that, with few exceptions, relationships in which it is regularly violated are predicted to be unhappy and possibly result in relationship termination (parent-child relationships are a notable exception). The norm of reciprocity is powerful, occurring across cultures, and has been argued to be a basis of cooperation in human societies.

Filial Piety

Social norms can also be part of maintaining larger social institutions and upholding cultural rules for behavior. For example, researchers in certain cultures have identified the concept of filial piety. Although the nature of filial piety can vary some across regions, cultures, or historical periods, it has generally been considered to direct young people to be obedient to, respectful of, and care for elders, especially parents and family members. Filial piety has been studied in Asian cultures and

a similar concept of “familism” exists in Mexican and Latino cultures.

A young person in these cultures would see other people showing respect and obedience to elders (descriptive norms), receive approval for respecting elders (injunctive norms), and would know that important others want them to be obedient to elders (subjective norms). These norms, in part, contribute to the maintenance of filial piety or familism in those cultures. However, filial piety or familism is maintained by other means, including societal values, beliefs, morals, and religious beliefs that are taught to children. Filial piety is a good example of how social norms can be one component of how a complex social system of beliefs and behaviors can be maintained within a society.

Gender and Marriage Social Norms

The effect of social norms depends on the nature of a relationship and the characteristics of the people in the relationship. For example, research on marriage has often considered how traditional gender role beliefs influence the division of labor within marriages. Gendered divisions of labor can be supported (or undermined) by social norms regarding gender and marriage. A couple may observe that their fathers were the primary breadwinners while their mothers were the primary caregivers for the children (descriptive norms). The couple may receive approval for maintaining a traditional division of labor from parents, family, friends, and religious sources (injunctive norms). Finally, the couple may perceive that important others want them to maintain traditional gendered division of labor (subjective norms).

The influence of social norms will depend on and compete with other variables. The couple's attitudes regarding equality in marriage, personality, skills, and knowledge will partly determine the division of labor in the relationship. For example, couples with beliefs in equality in marriage will likely develop more equal distributions of household work despite norms from parents supporting unequal roles. The division of labor will also depend on the characteristics of the relationship. If the wife's income is higher than the husband's, they may decide the husband will stay home to care for children and the wife will work. Social

norms are experienced within the context of interpersonal relationships, and characteristics of the relationships and the members of it will change how social norms are expressed.

Relationship Development and Norms

Relationships exist over time with a beginning, development over time, and eventually an ending. Social norms are relevant for each stage of a relationship, although norms may differ across relationship types or cultural context. For example, researchers have identified normative behaviors for a first date, but not every culture has “dating.” Instead, cultural relevant social norms lead to other ways of meeting potential partners including matchmaking, arranged marriages, and families interacting.

As relationships progress, some norms will stop being relevant and others will become more important. Beyond the first few dates, a person in a romantic relationship will begin to examine descriptive norms from long-term dating or married couples. As relationships progress, injunctive norms will change as different behaviors are approved of at different stages in a relationship.

Relationship Norms Over Time

Norms are not static, unchanging standards of behavior but instead are responsive to changes in the social, cultural, and historical context. Seventy years ago in the United States, descriptive and injunctive norms would have inhibited interracial friendships. Today in the United States, far fewer people would report descriptive or injunctive norms against these relationships. Romantic and sexual norms have changed in the United States. Both descriptive and injunctive norms have become more approving of premarital sex, cohabitation, and delaying age at marriage. As societies change, social norms will change.

Conclusion

Social norms are powerful predictors of behavior within interpersonal relationships. It is important to remember, however, that the influence of social

norms is complex because there are different types of norms and different relationships and different cultures with different social norms. This complexity adds to the power of social norms but also can make it difficult to predict how and when a person will be influenced by social norms.

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See also Beliefs About Relationships; Goals in Relationships; Media Influences on Relationships; Reciprocity, Norm of; Rules of Relationships

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NOSTALGIA

This entry provides a historical overview of conceptualizations of nostalgia. It contrasts past treatises, which viewed nostalgia as a neurological disease and a psychiatric disorder, with a contemporary approach, which views nostalgia as a predominantly positive, self-relevant, and social emotion. The entry reviews empirical evidence indicating that nostalgia is integral to interpersonal relationships. This evidence shows that

nostalgic memories frequently feature the self in a social context, that nostalgia is triggered by loneliness, and that nostalgia increases secure attachment, interpersonal competence, and perceived social support.

Historical Sketch

The word *nostalgia* was coined in the 17th century by the Swiss physician Johannes Hofer, but references to its meaning can be traced back as far as Homer's *Odyssey*. It is a compound of the Greek words *nostos* (return) and *algos* (pain). The literal meaning of nostalgia is the suffering caused by a desire to return to one's place of origin. In the 17th and 18th centuries, as well as most of the 19th century, nostalgia was thought to be a neurological disease with such varied symptoms as persistent thinking of home, despondency, bouts of weeping, irregular heartbeat, and smothering sensations.

By the end of the 19th century, nostalgia came to be regarded as a psychiatric or psychosomatic disorder. Symptoms included anxiety, sadness, loss of appetite, insomnia, and fever. As the psychodynamic perspective gained strength in the mid-20th century, nostalgia came to be viewed as a regressive disorder reflecting the subconscious desire to return to an early stage of life. Under this influence, nostalgia was downgraded to a variant of depression rooted in incomplete mourning and an inability to cope with the challenges of adulthood, including grief and loss. In this light, it is perhaps not surprising that nostalgia was often equated with homesickness.

Nostalgia did not acquire a unique conceptual status until the latter part of the 20th century. Sociologist Fred Davis laid the groundwork for this new look on nostalgia by showing, for instance, that participants associated words such as *warm*, *old times*, *childhood*, and *yearning* more frequently with nostalgia than with homesickness, suggesting that participants could discriminate between these two concepts. Recently, nostalgia has become the topic of social-psychological inquiry focusing on three issues: the content of nostalgic experiences, the triggers of nostalgia, and the psychological functions of nostalgia. Preliminary answers to these questions highlight

the link between nostalgia and interpersonal relationships.

Interpersonal Relationships and the Content of Nostalgia

Studies on the content of nostalgia have analyzed autobiographical narratives of nostalgic experiences. In one study, researchers retrieved and content-analyzed narratives published in the periodical *Nostalgia*. Another study followed a vivid-recall protocol in which undergraduate students wrote a detailed narrative account about a nostalgic experience, which was content-analyzed. In both studies, the narratives revealed that individuals most frequently felt nostalgic about close others (family members, old friends). Further highlighting the social aspect of nostalgia was the finding that nostalgic narratives almost exclusively featured the self in interpersonal context. Although many narratives contained descriptions of disappointments and losses (separation, death of loved ones), positive and negative aspects were often juxtaposed to create a redemption sequence—a narrative pattern that progresses from a negative to a positive life scene.

Interpersonal Relationships and Triggers of Nostalgia

Research on the triggers of nostalgia has been guided by the idea that nostalgia often occurs in response to negative psychological states and may help the individual to restore psychological equanimity. Most empirical attention has been focused on the discrete negative affective state of loneliness. In experimental research, loneliness was manipulated by giving British (in one study) and Chinese (in another study) undergraduates false feedback regarding their score on a test that ostensibly assessed loneliness. For some participants, the feedback indicated that they were high in loneliness, for others that they were low in loneliness. Participants then completed a measure of nostalgia, rating the extent to which they missed various aspects of their past (e.g., “someone I loved,” “feelings I had”). British and Chinese participants in the high-loneliness condition were more nostalgic than were those in the low-loneliness condition.

Two correlational studies with Chinese participants further showed that loneliness was positively correlated with feelings of nostalgia and that this loneliness-nostalgia association was stronger among high- than among low-resilience individuals. These findings raise the interesting possibility that individuals, particularly those high in resilience, recruit nostalgia to counteract the adverse effects of loneliness.

Interpersonal Relationships and the Psychological Significance of Nostalgia

How might nostalgia help individuals cope with negative subjective states such as loneliness? Research on the psychological functions of nostalgia has identified several pathways. In a typical experiment, some participants are instructed to write about a nostalgic experience and other participants are instructed to write about an ordinary experience from their past. Participants who write about a nostalgic experience (compared with an ordinary experience) show significant increases in positive affect and in positive self-esteem. Furthermore, these experiments provide evidence that nostalgia increases social connectedness. Nostalgic

participants scored higher than did control participants on state measures of secure attachment, perceived social support, and interpersonal competence. Nostalgia, then, can make individuals feel loved and capable of loving others.

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See also Affiliation; Loneliness; Memories and Relationships; Resilience; Social Support, Nature of

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OBSERVATIONAL METHODS

“You can observe a lot just by watching,” baseball great Yogi Berra once said. Researchers interested in human relationships have done a lot of watching, developing varied methods that improve our understanding of human relationships. This entry focuses on these methods and covers the difference between analogue and naturalistic observation, the types of studies employing observation, the use of observation in clinical assessment, and the measurement and statistical considerations involved in observational research.

Naturalistic and Analogue Behavioral Observation

Behavioral observation involves any situation in which an assessor (e.g., a researcher or clinician) systematically watches how people act. Although assessors may also see what effect the situation has on the participants’ thinking, feeling, or physiological reactions, the key focus is on observable action.

Behavioral observation comprises two forms. Naturalistic observation involves the measuring of behavior in its typical context without artificial constraints by the observer.

The prefix “analogue” in *analogue behavioral observation* (ABO) is derived from the same root as “analogy”; an analogue is like something else. In this case, the analogue situation is like a real-life

situation, one that is set up by the observer to see more intriguing things than would happen naturally. Thus, in more scientific terms, ABO can be defined as a situation designed by, manipulated by, or constrained by an assessor that elicits a measured behavior of interest. Observed behaviors can be either verbal or nonverbal (e.g., overt actions, observable facial reactions, verbalized attributions). This entry focuses more heavily on ABO, both because ABO is by far the predominant form of observation used in family studies and because it involves slightly more decisions.

Studies of couples’ communication are a prime example of ABOs in the study of human relationships, with hundreds of such studies in the published literature. In a typical study, psychologists bring a couple into the lab, give each of them a questionnaire (or interview) to find out what the biggest areas of conflict are (e.g., she would like him to spend more time with the children). The observer then brings them into a room (equipped with cameras and microphones) and asks them to discuss the problem and try to resolve it as they might at home. They are then left alone for 10 to 15 minutes as the video records. This process is often repeated for additional conflicts.

Researchers structure conversations in this way because they have a theory that conflict is important; observers set up the situation so that there is a high probability that it will happen while the video is recording. The likelihood that a conflict would occur if the observer watched any random 15-minute segment of the couple’s at-home behavior is low. In fact, one of the originators of the

conflict-oriented ABO method, psychologist John Gottman, set up a wired apartment in Seattle and had couples stay for 24 hours. Unlike his other studies that tested theories about how couples handle conflict, Gottman saw little conflict. There was so little that he and his colleagues had to come up with a different set of behaviors to study, for example how one partner would try to get the other's attention and whether these attempts worked.

ABO exists on a continuum of naturalism, ranging from highly contrived situations (e.g., How quickly do people walk down the hallway after being exposed to subconsciously presented words about aging?) to naturalistic situations arranged in unnatural ways or settings (e.g., How do couples talk with one another when asked to discuss their top problem topic?) to naturalistic situations with some (but minimal) experimenter-dictated restrictions. Pure naturalistic observation involves no restrictions at all (e.g., How many acts of aggression occur during recess on a school's playground?).

ABO is used as a hypothesis-testing tool for three purposes: (a) to observe otherwise difficult-to-observe behaviors (e.g., conflict behaviors), (b) to isolate the determinants of behavior (e.g., conflicts when a woman is asked to press for a desired change versus when a man is asked to press for change), and (c) to observe qualities of social interaction that unfold over time (e.g., anger escalation between mothers and children during a 15-minute period when the playing with certain objects in the room is forbidden). Although naturalistic observation might be preferable (i.e., observers would not need to guess about how comparable the behaviors were to those in real life situations), the first two purposes require controlled experimentation, necessitating ABO; for the third purpose, ABO is often preferable because it allows the observer to "stack the deck" to make it more likely that the behaviors (and the cause-effect relations) of interest will occur when the assessor can see them.

Types of Studies Using Observational Methods

ABO studies can roughly be divided into those that study the effects of specific situations on individual behavior and those that are interested in behaviors that arise in social situations. The goals

of first type of study are to manipulate the setting and test individual differences in response. That is, the situation is set and variations in individuals' behavior are observed. This type of study is common in developmental psychology (e.g., visual cliff experiments), social psychology (e.g., prosocial behavior experiments, emotion regulation experiments), and clinical psychology (e.g., social anxiety assessment).

Studies of social situation employ ABO mostly as a convenience in assessing quasi-naturalistic interaction. The goal of such assessment is typically to understand behavior and its determinants in situations in which participants influence each other while interacting (e.g., groups, families, couples). Understanding generalizable factors that promote or maintain problem behaviors in such systems typically requires more naturalistic approaches than those used in controlled, manipulated situation studies.

Naturalistic observation is used when the behavior of interest happens frequently (e.g., a spouse's or child's bid for attention), predictably (e.g., a mother dropping off a child at daycare), or is demarcated in a way that allows for efficient culling (e.g., loud arguments can activate a recorder with a particular decibel threshold; recorder is activated by the parent at salient times).

Clinical Assessment

Behavioral observation is a useful tool in clinical assessment, although relatively few paradigms have been developed specifically with this application in mind. To be clinically useful, behavioral observation must efficiently provide reliable, valid, nonredundant, and cost-effective information. Because most systematic, empirically sound observation is done in research studies with methods that are impractical in common clinical practice, clinical observational assessments are typically impressionistic rather than formal and statistical. That is, clinical observation almost always is used simply to flesh out self-report information. For example, clinicians observing couple or parent-child interactions do not typically use validated coding systems and calibrate their coding reliability systematically and regularly. Regrettably, the use of any formal,

systematic observation in clinical assessment is relatively rare. This oversight is especially pronounced with couples, families, and children (who typically are accompanied by at least one parent), as the social situation that causes, helps maintain, or can help ameliorate problems is already in the potential observer's office; obtaining such social situations with individual clients is considerably more difficult.

Measurement Considerations

Each behavioral observation paradigm and its accompanying coding systems must be separately considered for "psychometrics"—measurement issues such as interobserver agreement (for systems using human observers), reliability, validity, and utility. *Interobserver agreement* is the concurrence of two or more observers that a particular behavior occurred or occurred at a particular intensity. *Reliability* is the reproducibility of observations (i.e., that the findings are stable and not a fluke). *Validity* is establishing that an observational task or coding measures what it intends to measure. *Utility* refers to the usefulness of results.

The coding of behaviors turns observation into a true tool. Creation or use of a coding system is a theoretical act, and the following questions should have answers before proceeding: Why are you observing? What do you hope to learn? How will it affect your hypotheses (i.e., either research questions or case conceptualization questions)? This is especially true because coding of many observed target behaviors is difficult to do in a reliable, valid, and cost-effective manner.

Sampling

The major sampling strategies are event sampling (the occurrence of certain behavior is coded, ideally in sequential fashion), duration sampling (the length of each behavior is recorded), interval sampling (the observational period is divided into time blocks; during each time block, the occurrence of each code is noted), and time sampling (intermittent observations are made, typically in a duration or interval sampling manner).

Behavioral Targets

Some behaviors are so concrete that the observer serves more as a recorder than as a coder (e.g., the length of time a child stays seated during a time out). Other behaviors require at least some degree of inference (e.g., parallel versus solitary play in young children). Researchers will typically provide a coding manual with prototypical examples, but exhaustive, universal definitions are not possible; thus, the coder is considered a "cultural informant" and uses his or her common sense of the culturally normative meaning of behaviors to infer that a combination of situational, linguistic, paralinguistic, or contextual cues amounts to a behavior that can be coded. Cultural informants will not always agree, for example, whether a particular utterance should be considered "hostile" in a couples coding system; the strength of the system is based largely on a reasonably high level of agreement among coders on the putative hostility of the behavior, on agreement between the coders and the developer, and on the ability of the system to make sensible discriminations (e.g., couples in therapy are likely more hostile than are happy couples) and predictions (e.g., hostile couples may be more likely to divorce). Concrete codes are not necessarily better than informant-inferred codes; sometimes one allows for a more valid measurement of a construct, sometimes the other does. In accord with Occam's razor, coding should be as simple as possible to reliably capture the behavioral constructs of interest.

Global (i.e., molar) coding systems make summary ratings for each code during the entire observation (or across large time intervals). Codes tend to be few, representing behavioral classes (e.g., negativity). Microbehavioral (i.e., molecular) systems code behavior as it unfolds over time and tend to have many fine-grained behavioral codes (e.g., eye contact, criticize, whine).

Topographical coding systems measure the occurrence of a behavior (including, potentially, its duration). Dimensional coding systems measure the intensity of the behavior. Microbehavioral systems tend to be topographical; although global systems tend to use rating scales, they may summarize frequency rather than intensity. Dimensional coding of intensity, especially on moment-by-moment basis, has been used sparingly in observation.

Conclusions

Behavioral observation can be a good theory testing tool because (depending on exactly how it is employed) it minimizes the need for inferences to assess behavior, it can facilitate formal or informal analysis of cause and effect, it can provide the assessor with experimental control of situational factors, it can facilitate the observation of otherwise unobservable behaviors, and it can provide an additional source of useful information in a multimodal strategy (e.g., questionnaires, interviews, observation). Finally, because the assessor can set up a situation that increases the probability that behaviors of interest will occur during the observation period, ABO can be high in clinical utility and research efficiency.

Like any tool, however, observation's usefulness depends on its match to the resources and needs of the person considering using it. Observation is often a time-, labor-, and money-intensive assessment strategy; the use of research-tested protocols and coding is often impractical in clinical settings; adaptations of empirically supported observational methodology in clinical settings may render them unreliable and of dubious validity; the conditional nature of validity may make it difficult to generalize observed behavior to the broad variety of real world settings; and, the less naturalistic the ABO situation, the more nagging the concerns about external validity (i.e., applicability to real-world situations).

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See also Assessment of Couples; Assessment of Families; Coding Systems for Observing Interactions; Communication Skills; Conflict Measurement and Assessment; Family Communication

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OBSESSIVE LOVE

Models of romantic love postulate sets of distinct qualities, such as (a) passion, intimacy, and commitment; (b) attachment, caregiving, and sexuality; (c) passionate and companionate love; and (d) caring and needing. These qualities can occur in various combinations and differing levels of intensity during a relationship. Obsessive love is a unique type of romantic love characterized by a dominant cognitive pattern of recurrent and persistent thoughts, impulses, or images about being with another person in a romantic or sexual relationship. Obsessive love may overlap with other attachment systems (e.g., maternal attachment) and love in other contexts (e.g., familial love; friendship love), but this entry is limited to obsessive love as a type of romantic love.

Obsessive love can occur during different phases of a romantic relationship. It may exist before any interaction and be the precursor to a developing relationship that results in more complete love (e.g., intimacy and commitment). It may be a component of romantic love that is complemented by other attributes (e.g., intimacy). Obsessive love may also be a consequence of a terminated romantic relationship where, in the absence of further interaction and other attributes (e.g., commitment), the cognitive obsession for the love object persists.

The cognitive components of obsessive love would both contribute to and be a result of motivational systems (e.g., attachment, mate selection) and biological systems (e.g., sexual arousal) that have interpersonal, intrapsychic, and biological origins. These systems can fuel the obsessive cognitions and result in emotions that are intense, enduring, and seemingly uncontrollable. Thus,

obsessive love, much like other forms of romantic love, is accompanied by a motivation to approach a potential partner to fulfill needs for affiliation, closeness, intimacy, attachment, and sex; however, unlike other forms of love, obsessive love is marked by unequal commitment, lack of reciprocation, and repulsed approaches. Obsessive love is similar to infatuation, lust, a "crush," and limerence, all of which are viewed as an involuntary and emotional state of intense romantic desire for another person.

Obsessive love may also be perceived by the individual as being dystonic because it leads to distress and anxiety. Obsessive love has some characteristics in common with the perspective that views love as an addiction. The dystonic qualities of addictive love are viewed as tied to psychological inadequacies and interpersonal incompetencies of the individual because the obsession may be a means of shifting attention away from the self and toward an external object.

The most substantial feature of obsessive love is persistent and recurring thoughts, impulses, and images coupled with cognitive distortions. These cognitive distortions are characterized by an intense need to be with the love object, biased interpretation of the love object's actions, and the belief that this person alone can fulfill romantic desires. In addition to idealization and incorrect or inappropriate interpretations of the love object's intentions, the lack of commitment by the love object runs the risk of producing consternation when love is unreciprocated or rejected. Active attempts to suppress the predominant cognitions may only increase their frequency and prolong their duration. Thus, these ruminations tend to increase interest in the love object and to reinforce the importance of the love object for obtaining a satisfying relationship, while diminishing the self if that love is unrequited.

Obsessive love can be a benign infatuation that is private, never results in interpersonal romantic behaviors toward the love object, and, with time, passes. Or, obsessive love may lead to a fulfilling lifelong relationship after a period of unreciprocated pursuit. Obsessive love, with its preoccupation for the love object and its desire for greater intimacy, can lead to both appropriate and inappropriate actions that attempt to establish and develop a relationship. As positive as such

potential outcomes may be, the behavioral manifestations of obsessive love can be counterproductive, undermine establishing a relationship by driving the love object away, and potentially be catastrophic for both individuals. Thus, the behavioral concomitants of obsessive love represent a continuum of behaviors that (a) can be as simple as loving from afar and initiating the development of a relationship through (b) courting the love object with the goal of a permanent long-term relationship to (c) stalking and obsessive relationship pursuit.

Obsessive love is a high-stakes gamble in which the potential for producing an enduring relationship justifies, in some instances, the use of unscrupulous, Machiavellian, and immoral tactics (although the pursuers do not perceive them as such) along with the risks of failure, embarrassment, and lowered self-esteem. For the love object, this obsessive love can be emotionally trying from the standpoint of having to continually reject another and respond to unwanted advances.

Because of the mix of frustration resulting from rejection and the prospect of a potential relationship that might yet develop, obsessive love is accompanied by both positive and negative emotions. The obsessive lover may view rejection as indicating interest by the love object in a relationship (i.e., playing hard to get). These ruminations and emotions may change during the relationship as rejection mounts.

Although not clinically pathological, obsessive love does share characteristics with obsessions that are pathological (e.g., obsessive-compulsive disorder, criminal stalking) in that obsessive love may involve cognitions that seem inappropriate, they may intrude in ways that distract the individual during routine activities, and they may be perceived as uncontrollable. Typically, the intensity and duration of these attributes are not extreme enough to warrant a clinical diagnosis and are, therefore, considered part of normal phenomena.

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See also Cognitive Processes in Relationships; Dependence; Jealousy; Love, Companionate and Passionate; Love, Unreciprocated; Obsessive Relational Intrusion

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OBSESSIVE RELATIONAL INTRUSION

It is not uncommon for two individuals to possess incompatible goals and intentions for a shared relationship. For example, one person may desire romance but the other prefers a platonic friendship; one person may want to terminate a relationship that the partner wishes to continue. Such disjunctive relationships can lead to obsessive relational intrusion (ORI), in which one person persistently pursues interdependence with another person that the other explicitly eschews. This entry summarizes manifestations of ORI and reviews the factors that contribute to the occurrence of this phenomenon.

Many of the patterns of behavior that characterize ORI closely resemble ordinary relationship pursuit behaviors. The pursuer engages in activities designed to establish proximity, foster contact, seek affinity, reduce uncertainty, and cultivate closeness and interdependence. Because these behaviors are prosocial, and because the intention behind them may be unclear, the incompatibility of relational goals may take some time to be revealed. When these patterns of behavior are repeated or intensified despite overt rejection by the pursued individual, they become excessive and intrusive.

A single episode of unwanted pursuit does not qualify as ORI. Rather, ORI involves a pattern of unwanted behaviors across multiple episodes of interaction. The relative severity of ORI depends on the *persistence* of the obsessive pursuer. Mild

persistence is annoying and pestering, but not particularly distressing. Indeed, some of the inconvenience experienced by the pursued person may be counterbalanced by simultaneously feeling flattered by the unwanted attention. Mildly persistent pursuit involves flirtation, ingratiation, and attempts to be in proximity to the pursued. This can include such behaviors as giving gifts, requesting dates, using third parties to obtain information about the pursued, approaching the pursued in public places, and making contacts via phone calls, instant messages, and the like. When pursuit becomes moderately persistent, it is more frustrating and troublesome to the pursued. The extended duration of ORI as well as the nature and frequency of the unwanted behaviors render the pursuit more exasperating and intrusive. Moderate ORI can include surveillance of the pursued person (e.g., spying, following); trespassing; harassing the pursued's family, friends, or coworkers; spreading false rumors about the pursued, and other behaviors that seem "creepy." Severely persistent ORI is annoying and intrusive, as well as frightening and extremely worrisome. As such, it legally qualifies as stalking. Although stalking can occur for various motives, its most common impetus is the desire to establish or reestablish a relationship with the stalking victim. Ironically, some rejected relationship pursuers engage in threatening and abusive forms of harassment, sometimes in a desperate attempt to forge the desired relationship, and sometimes as a form of revenge for being rejected.

Various explanations for the occurrence of ORI have been proposed. Common among these are social skill deficits, personality aberrations, and mental disorders. Some persistent pursuers lack social skills that would permit them to seek affinity in appropriate ways and to recognize when their pursuit is unwanted and obsessive. It is not uncommon for some pursuers to have a history of failed relationships, and insecure attachment, particularly a preoccupied attachment style, is perhaps one of the most common explanations for ORI. Some obsessive pursuers are prone to experiencing possessiveness and morbid jealousy in their close relationships. Other pursuers suffer from disorders ranging from borderline personality to schizophrenia, and in rare cases, erotomania.

In addition to these explanations, there are other accounts for persistent unwanted pursuit

that are grounded in the complexities of negotiating ordinary personal relationships. Relationships are coconstructed through implication and tacit communication, thereby allowing much room for the mismatching of relationship goals and intentions. Thus, ingratiating behavior that is motivated by the desire to increase relationship closeness can be interpreted by the recipient as mere friendliness. At the same time, the recipient's reciprocation of friendly behavior may be incorrectly taken as a sign of reciprocation of the hidden motive to escalate intimacy. In this way, the manifest behaviors of the pursuer and the pursued seem compatible, but the latent meanings each person attaches to the behaviors are incongruent.

Further contributing to mismatching of relational goals is the fact that unwanted bids for relationship connection tend to be rejected in an indirect and polite fashion. The rejecting person "lets the pursuer down easily" to avoid appearing heartless or cruel, to expiate some of the guilt felt when conveying rejection, and to mitigate some of the rejected person's hurt or embarrassment. This sugarcoating of rejection messages is intended to minimize the loss of face for both parties, but the unintended consequence is to render the rejection itself unclear. The pursuer, who is inclined to rationalize that his or her relational intentions will be reciprocated, often regards the soft rejection as ambivalence or encouragement.

Finally, relationship pursuit occurs within a cultural milieu where persistence in striving for important outcomes is both expected and rewarded. We learn early in life, from actual experiences and from depictions in popular culture, success in achieving goals is a function of effort. The mentality that "quitters never win, and winners never quit" extends to the pursuit of desired relationships. To some degree, this persistence is fueled by the perceived occurrence of token resistance. Potential relationship partners sometimes "play hard to get" to avoid appearing too eager. This reinforces the view of relationship pursuers that persistence, even in the face of apparent rejection, is expected and sometimes welcomed.

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See also Affinity Seeking; Love, Unreciprocated; Obsessive Love; Stalking

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OPENING LINES

An opening line or gambit is a verbal or nonverbal tactic employed by an individual to initiate interaction with a stranger whom the individual finds attractive. In the entertainment media, the leading man is often portrayed as a savvy hunter who bags a doe-eyed female by taking an unerring shot with a captivating line. In the 2005 film *Hitch*, Will Smith portrayed the title character, who offered coaching on opening gambits and relationship initiation to male clients. His emphasis was on both confidence and clever meetings. Hitch claimed, "No matter what, no matter when, no matter who . . . any man has a chance to sweep any woman off her feet; he just needs the right broom." This entry discusses different categories of opening lines and the role of opening lines in the sequence of courtship stages.

The Internet provides numerous Web sites that propose to offer the right broom, in the form of "pickup lines." Many of the pickup lines are intended to be humorous, based on the hope that the display of wit will both convey desirable mating attributes to the opposite sex, and break the ice. The site linesthataregood.com for example, offers more than 1,200 possibilities. Many of the opening lines are based on light-hearted compliments to the other person's general beauty and attractiveness:

I think I can die happy now, 'cause I've just seen a piece of heaven.

What does it feel like to be the most beautiful girl in this room?

Is there an airport nearby or is that just my heart taking off?

It is only a short step from complimenting the person's general attractiveness to a comical focus on their body and sexual attractiveness:

Greetings and salivations!

Was your father a mechanic? Then how did you get such a finely tuned body?

Are those space pants? 'Cuz your body is out of this world!

From mentioning the person's sexual desirability, it is but one more step to a humorous sexual proposition:

If I told you that you had a great body, would you hold it against me?

Do you know, your hair and my pillow are perfectly color-coordinated?

(Give the person a bottle of tequila) Drink this, then call me when you're ready.

Rather than focus on the other person's attractiveness, some pickup lines focus on the self's purported desirability, or lack thereof:

Do you believe in love at first sight, or should I walk by again?

Baby, I'm no Fred Flintstone, but I can make your Bedrock!

I bet you \$20 you're gonna turn me down.

Researchers have classified pickup lines into three categories. Cute/flippant lines are compliments, sexual innuendos, and playful challenges, like those listed earlier. Innocuous pickup lines are bland conversational statements such as "Hi" or "What do you think of the band?" Finally, direct opening lines involve a simple, self-deprecating statement, such as "I'm a little embarrassed about this, but I'd really like to meet you." Field tests were conducted on the various categories of opening lines using nearly 300 young adults. Moderately physically attractive males approached females in crowded bars without observing the preliminary nonverbal steps described previously. The direct

and innocuous lines were equally effective, and resulted in the successful initiation of a conversation approximately 50 percent of the time. Cute/flippant lines, by contrast, produced female rejection about 80 percent of the time that the males tried them. Follow-up studies suggested that males who tried cute/flippant lines were seen as less intelligent and less responsible than were males who tried other approaches. Studies conducted in Great Britain produced results similar to those in the United States, finding that those opening lines that involved jokes, empty compliments, and sexual references received poor ratings. By contrast, when the male revealed his helpfulness, generosity, athleticism, culture, and wealth, he was rated more highly, at least in a hypothetical vignette.

Research has focused on opening gambits in face-to-face relationships, but it seems likely that opening gambits based on exaggerated compliments, sexual humor, and bragging are likely to backfire online, just as they do in real life. Such repartee may be enjoyed among cross-sex friends who share some romantic feelings toward one another, but research indicates that few women welcome or accept sexual pickup lines from total strangers. Instead, women tend to be mindful of the risks of pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, or threats to the self-concept, and dodge unexpected arrows from would-be cupids. Like the game of chess from which the term *opening gambit* was derived, initial conversations between strangers take place in the context of implicit norms and scripts.

The pickup line generally occurs in the middle of a sequence of courtship steps, most of which are nonverbal. In the first step in this sequence, a female subtly expresses her interest in companionship, such as by scanning the room, grooming herself, or moving in time to music. A male who is interested will try to make eye contact, and exchange smiles. If the female reciprocates his attention, the male has conditional permission to approach. If the male approaches a female who is not interested in social attention, or who approaches without first making eye contact and implicitly gaining permission for an advance, his chance of success is diminished. But, getting the nod is not enough. If the male's nonverbal behavior while coming closer suggests that he is too dominant and predatory, or too shy and

awkward, the female's interest may evaporate, dooming further efforts to failure. Assuming that the female's interest remains, only then does the male have an opportunity to deliver a pickup line. If the content and delivery are pleasing, then the couple can move forward to flirtatious conversation.

This discussion has focused on males approaching females, but what about the converse situation, in which a female approaches a male? Females often generate all of the attention that they desire by wearing appealing clothing and flashing an attractive smile, but in one observational study, approaches by females to males accounted for nearly 20 percent of the opposite-sex encounters. Field research indicates that females are successful at initiating such conversations approximately 90 percent of the time, regardless of whether they use a cute-flippant, innocuous, or direct opening line. When it comes to short-term relationships, males have much less to lose and lower standards than do females.

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See also Attraction, Sexual; Casual Sex; Evolutionary Psychology and Human Relationships; Flirting; Internet, Attraction on

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OPENNESS AND HONESTY

Openness and honesty are often identified as key characteristics desired in personal relationships. This entry explores how openness and honesty affect personal relationships and discusses whether openness and honesty are always the best policy.

Openness

To be in relationship means to be open. Early work by Irwin Altman and Dalmas Taylor demonstrated this by suggesting that relationships vary in the *breadth* and *depth* of topics that partners discuss. For example, a casual acquaintance relationship with a neighbor is characterized by limited breadth and depth (e.g., the new addition to one's house and the weather are all that are talked about). As such, the relationship has limited openness. If the neighbor is one known for some time and who would be considered a good friend, the breadth and depth of discussion, necessarily, increases substantially (e.g., sharing parenting struggles).

Openness implies giving a partner access to one's self. This access may be manifested in four specific ways. First, relational partners may give each other access to information. The more open one is in a relationship, the more information that is known about him or her. Second, partners may give social access. Social access is characterized by time spent together. For example, one can be open socially by talking on the phone, texting, or physically spending time together. Third is physical access. Physical access includes being open to various forms of touch, such as playful touch and affectionate touch. The final form of access is psychological. Psychological access occurs when one is open about how one feels and thinks (for example, sharing one's deepest fears).

Openness across these four dimensions increases the level of intimacy in a relationship. This increase in intimacy is a result, in part, of the relationship risk that each partner shares. This risk is the result of the increased possibility that partners might use private information in hurtful or inappropriate ways. Increased trust is necessary for partners to manage the increased vulnerability that is a

consequence of relational openness. As such, intimacy is developed not merely through openness, but through openness that facilitates closeness and trust.

Scholars have also identified openness as part of a dialectic that is central to most personal relationships: openness—closedness. Dialectical theorists argue that relationships experience a number of internal tensions that are the result of constant negotiation between opposing or contradictory tendencies (e.g., interdependence—independence; judgment—acceptance). From this perspective, individuals in relationships are constantly being pulled between the desire to be open with one's partner and the desire to maintain privacy.

Societal norms and expectations regarding openness made a significant shift in the 1960s. For example, 50 years ago, there was less expectation that one's romantic partner would also be one's best friend—this was especially true for lower socioeconomic couples. Arthur Bochner has suggested that the countercultural movement of the late 1960s polarized social conduct into two camps: instrumental and expressive. Instrumental conduct emphasized certainty, predictability, restraint, and strategic communication. Expressive conduct was characterized by openness, honest talk, and freedom of expression. Phrases like “tell it like it is” and “let it all hang out” illustrate the expectations that individuals in close relationships should be “totally open” with one another (perhaps with little concern for the other person's feelings). However, multiple studies have indicated that individuals in satisfying intimate relationships (e.g., married couples) are selective in their self-disclosure. Happy spouses are characterized by sharing in moderate amounts with each other. Part of this results from the high levels of self-disclosure experienced in growth stages of the relationship, but it also seems that healthy couples have the ability to sense *what* is important to talk about and *when* and *where* and *how* to talk about it.

Honesty

The role of honesty is important when considering the previous findings. Research has demonstrated a strong positive relationship between honesty and positive relationship outcomes. One

can't be open when giving false information or willfully creating a false image or withholding important information for the purpose of misleading one's partner. However, in light of the findings for openness, it's important to recognize that lack of full self-disclosure (openness) may be appropriate and effective when designed to achieve honesty with one's partner in ways that facilitate understanding—as they say, “timing and delivery is everything.”

It's clear that friends and romantic partners value both openness and honesty as part of the “rules” of the relationship. Honesty has been demonstrated to be positively correlated with feelings of relational closeness, whereas a lack of honesty and openness has been related to abuse in relationships.

A common perception is that deception is appropriate at times within personal relationships. For many, the classic question, “Do these pants make me look fat?” precipitates a dishonest response. However, it has been argued that in close relationships, appropriate responses to difficult questions should be more a matter of timing and phrasing that facilitate honest understanding, rather than strategic deception that may include incomplete, indirect, and unclear responses, to avoid conflict or relational hurt. Dishonest responses tend to decrease openness in the relationship, limit the other's potential responses, and limit the ability to dialogue and respond to one another in creative and supportive ways. Thus, three criteria are central to creating a strategic and effective response to difficult questions. First, what is the function of the question? For example, is the question designed to find out information (“Do I really look fat?”) or is it designed to achieve social support (“I just want to know that you think I'm attractive.”). Second, think about *what*, *when*, *where*, and *how* questions to construct a message that the receiver is likely to understand without becoming defensive. For example, if the pants are not flattering, one might suggest another outfit (“I've always loved you in your black pants.”), then, a few days later, give an honest opinion about the “fat” pants. Third, the speaker needs to consider her or his own level of comfort in sending various types of messages (e.g., many would find it difficult to say, “You look great!” if they didn't really believe it).

Interestingly enough, openness and honesty have also been identified as two of six major personality characteristics. Research on what has become known as the Big Five or Five-Factor model of personality characteristics has included openness as a central personality characteristic in the form of *openness to experience*. Openness to experience is not typically understood in relational terms and, yet, future research may discover that one's tendency to be open through aesthetic appreciation, inquisitiveness, creativity, and unconventionality may be linked to openness in personal relationships. More recent examinations of personality dimensions—the Honesty-Humility (H), Emotionality (E), Extraversion (X), Agreeableness (A), Conscientiousness (C), and Openness to Experience (O) model (HEXACO)—include a sixth dimension of *honesty-humility* that is characterized at one extreme by honesty, fairness, sincerity, and modesty.

Openness and honesty are significant in negotiating personal relationships. Both are strongly associated with rules and expectations for friendships and romantic relationships. The vulnerability that openness and honesty potentially create and the constant relational tension that exists between openness and closedness, and free expression and strategic communication, keep both of these constructs at the center of creating meaning in close relationships.

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See also Deception and Lying; Intimacy; Personality Traits, Effects on Relationships; Privacy; Self-Disclosure; Social Penetration Theory

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OPTIMISM, EFFECTS ON RELATIONSHIPS

One enduring lesson from social and personality psychology is that beliefs affect social behavior. Beliefs can proactively shape the ways that individuals perceive and make sense of social situations, and beliefs can affect how individuals behave toward others. A belief orientation that has received a great deal of attention in a variety of domains is *optimism*. The focus of this entry is on how optimism is related to relationship processes and outcomes. This entry begins by defining optimism, reviewing some of the outcomes generally associated with it, and presenting a general theoretical model that explains why optimists enjoy more favorable outcomes in many areas of life. It then considers the role of optimism in relationships, discusses some of the positive relationship outcomes that have been associated with optimism, and highlights the adaptive relationship processes through which optimism brings about those outcomes.

What Is Optimism?

Optimism is defined as a tendency to expect favorable outcomes. Research has demonstrated that there are individual differences in global optimism—that is, some individuals are more inclined than are others to expect good things across a variety of life domains. A global, dispositional tendency to be optimistic will typically manifest itself in a variety of more specific beliefs tied to particular times, situations, or life domains, and beyond any dispositional tendency, optimistic or pessimistic beliefs may be activated or diminished by short-term factors (for example, people in happy or angry moods are more optimistic than are people in fearful moods). Optimism and pessimism are generally conceptualized as opposite sides of a continuum. Thus, when this entry refers to *optimists* or *pessimists*, that is used as

shorthand for relative differences along such a continuum, not for qualitatively different types of people.

Research on dispositional, global optimism helps paint a picture of the personality traits and outcomes typically associated with being an optimist. This research has shown that optimists tend to have somewhat higher levels of extraversion and self-esteem, and lower levels of neuroticism, stress, anxiety, and hopelessness. Optimism is associated with a number of favorable outcomes in various domains of physical health and psychological functioning. For example, optimism assessed before a stressful life transition has been shown to predict fewer physical symptoms in patients and better immune system functioning during the transition. Optimism is also correlated with lower depression, fewer mood disturbances, and fewer negative interpersonal interactions. Optimism has been shown to predict less negative affect, depression, and stress during major life transitions.

A subset of optimism research has investigated outcomes in interpersonal relationships. Research has shown that individuals with optimistic outlooks are better liked by others and are socially rejected less often, have fewer negative social interactions, have longer-lasting friendships, and experience lesser social alienation and anxiety. In romantic relationships, both optimists and their partners enjoy greater relationship satisfaction, and optimists' relationships are at lower risk of breaking up.

How Optimism Influences Outcomes

Charles Carver and Michael Scheier, who have theorized and written extensively about optimism, have proposed that the associations between optimism and positive outcomes can be explained using an expectancy-value model of self-regulation and goals. Their model starts with the key assumption that nearly all behavior is driven, implicitly or explicitly, by goals. According to an expectancy-value model, goal-driven behavior is energized by two factors. The *value* of a goal refers to its desirability to the individual. *Expectancies* refer to beliefs about the attainability of goals. Goal pursuit is a joint function of value and expectancies: All else held equal, an individual will be more

persistent in pursuing a goal when that goal is greatly valued and when the individual expects to be successful in attaining the goal. The proposed role of optimism within the expectancy-value framework is that optimists tend to have more favorable expectancies. Thus, one would expect optimists to be more persistent in pursuing desirable goals, and thus to attain better outcomes.

In support of this model, research on coping strategies has indicated that optimists are indeed more persistent and more successful in pursuing goals. When faced with challenges or obstacles, optimists are more likely to use approach-oriented coping strategies like active coping, planning, positive reinterpretation, and less likely to use avoidance-oriented coping strategies such as denial and behavioral disengagement. Optimists are also more likely to use coping strategies that target a problem directly when doing so would be effective, but when a problem is unresolvable or uncontrollable, they make use of emotion-based strategies like acceptance, humor, and positive reframing to lessen the problem's impact. Optimists' persistence is not limitless or self-destructive, however: Optimism is also associated with behavioral flexibility in coping with a stressor, such that optimists disengage from hopeless tasks and shift their attention to more tractable problems, rather than proceeding with nonproductive persistence.

Self-regulation theories propose that progress toward goals can affect mood. Consistent with this idea, optimists experience less negative emotion (such as shame, depression, and anger) when their progress toward goals is disrupted, presumably because they anticipate being able to overcome the obstacles. Indeed, optimists regulate their behavior during goal pursuit by working toward their goals and engage in more proactive steps to promote well-being and prevent stress, suggesting that they are better able to prevent their emotions from interfering with their behavior. Optimists' use of emotion-based coping buffers some of the negative emotions that might otherwise accompany failure or unresolvable problems.

Global Optimism and Relationship Processes

Global, dispositional optimism is not explicitly defined as a relational construct, and the most

commonly used measure of global optimism (the Life Orientation Test) makes no reference to beliefs about relationships. Nevertheless, as mentioned earlier, several lines of research on optimism and relationships show that a globally optimistic outlook is associated with a variety of positive social outcomes. The following sections consider how optimism helps bring about positive outcomes in relationships.

Perceived Social Support

One key factor that researchers have focused on is *perceived support*. Perceived support refers to the belief that others will be available to provide assistance and comfort if needed. Perceived support is only modestly related to objective indicators of the actual social support received. Thus, it is more than just a realistic reflection of others' supportive behaviors; perceived support appears to also reflect stable, persistent beliefs about others' likely future behavior. As such, it can promote adaptive responses to stressors and obstacles: Before actual support is even necessary, perceived support can lead an individual to appraise a situation as less stressful (because the individual expects that he or she will be able to draw on others' help to cope with the stressor), lowering the demand for objective support or other coping. Perceived support beliefs show some consistency across multiple others, but they can also vary between types of relationships or between specific individual others. For example, an individual can see a romantic partner as very supportive and a friend as not very supportive, or vice versa.

Research indicates that perceived support is associated with several of the same processes as global optimism, including adaptive coping, favorable expectancies, and positive affect. Recently, several studies have provided more direct support for a link between optimism and perceived support. Optimism has been associated with perceived support among air crash rescue workers, bereaved men, romantic couples, and students transitioning to college. It appears that, if global optimism is a general tendency to expect good things, perceived support is a more specific manifestation of optimism in which one expects a particular good thing (social support) in a particular context (close relationships).

Supportive Behaviors in Relationships

Another way that optimism can lead to positive relational outcomes is through actual social support, both offered and received by optimists. One factor to consider is the sheer availability of supportive others. Optimism is a socially valued trait, and as a result optimists tend to be well-liked by others and have larger social networks. Thus, one of the benefits of optimism is to simply have more people available to offer support in difficult times.

Beyond sheer quantity of support, however, optimism affects the quality of support given and received in close relationships. According to the expectancy-value framework, optimists will expect that conflicts with partners can be successfully resolved. As a result, optimists can be expected not to withdraw from conflicts and instead to engage in flexible, constructive, and cooperative problem-solving behaviors with partners. Withdrawal or disengagement from conflict is a major risk factor for relationships; optimism should therefore lower the probability of this risk. Research has supported this prediction: When discussing conflicts with partners, optimists are more likely to listen to their partners and demonstrate interest, and less likely to criticize or withdraw from the conflict. Of particular interest is that the partners of optimists engage in the same constructive behaviors as optimists. In other words, the partner of an optimist will reciprocate the optimist's flexible engagement in problem-solving, regardless of the partner's own level of optimism. These reciprocal, constructive problem-solving processes are a major mechanism by which optimism brings about positive relationship outcomes (i.e., high relationship satisfaction for both partners, and low probability of breakup or divorce).

Specific Optimistic Beliefs

This entry so far has addressed global, dispositional optimism—the general tendency to expect favorable outcomes. A complementary approach is to define optimism with respect to some particular time, situation, or life domain. Thus, rather than focusing on (global, stable) optimists versus pessimists, one might instead consider the importance of particular optimistic beliefs. As discussed

earlier, the two ways of thinking about optimism are not entirely unrelated. A global tendency to be optimistic (“good things are going to happen”) can give rise to more specific optimistic beliefs, such as perceived support (“my partner will still love me after this argument”), that act as more specific expectancies to support flexible and constructive pursuit of relational goals. As a practical matter, however, an emphasis on specific beliefs highlights avenues for intervention and change: Whereas it might be difficult to change someone’s global outlook, it is more reasonable to target specific beliefs in domains where they are causing the most harm (i.e., through therapy or self-improvement).

Generally speaking, research on optimistic beliefs about relationships has shown that they lead to adaptive outcomes. Research by Sandra Murray and others has shown that partners who have *positive illusions* about each other—meaning more positive views of a partner than the partner has of himself or herself—have more satisfying and longer-lasting relationships. Such positive illusions are most adaptive when they are quite general in their content: A belief that “my partner is a good person” tends to be beneficial for the relationship, even if the believer has to overlook a few of the partner’s foibles and failings. However, unrealistically optimistic beliefs about partners are less adaptive when they are so specific that they create opportunities for tangible disappointment. For example, a belief that “my partner is a neat and tidy person” can raise high expectations that come crashing down when faced with a sink full of dirty dishes night after night. Researchers Lisa Neff and Ben Karney have identified “global adoration and specific accuracy” as an especially adaptive pattern in marital relationships.

Conclusion

Optimism brings about positive outcomes in relationships by promoting favorable expectancies, which in turn cause individuals to pursue their relationship goals more flexibly and persistently. This core principle helps explain why other individual differences that correlate only modestly with optimism, such as a secure attachment style or low fear of negative evaluation, appear to lead

to many of the same outcomes: They are multiple pathways to favorable expectancies. This principle also suggests avenues for therapeutic intervention or self-improvement. The benefits enjoyed by optimists may be accessible to individuals who work on changing their beliefs. By identifying and revising irrational or pessimistic beliefs about a partner, through therapy or introspection, it may be possible to cultivate a mindset that will lead to more constructive interactions with a partner, and ultimately, to a more satisfying and longer-lasting relationship.

Sanjay Srivastava and Kimberly Angelo

See also Approach and Avoidance Orientations; Beliefs About Relationships; Expectations About Relationships; Personality Traits, Effects on Relationships; Social Support, Nature of

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OSTRACISM

Ostracism—ignoring and excluding others—is one of the most fundamental strategies for regulating behavior among all social animals, including humans. Social animals such as lions, primates, and even bees ostracize burdensome members to protect and strengthen the group.

Among social animals and in tribal communities, ostracism typically results in death of the ostracized member. Humans also ostracize to strengthen the group, in addition to gaining control over the outcast member, to increase cohesion among the other ostracizing members, to protect themselves from similar treatment by others, and to punish. Ostracism can lead either to ultimate expulsion or can motivate the ostracized member to adjust his or her behavior to be acceptable to the others. In close relationships, a relational form of ostracism is a common occurrence—in Western cultures, it is called *the silent treatment*. At least 70 percent of adults in the United States report being given the silent treatment by a loved one. The silent treatment consists of several behaviors, including silence by the ostracizer to the target of the ostracism, but also lack of responsiveness (verbally and nonverbally), and aversion of eye gaze.

Many experimental studies are now aimed at assessing the impact of ostracism, as well as related concepts such as social exclusion and rejection. Methods for inducing ostracism range from humiliating and public forms of rejection and expulsion, to seemingly innocuous instances of being excluded in a virtual ball toss game (called Cyberball) with strangers. Additionally, telling people that others do not wish to work with them, that their personalities indicate a future alone, or even asking them to imagine past or future instances of exclusion are sufficient to induce the painful consequences of ostracism. A handful of qualitative or interview studies assess the long-term impact of persistent ostracism, as well as role-play and diary studies. This entry discusses three stages of ostracism's impact on the individual: immediate (or reflexive) responses, short-term (reflective) coping reactions, and long-term (resignation) reactions.

First Stage: Reflexive Pain

The impact of ostracism on the target follows three stages. During the initial ostracism episode itself, the target feels pain and distress. This pain has been documented by self-reports, pain estimates, and activation of the dorsal anterior cingulate cortex (dACC), the same region of the brain

that is activated when individuals experience physical pain. The ostracized individual then experiences a threat to four fundamental human needs: the need to belong, to maintain a reasonably high self-esteem, to perceive control over his or her environment, and to feel worthy of attention and recognition, also known as meaningful existence. Mood shifts, such as increased anger and sadness, also occur.

Diary research shows that individuals are ostracized about once a day, but many of these instances are relatively minor, such as being ignored by strangers in elevators, and lead to swift recovery. However, when ostracized by important others or by a loved one, recovery is slower and is more distressing for the individual. Nevertheless, the initial pain experienced by any episode of ostracism, regardless of how minor or irrelevant it may seem, appears to be experienced similarly by everyone. Studies have shown that individuals experience the same levels of need threat and distress when ostracized by ingroup members, outgroup members, despised others, even when they know it is being done by a computer. Further, ostracism is similarly painful when one benefits financially from exclusion and when inclusion is costly. Even when one expects to be ostracized in a virtual ball toss game with strangers because the individual's computer is not yet communicating with the other players' computer, distress is experienced. All these findings suggest that detecting ostracism is quick and crude, seemingly bypassing interpretations that would logically lead to easy dismissal. That is, logically, it should be easy to dismiss ostracism by a computer, or by a despised outgroup, but the immediate or reflexive response is still to feel pain.

Second Stage: Reflective Appraisal and Fortification of Threatened Needs

In the second stage, individuals strive to fortify the needs that are most threatened, through thoughts and behaviors that increase a sense of belonging, affirmation, control, and recognition. The individual increases his or her inclusionary status by becoming more sensitive and likable to others, especially when belonging and self-esteem are most threatened. If control and desire for

recognition are most threatened, the individual may resort to provocative behaviors and even aggression toward the ostracizers and even naïve others.

Thus, research tends to demonstrate two diametrically opposed behavioral clusters. When control is not overly jeopardized (as when reinclusion is possible or one has his or her control reinstated even in another domain), ostracized individuals are more likely to attend to social information (compared with nonsocial information, and in contrast with included individuals), nonconsciously mimic (i.e., copying the behaviors of another without awareness) another person, especially one who shares ingroup membership, strategically behave more cooperatively, conform more to a new group that is unanimously incorrect in its members' perceptual judgments, comply more to requests from a stranger, and behave more likably to others. However, when future inclusion is unlikely or when a sufficient amount of control has been thwarted, individuals have also been shown to be aggressive to ostracizers and naïve others alike, to be uncooperative and unhelpful to those in need, and to be less able to engage in helpful self-regulation.

Third Stage: Resignation

When individuals face repeated or persistent episodes of ostracism from their groups or relationship partners, their ability to allocate resources to fortify their thwarted needs becomes compromised. At some point, they lack the resources, energy, or hope to build up what has continually been torn down. No longer able to attract others or be reincluded, they are more likely to become alienated and resentful of others. For instance, rarely succeeding in the affirmation that inclusion affords, they become depressed. Whereas initial barriers to control lead to reactance (attempts to take control), continued experience with no control leads to learned helplessness, giving up, and depression. Knowing one is unworthy of attention and not being capable of directing others' attention and recognition of the self leads to despair and dysfunctional and unhealthy life choices. Thus, for individuals whose partners give them the silent treatment, either continuously

over the years or routinely after every displeasing act, their options appear to diminish along with their self-esteem. They, in essence, follow the course of an abused spouse who remains in the relationship because they see no other alternatives. In interviews with individuals who have experienced lifelong ostracism, they report suicidal ideation or actual attempts, promiscuity or isolation, depression, eating disorders, and poor health.

People who routinely engage in ostracizing behavior (or the silent treatment) appear to be similarly distressed in the long run. They report that the habit is so strong that it becomes the first line of defense rather than the method of last resort. They report losing close relationships with important others, transforming their targets into, as one research participant said about his son, "a spineless jellyfish," and stripping away their targets' sense of self. Once they have opted to engage in long-term ostracism, they report the inability to reconcile or to begin a "talking treatment" that will heal the relationship. Silence begets silence, and the target eventually reciprocates it.

Conclusion

The emerging literature on ostracism, social exclusion, and rejection suggests that it saps one of the most primitive and core requirements of human nature—belonging to others in a reciprocal and responsive interaction. Given that ostracism is (or was) an adaptive behavior by those who use it, methods to decrease its use will be difficult. Animals use it, children use it, and institutions use it. Parents and teachers give "time-outs" as a form of punishment and behavioral discipline. Ostracism is ingrained in our lives. Thus, the more hopeful course of action will be to seek ways in which targets can immunize themselves to ostracism's self-perpetuating spiral of self-loathing, and to either improve their social skills or to offer them cognitive plans to be included by other individuals and groups.

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See also Abuse and Violence in Relationships; Anger in Relationships; Dark Side of Relationships; Rejection; Rejection Sensitivity; Relational Aggression

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PARENT–ADOLESCENT COMMUNICATION

Adolescence is generally viewed as a difficult period for both adolescents and their parents. The popular perception is that the quality of parent–child relationships declines precipitously during adolescence and teenagers become moody, rebellious, difficult, and disobedient to parents. Yet the overwhelming evidence from decades of psychological research indicates that alienation, rebellion, and very conflicted relationships with parents are the exception, not the norm, and that they occur in only about 10 to 15 percent of all families. Moreover, when found, they usually have their origins in very negative and conflicted relationships prior to adolescence. Research suggests that there is a great deal of continuity from childhood to adolescence in the quality of parent–child relationships. Nevertheless, parent–child relationships and communication change normatively during adolescence. Conflicts and disagreements with parents increase during adolescence, and closeness and adolescents' disclosure to parents about activities declines as teenagers spend less time with parents and more time with their friends. The following sections describe our understanding of adolescent–parent communication, including age-related changes in the amount of time adolescents and parents spend together, conflict and closeness in relationships, adolescents' willingness to disclose to their parents, and adolescent–parent interactions.

Time Spent Together

Psychological research has shown that, with increasing age, teenagers and parents in both the United States and Europe spend progressively less time in each other's company. Psychologists often have assessed the amount of time spent together by employing the "experience sampling method," a daily diary method. Research participants carry pagers for 1 week, and when signaled at random intervals, they report on their location, activities, companions, experiences, and moods. Reed Larson and his colleagues have used this method in many studies and found that the amount of time adolescents spend with their family drops dramatically and steadily across adolescence, from about a third of their waking hours to only about 14 percent. Interestingly, at least in early to middle adolescence, the drop in time spent interacting with the family is because teenagers spend more time alone rather than out of the house. Moreover, there are age-related shifts in the types of activities families report. With age, they spend less time together watching TV and increased time talking together, particularly when siblings are present and more with mothers than with fathers. Family conversations increasingly focus on interpersonal topics, especially for girls. During the high school years, declines in amount of time spent together are partially due to other out-of-home opportunities and "pulls," like jobs or having a driver's license. Thus, although the amount of family time spent together diminishes, there is more direct interaction with parents.

Negative Interactions and Adolescent-Parent Disagreements

Research using the experience sampling method also has shown that there are developmental changes in adolescents' daily emotional experiences within their families. Negative emotional states increase with age, and there are fewer extreme positive states, although the downward trend stops in late adolescence. Early adolescents' emotions are in flux, but there is increasing stability in their daily emotional experiences as they progress through adolescence. These findings parallel the results of both questionnaire studies and observations of family interactions, which typically find that negative interactions increase during adolescence. Across adolescence, girls report less negative affect, as measured on a daily basis, than do boys, but girls also report a wider range of daily variations than do boys in their positive and negative emotions. Also, across adolescence, increases in negative moods are strongly and consistently associated with increased daily stress.

Accompanying the age-related increases in negative emotions, parent-adolescent relationships are typically characterized by modest increases in bickering and disagreement, particularly during early adolescence. Conflicts are usually over everyday, mundane issues such as doing chores around the house, the adolescent's appearance, getting homework done, choice of leisure time activities, and preferences for music, TV, and movies. Thus, conflicts often pertain to adolescents' styles and preferences, rather than to differences in values; in fact, there is a high degree of similarity in religious and political values across generations. Psychologists generally agree that conflict in early adolescence is a normative and temporary perturbation that helps to transform family relationships from a more hierarchical organization (with parents in charge) to a more equal relationship. Research has shown that moderate levels of conflict with parents are associated with better psychosocial adjustment than either no conflict (because a willingness to express different opinions and points of view is considered a healthy aspect of all relationships) or very frequent conflict and that moderate conflict in early adolescence does not influence the quality of later parent-adolescent relationships.

Researchers have distinguished between the rate of conflict (how many conflicts occur and how often they occur) and their intensity (how angry participants get). The evidence indicates that the rate of conflict peaks in early adolescence (ages 12 and 13) and then declines, whereas conflict intensity increases from early to middle adolescence. Adolescents typically have more frequent and intense conflicts with mothers than with fathers, and mother-daughter dyads are usually more conflictive than mother-son dyads (or father-child dyads). Furthermore, similar age trends in parent-adolescent disagreements are found among American families from different ethnic, racial, and cultural backgrounds and also have been observed among Asian youth in Hong Kong and the People's Republic of China, although perhaps at a lower frequency than among European-American youth.

Different explanations have been offered for the increased conflict observed in early adolescence. Laurence Steinberg has proposed that conflicts are due to the biological changes of puberty. Pubertal maturation and the accompanying physical changes in height, weight, and appearance signal adolescents' increasing maturity to parents. Research has shown that as puberty progresses, adolescent males gain more power in the family. Thus, prior to puberty, fathers typically are the most powerful family members, followed by mothers and then sons. After boys pass the peak of pubertal change, the hierarchy shifts, and sons gain more power than mothers (but remain below fathers in terms of dominance). Similar changes in the dominance hierarchy following puberty have been observed among primates, leading some researchers to assert that this is an evolutionary adaptation. In a similar vein, psychoanalytic theory has been used to assert that adolescents separate and detach from parents at puberty and that this is necessary to form new attachments to romantic partners.

Andrew Collins has proposed that the rapid physical, cognitive, and social changes occurring in early adolescence lead to violations of expectations. Parents expect more mature behavior to accompany these observed physical changes, and discrepancies in expectations and behavior cause conflict. Finally, Judith Smetana has found that adolescents and parents interpret conflicts in different ways. Parents reason about conflicts primarily in terms of enforcing social-conventional and

normative standards (“It’s my house, so you need to follow my rules”) and the need for social coordination and responsibility, whereas teenagers overwhelmingly view conflicts as issues of personal choice and prerogatives (“It’s my room—it’s my choice”). When parents attempt to control issues that teenagers believe should be personal, parents may be perceived as overly intrusive and controlling (referred to as parental psychological control), and high levels of parental psychological control have been associated with both greater depression and anxiety and greater conduct problems among teens. Although teenagers want more personal freedom from parents, parents must decide whether teenagers have the competence or maturity to take on new privileges, and parents also are concerned with safeguarding adolescents’ health and safety.

Although the explanations vary, all of these approaches agree that moderate levels of parent-adolescent conflict, especially in the context of supportive parent-adolescent relationships, lead to adolescents’ greater independence from parents. In addition, Susan Silverberg and Laurence Steinberg have pointed out that many parents are coping with their teenagers’ developmental changes at the same time that they are also confronting their own midlife developmental issues and that this can impact parents’ well-being. Conflict with adolescents among parents who are facing midlife issues can lead to increased depression and life dissatisfaction, particularly for mothers.

Overall, most of adolescents’ conflicts with parents are resolved by walking away or giving in to parents, but at least among European-American youth, there is some transfer of power with age, with adolescents getting their way more often. In minority families, it is more common for parents to have the final say in disputes, but as adolescents of other ethnicities become more American acculturated, they resemble European-American youth more in their patterns of conflict resolution. Researchers have claimed that learning to resolving conflicts effectively provides teenagers with developmentally appropriate opportunities to learn negotiation skills that can be used in other relationships.

Divorce and remarriage lead to structural changes in the family and temporarily disrupt adolescent-parent relationships. They also typically lead to increased parent-adolescent conflict, particularly in the first 2 years following a divorce

and with a new stepparent. However, there appears to be less adolescent-parent conflict in stably divorced, mother-headed households than in two-parent households perhaps because mother-adolescent relationships in single-parent, divorced families tend to be less hierarchical and more egalitarian. Both chronic and sudden economic strain due to job loss and unemployment are associated with more negative parent-adolescent relationships, including greater parent-adolescent conflict and more negative emotions.

Research on within-family (sibling) differences in adolescent-parent relationships suggests that conflict increases for both siblings when the first born transitions into adolescence. Furthermore, recent research also has demonstrated that parents’ prior childrearing experience with their first borns influence their expectations for their younger child’s adolescence, even when researchers take the child’s temperament (personality) into account. Parents have less conflict with and greater knowledge of daily activities for later-born than first-born adolescents.

Closeness and Warmth

A well-established finding, obtained in both questionnaire studies and in laboratory studies where trained raters observe parent-adolescent interactions, is that support, closeness, cohesion, and intimacy with parents decline during adolescence. Similar patterns of age-related declines in warmth and cohesion have been observed in ethnic minority and majority youth, but closeness tends to decline at later ages among minority youth and youth from other cultures than among European-American teenagers. A number of studies also suggest that relationships with parents also improve once adolescents leave home.

Relationships with mothers and fathers differ in both quality and substance. Studies consistently show that, across ages, adolescents are closer and spend more time in direct interaction with mothers than with fathers. Mothers have been described as providing more emotional support to their children, whereas fathers provide informational and material support. In keeping with this finding, adolescents also talk more about private matters like dating and sexual attitudes and information with

mothers, but discuss impersonal issues, such as schoolwork, future plans, and social issues, equally with mothers and fathers. In addition, girls discuss private matters with mothers more than do boys.

Parental Monitoring and Adolescent Disclosure

A long-standing conclusion in psychological research is that parental monitoring is increasingly important in adolescence because it allows parents to keep track of their adolescents' activities, peer associations, and whereabouts while permitting greater autonomy. Recently, however, Margaret Kerr and Hakan Stattin found that even accounting for the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship, parents' knowledge of adolescents' whereabouts and activities comes more from adolescents' voluntary disclosure to parents than from parents' attempts to obtain information, track their activities, or control their behavior.

Researchers have identified different strategies that parents use to keep track of adolescents when they are out of the house. Parents may use active methods, such as asking teens directly, asking others (like teachers or their spouse) about what teens are doing, or actively participating in activities with teens (such as driving the child to activities). They also can obtain information voluntarily from others, like the teen or their spouse. Research suggests that mothers and fathers obtain knowledge in somewhat different ways, with mothers using more active means and fathers relying more on obtaining information from their spouses. Mothers and fathers who employ a relational style that includes more voluntary disclosure from teens and more listening and observation tend to know more about their middle adolescents' activities than parents who use other strategies, and, in turn, this greater knowledge has been linked to lower levels of risky behavior over time. For fathers, obtaining information from spouses has also shown significant over-time associations with parental knowledge and subsequent reductions in risk.

Disagreements with parents are a fact of life during adolescence, but as adolescents spend more time out of the house and in the company of peers, they have increased opportunities to decide whether to disclose or withhold information about their activities

from their parents. Evidence suggests that adolescents disclose less to parents in middle adolescence, just when conflict frequency declines and conflict intensity peaks, than at earlier ages. Thus, with age, adolescents may choose to conceal information rather than confront their parents directly. Researchers believe that adolescents' information management provides another route to autonomy development.

Adolescents rarely tell their parents all the details of their whereabouts, associates, or activities, especially when they disagree. According to Nancy Darling, however, when adolescents fully disclose to parents, they do so primarily because they feel obligated to disclose and less frequently because they believe that their parents can legitimately regulate the issue, because they hope to change their parents' minds, or because they feel they cannot get away with not disclosing. Several studies have shown that adolescents' willingness to disclose information to their parents is associated with more responsive parenting, greater trust in parent-adolescent relationships, greater parental behavioral control, and greater parental acceptance. It is also associated with adolescents' better psychosocial adjustment. Also, girls tell their parents more about their activities than do boys.

Adolescents' management of information can range from acts of omission (e.g., avoiding the issue or providing partial information) to deception or lying. Several studies have found that nearly all adolescents report not disclosing information at least some of the time, and their primary strategies include telling parents some of what they want to know while leaving out important information or avoiding the topic altogether. Adolescents do not interpret these forms of information management as lying because they are not intentionally misleading parents by providing them with untrue statements. Lying is less frequent than these other strategies for information management, although researchers have found that nearly all high school students have lied to parents at least once during the past year about money, friends, sexual behavior, friends, parties, dating, and alcohol and drug use. Lying to parents is considered more acceptable among high school than college students and among boys than girls. Adolescents' lying to parents has been associated with poorer adjustment, greater tolerance of deviance, and poorer adolescent-parent

relationships. Although adolescents view dishonesty to parents as morally wrong, they view it as justified when parents treat them unfairly or infringe on their personal prerogatives. Psychological research is just beginning to investigate disclosure, secrecy, and strategies for information management among adolescents of different ethnic, racial, and cultural groups.

Adolescent-Parent Communication and Interactions

Observational studies of family interactions indicate that parents and adolescents reciprocally influence each other. Studies including adolescents of different ages, as well as studies following the same adolescents over time, have found that family interactions that allow adolescents the opportunity to express independent thoughts and feelings while maintaining closeness and connection to parents lead to more mature development and better psychosocial adjustment, including better self-esteem, greater competence, less depression, greater identity development, and more mature moral reasoning. There is some evidence to suggest that when families live in poor and dangerous environments, mothers who undermine their adolescents' independence have better relationships with their teens most likely because limiting autonomy in these contexts is seen as a protective strategy to keep youth safe. Among adolescents living in low-risk environments, however, having a mother who undermines autonomy is associated with poorer relationships with parents.

Research also shows that when parents and adolescents share decision-making authority and make decisions together, adolescents demonstrate better adjustment and are less involved in deviance than when either parents or youth independently make decisions without the other's input. It is particularly advantageous for parents to be involved in and provide some input into adolescents' decision making in early and middle adolescence. However, adolescents typically become more autonomous in their decision making by late adolescence, and increased decision-making autonomy between middle and late adolescence leads to better adjustment, including better self-esteem and less depressed mood, in late adolescence.

Parents and adolescents have both unique and shared views of their family interactions. When adolescents and parents are observed interacting together in laboratory tasks, their perceptions of their family interactions typically diverge from each other and from trained observers' ratings. Parents generally perceive their family interactions as more loving, warm, and cohesive than do outside observers, who in turn view these interactions more positively than do teens. Parents and trained (adult) observers' views of parent-adolescent interactions are more consistent than are observers' and teenagers' perceptions. It is worth noting that these findings differ from the results of research on highly satisfied married couples, which has generally found that spouses share an understanding of their interactions that outside observers do not. In contrast to married couples, parents and adolescents appear to have different stakes in their relationships. Parents may maximize similarities because they want to maintain continuity between generations, whereas adolescents may minimize similarities because they want to differentiate from parents.

Thus, the research reviewed here suggests that conflicts, disagreements, negative moods, closeness, intimacy, and support are all important and developmentally salient aspects of adolescent-parent relationships.

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See also Conflict, Family; Daily Diary Methods; Family Relationships in Adolescence; Mother-Child Relationships in Adolescence and Adulthood; Parent-Child Relationships; Parenting

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PARENTAL INVESTMENT THEORY

Parental Investment Theory is a biological theory that attempts to explain the dynamic, give-and-take relationships among parents, their offspring, and limited resources. In many species, parents are forced to make a difficult choice between investing in themselves (e.g., survival, mating) and investing in their offspring (e.g., feeding, protection). Although both parents typically have a shared interest in the survival of their offspring, males in most species invest substantially less in their offspring than females, due in part to the fact that females must carry their offspring to term and often provide food, breast milk, and protection. This biologically based sex difference in parental investment has several implications for sexual and familial human relationships. This entry describes the theoretical background of parental investment, summarizes related biological theories such as Inclusive Fitness Theory, and discusses Parental Investment Theory’s implications for attachment patterns, human development, and sexual and familial relationships in humans.

Biological Background

In many species, individuals compete with each other for limited resources such as food and mates. Parenting poses the additional problem of trading off investing in offspring versus investing in oneself or other mates. Creating and rearing offspring is often costly, and this is especially true for female mammals, which are biologically obligated to invest their energy in their offspring during gestation.

This investment often continues following the birth of their offspring to include breastfeeding, caretaking, securing food, and protection from predators. Male mammals are typically not obligated to invest in their offspring once they have contributed their sperm. In many mammalian species, male parental investment is not necessary for offspring survival (e.g., cattle, orangutans). Thus, there is a biologically based cost asymmetry for males and females in terms of parental investment in their offspring; the cost for females is nearly always far greater. Thus, the sex difference in paternal investment in offspring in many species is one of quantity versus quality: Males seek to maximize the number of offspring they can produce by seeking multiple mates, whereas females seek to maximize the survival and viability of the offspring they produce.

There is some evidence that offspring who receive some paternal investment are more likely to survive and reproduce than those who receive less or no paternal support. From an evolutionarily perspective, if offspring require investment to thrive and survive, and if paternal investment gives offspring a survival or reproductive advantage over and above maternal investment, then genes favoring paternal investment may be naturally selected for over evolutionary time. Thus, species that currently exhibit some forms of paternal investment, such as modern humans, owl monkeys, and siamangs (a lesser ape), may have faced selection pressures in the evolutionary past that favored some paternal investment over none (e.g., scarce resources). In humans, the protracted length of defenselessness in infancy and early childhood may have facilitated the natural selection of paternal investment over evolutionary time.

Parental Investment Theory seeks to explain the balancing act among the biological drives of the mother, the father, and their offspring. It is a balancing act because there are inherent cost-benefit trade-offs. Investing in offspring often incurs a substantial cost on the investing parent. Energy that parents could use to promote their own health or to find better or additional mates instead gets channeled into promoting the health and development of their offspring. Although the offspring are the direct beneficiaries of parental investment, the parents may later reap the indirect benefits of having their genes passed on to the next generation should their

offspring survive and reproduce. There is, however, an additional cost-benefit asymmetry: The cost of reproduction for males (e.g., contributing sperm) is far less than the cost of reproduction for females (e.g., months of pregnancy, breastfeeding, caretaking, and protection). Thus, in many mammalian species, males are more likely to spend their energy competing with other males to gain access to additional mates, whereas females are more likely to devote more of their energy to providing nurturance and protection for their offspring.

Parental Investment Theory is partly subsumed by a broader biological principle called Inclusive Fitness Theory. Inclusive Fitness Theory posits that individuals are more likely to help and share resources with kin to whom they are closely genetically related than they are with kin to whom they are distantly genetically related or with unrelated persons (nonkin). For example, all else being equal, a person might be more willing to lend money or donate a kidney to a full sibling than a first cousin. This is due in part to the fact that a person shares one-half of their common genes with a full sibling on average, whereas a person shares only one-eighth of their common genes with their first cousin on average. That is, copies of a person's genes are more likely to be found in their sibling (a first-order relative) than in their cousin (a third-order relative). It is theorized that, over evolutionary time, individuals who acted prosocially toward their relatives—even if it incurred a cost—could potentially reap indirect benefits if the prosocial act promoted the survival and reproductive fitness of those relatives who carried copies of the person's genes. Inclusive fitness theory is important to Parental Investment Theory because it helps explain why parents typically invest more in their own offspring than in others' offspring (e.g., nieces, nephews, or unrelated children).

Parental Investment Theory has broad implications for the biological and social sciences. For example, it has garnered a great deal of empirical support in animal models, particularly among species whose offspring cannot survive without some parental investment. Parental Investment Theory also has important implications for human relationships. Among these are paternal uncertainty, mate preferences in sexual and romantic relationships, timing of sexual maturation in girls, and attachment patterns.

Paternal Uncertainty

Paternal uncertainty is an important concept with regard to parental investment. Because women have concealed ovulation and may engage in extrapair copulations (i.e., having more than one sexual partner in a short period of time), men can rarely be certain that their child is in fact their own (i.e., cuckoldry). In contrast, women can be absolutely certain that the child they are carrying is in fact their own. Thus, there is an asymmetry in relatedness certainty between the sexes. Paternal uncertainty can have important implications for parental investment. For example, men are more likely to experience jealousy at any hint of sexual infidelity in their partner and are less likely to invest in their purported offspring if they believe their partner has been sexually unfaithful.

Sexual and Romantic Relationships

Parental Investment Theory has key implications for understanding human sexual and romantic relationships. Because the cost of bearing and rearing children is higher for women than for men, the two sexes differ somewhat in the emphases they place on preferences for mates. Because women typically seek resources and protection for their children, women especially desire strength, dominance, intelligence, ambition, wealth, and the potential for obtaining wealth in their partners. In contrast, because men typically seek multiple mating opportunities, men especially desire characteristics related to physical beauty and fertility in their partners (e.g., youth, healthy appearance, a low waist-to-hip ratio). These sex differences in mate preferences are especially pronounced among people seeking short-term mates (e.g., casual sexual encounters). When people seek long-term mates (e.g., marriage), they are usually forced to compromise on some of their mate preferences to find a well-rounded partner; as a result, these sex differences in mate preferences are smaller in magnitude, but still persist on average. Research on jealousy and reasons for relationship dissolution show a similar pattern. Men tend to experience more jealousy than women regarding their partner's possible sexual infidelity. In contrast, women are more likely than men to abandon their partner if he loses

status or resources (e.g., being fired from a job). In terms of romantic relationships, Parental Investment Theory may help explain why women may tend to leave their mates for wealthier men and why men tend to leave their mates for younger women. Parental Investment Theory may also help to explain why relationships can become particularly strained when resources are scarce, a new baby is on the way, or both. Thus, due to biologically based differences in parental investment costs, men and women experience different pressures to initiate, maintain, dissolve, and repair sexual and romantic relationships.

It is important to note that there is both individual and cross-culture variation in the extent to which the sex differences in mate preferences are exhibited. Moreover, comparatively little is known about how Parental Investment Theory may affect mate preferences in same-sex couples. Nevertheless, a growing empirical literature of questionnaire, laboratory, and field studies have supported the notion that biological differences in parental investment are responsible for some of the observed variation in sex differences in mating preferences. Both men and women, however, do seek common characteristics in mates (e.g., fidelity, agreeableness) and do have a shared interest in the survival of their offspring.

Parent–Child Relationships

Parental Investment Theory has straightforward implications for parent–child relationships. For example, children who have parents who are warm, attentive, and provide resources are more likely to form secure attachment patterns, whereas children who have parents who are neglectful and provide fewer resources are more likely to form anxious-avoidant or anxious-ambivalent attachment patterns. The fact that anxious-ambivalent children warm to strangers more easily than their secure counterparts may even be an adaptive reaction, in that they are trying secure additional resources from a stranger given that their biological parent has only provided inconsistent support and resources. The sex difference in parental investment may also explain why mother–child attachment is comparatively more central to the psychosocial development of a child than father–child attachment, although it

is also possible that greater attachment leads to greater investment.

Maturation and Menarche

There is some empirical evidence that parental investment (or lack thereof) may be related to accelerated sexual maturation, particularly among girls. For example, some research has suggested that girls who are raised in father-absent homes tend to achieve menarche (first menstrual period) earlier than girls who are raised in homes where their biological father is present. Other research has suggested that lower socioeconomic status (SES), which is more common in father-absent homes, may better explain this relationship. Girls who are raised in low-SES or father-absent homes may have few resources, and this may put them on a developmental trajectory where they mature early so that they can gain resources from potential mates instead of their fathers. Although the precise mechanism of this effect is not entirely clear, it appears that paternal investment may play some role in shifting girls' pubertal timing. Much of this research is currently correlational; there is little definitive research showing a causal relationship between paternal absence or lack of paternal investment and accelerated sexual maturation in girls.

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See also Biological Systems for Courtship, Mating, Reproduction, and Parenting; Kin Relationships; Kin Selection; Mate Preferences; Parent–Child Relationships; Parenting

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PARENT–CHILD COMMUNICATION ABOUT SEX

Children become aware of issues surrounding sex and reproduction at a much earlier age than their parents typically anticipate. Everyday life is filled with situations and stimuli that could cause young children to be curious about these matters. Parents should recognize that their children's curiosity is normal and that truthful, but age-appropriate responses would be an effective response. Parents need to be aware that information about sexuality can also be conveyed nonverbally and indirectly in the form of uncomfortable body language and silence about particular topics. Parent–child communication about sex is one way to help children learn about sex and develop sexual values that are consistent with those of their parents. This entry examines research on the prevalence, form, and impact of parent–child sexual communication, as well as the characteristics of those parents who are most likely to discuss sex with their children.

Methodology

There are several ways that parent–child communication about sex has been assessed. Researchers have examined the frequency of sexual discussions, the number and types of topics discussed, the perceived quality of communication, the comfort level of the participants, and the nature and pattern of the discussions. Typically, this is done

in the form of a questionnaire administered to the parents and/or the children, but some researchers have videotaped family sexual discussions or have interviewed family members.

There is generally little correspondence between parents' and children's reports of how much family sexual discussion has occurred. In addition, children are often unaware that their parents disapprove of premarital sex, and parents are often unaware that their children have already engaged in sexual activity. This suggests that family members are not necessarily reliable sources of information about each others' behavior.

Predictors of Parent–Child Sexual Communication

There is virtually no research on parent–child communication with children less than 10 years of age about sex. There are, however, many studies of parent–child communication with adolescents, yielding some consistent findings as well as some confusion. It is clear that many parents do not discuss sexuality with their children. Parents are more likely to discuss sex with their daughters than with their sons, and mothers are more likely to engage in such conversations with sons and daughters than are fathers.

Parents are more likely to talk to their children about sex if they have higher levels of general communication with their child, a greater belief that other teens are engaging in sexual activity, and greater concerns about adolescent sexuality. Mothers who report more sexual discussion with their children tend to have more open general family communication, have greater feelings of competence in sexual communication, and are more likely to have had sexual discussions with their own mothers. Fathers who communicate with their children about sex are also more likely to be open in general family communication, to have discussed sexuality with their own fathers, and to have more years of formal education.

There are some cultural differences with regard to the extent of parent–child communication about sexuality. Parents who are White or African American are more likely to discuss sexuality with their adolescent children than are parents who are Hispanic or Asian. African-American families tend to discuss

sexuality at an earlier age and are more likely to discuss “sensitive” topics than White families.

The Nature of Parent–Child Sexual Communication

Parents avoid sexual discussions with their children for a number of reasons, including potential embarrassment, a fear that they have inadequate knowledge to convey, uncertainty as to how and when to begin such conversations, and a sense that children today already know all there is to know about sexuality, would not take the talk seriously, and would view it as prying.

Those parents who talk to their children about sex tend to focus more on biological aspects of reproduction as well as abstinence and contraception. Findings are mixed with regard to discussions of the risks of sexual activity, with some researchers reporting that parents shy away from the topic and others finding that parents tend to stress the dangers of sex. Such family sexual discussions tend to bypass or downplay the pleasurable and positive aspects of sexuality, particularly in talks with daughters. Family discussions about sex typically involve less mutual participation and fewer words than nonsexual conversations.

Potential Impact of Parent–Child Sexual Communication

Some studies suggest that family discussions about sex are related to more responsible sexual behavior on the part of adolescents, with teens who have had more opportunities to discuss sex with their parents being less likely to engage in premarital sexual activity and, if they do have sex, being more likely to use contraception and to have fewer sexual partners. However, just as many studies have failed to find such a correlation.

When researchers take into account factors beyond simple frequency or extent of sexual discussions, there do seem to be some significant correlations with the behavior of the adolescent children. When permissive parents talk to their children about sex, their offspring are somewhat more likely to engage in premarital sex than when conservative parents talk to their children. Specifically discussing contraception is related to a

greater likelihood of safer sex. In addition, family sexual discussions when adolescents are younger and before they have engaged in sexual intercourse tend to be more effective. Finally, if adolescents perceive their parents as being comfortable and open during sexual discussions or when the adolescents are comfortable during the conversations, they are more likely to delay sexual intercourse and use contraception. It is likely that these positive effects are due at least in part to greater closeness and better general family communication in those families in which sexuality is discussed.

There are few studies that support the view that if parents talk to their children about sex, the children will have more knowledge about sexuality. Parent–child sexual communication appears to have more of an effect on the sexual attitudes or values of children than on knowledge or behavior. Studies indicate that parents who have had more communication about sex with their late adolescent children have offspring whose sexual attitudes are much more similar to their own than do parents who have had less communication about sex with their children.

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See also Family Communication; Family Relationships in Adolescence; Parent–Adolescent Communication; Parent–Child Relationships; Sexuality in Adolescent Relationships

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PARENT–CHILD RELATIONSHIPS

One of the most important and earliest relationships is the parent–child relationship. During infancy, this relationship focuses on the parent responding to the infant's basic needs. Over time, an attachment forms between the parent and child in response to these day-to-day interactions. During toddlerhood, parents attempt to shape their children's social behaviors. Parents play various roles for their toddlers, including acting as teachers, nurturers, and providers of guidance and affection. Throughout childhood, children become more interested in peers. However, parents continue to influence their children through their parenting styles. In addition, parents serve as providers of social opportunities, confidants, coaches, and advisors. Although this relationship evolves throughout development, the parent–child relationship still exerts considerable influence over the child.

Theoretical Approaches to Parent–Child Relationships

Several theoretical approaches address the parent–child relationship, including the typological approach, the attachment-theoretical approach, and the social-interaction approach.

The Typological Approach

One of the most influential theories was proposed by Diana Baumrind, who distinguished among three types of parental childrearing approaches. Authoritative parenting is characterized as warm, responsive, and involved, yet unintrusive. Authoritative parents set reasonable limits and expect appropriately mature behavior from their children. Authoritarian parenting is harsh, unresponsive, and rigid. These parents tend to use power-assertive methods of control with their children. Permissive parenting is lax. Permissive parents exercise inconsistent discipline and allow their children to express their impulses freely. Research has found that authoritative but not authoritarian or overly permissive parenting fosters positive emotional, social, and cognitive development in children. Longitudinal studies indicate that authoritative

parenting is associated with positive outcomes for both younger children and adolescents, and that responsive, firm parent–child relationships were especially important in the development of competence in sons. Moreover, authoritarian childrearing had more negative long-term outcomes for boys than for girls. Sons of authoritarian parents were low in both cognitive and social competence. Their academic and intellectual performance was poor. In addition, they were unfriendly and lacking in initiative, leadership, and self-confidence in their relations with peers. Children of permissive or laissez-faire parents were often impulsive, aggressive, and bossy, and they were low in independence and achievement.

Later, a fourth parenting style was recognized—namely, uninvolved parenting, which is parenting that is indifferent and neglectful. Uninvolved parents focus on their own needs rather than the needs of their child. Uninvolved parenting has been associated with disruptions in attachment for infants and impulsivity, aggression, noncompliance, moodiness, and low self-esteem in older children.

More recently, Brian Barber further distinguished types of control that are not fully captured by Baumrind's four-cell typology. He distinguished behavioral control (regulation of the child's behavior through firm but appropriate discipline and monitoring) from psychological control (regulation of the child's activities by modifying his or her emotional state by using guilt or shame induction, love withdrawal, and parental intrusiveness). High levels of psychological control or high use of both behavioral and psychological control is associated with internalizing problems such as anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, loneliness, and self-derogation.

One concern with the typological approach is whether the identified types and their consequences are universal. Recent studies have questioned the generalizability of these styles across SES and ethnic/cultural groups. For example, research has found lower SES parents are more likely to use an authoritarian style, but this style is often an adaptation to the ecological conditions such as increased danger and threat that may characterize the environments of poor families. Moreover, the use of authoritarian strategies under these circumstances has been linked with more positive outcomes for children. A second challenge to the presumed universal advantage of authoritative childrearing styles comes from

cross-ethnic studies. Accumulating evidence underscores the nonuniversality of these stylistic distinctions and suggests the importance of developing concepts that are based on an indigenous appreciation of the culture in question.

Attachment Approach to Parent–Child Relationships

John Bowlby's attachment theory is derived from the evolutionary assumption that both infants and parents are prepared to respond to each other's behaviors in a way that ensures that parents provide their infants with the care and protection that contributes to their survival. Many children form secure attachments, where caregivers serve as sources of nurturance and affection, which gives these children the confidence to explore the world and become more independent. However, when caregivers are less dependable and nurturing, some children form insecure attachments to their caregivers. These children may exhibit resistant, avoidant, or disorganized behaviors toward their caregivers.

Securely and insecurely attached youngsters develop different social and emotional patterns. Research has found that at 4 to 5 years of age, securely attached children were more socially competent, were more socially skilled, and had more friends than other children. Moreover, their classmates considered them more popular than others. At 8 and 12 years of age, securely attached children continued to be more socially competent, peer oriented, and less dependent on adults. Additionally, they were more likely to develop close friendships than their less securely attached peers. At age 19, those adolescents with a history of secure attachment had higher socioemotional functioning, were more likely to have close family relationships, long-term friendships, sustained romantic involvement, higher self-confidence, and greater determination regarding personal goals than peers who had a history of insecure attachment. Attachment has been linked with self-esteem, risk behaviors, and family communication in high schoolers.

The Parent–Child Interactional Approach

Research in this tradition is based on the assumption that face-to-face interaction with parents may provide the opportunity to learn, rehearse,

and refine social skills that are common to successful social interactions with other social partners. This approach overlaps with the attachment approach: Both focus on the importance of examining parent–child interaction patterns in order to understand later development, but they differ in their emphasis on the theoretical centrality of the attachment construct. The parent–child interactional approach focuses more on specific aspects of parent–child exchanges (e.g., positive and negative reciprocity) and assumes that these variables are continuous in contrast to the categorical approach (i.e., attachment classifications) endorsed by attachment theorists. Research in this tradition has yielded several conclusions. First, the nature of the interaction between parent and child is linked to a variety of social outcomes, including aggression and achievement. Parents who are responsive, warm, and engaging are more likely to have children who are more socially competent. In contrast, parents who are hostile and controlling have children who experience more difficulty with peers.

Although there are many similarities in the interactive styles of mothers and fathers, evidence is emerging that mothers and fathers make unique and independent contributions to their children's social development. Quality, rather than quantity, of parent–child interaction is an important predictor of cognitive and social development. Fathers tend to engage in more emotionally arousing interchanges that induce excitement, which has been linked to the development of children's emotional regulation. Mothers, in contrast, are more emotionally modulated in their exchanges with infants and children, but are more didactic and use more toys and materials in their interactions. Both maternal and paternal styles, especially when used in a manner that is sensitive to the child's behavior and emotions, are related to children's success with peers.

Not only are differences in interactive style associated with children's social competence, but the nature of the emotional displays during parent–child interaction is important as well. The affective (emotional) quality of popular children's interactions with their parents differs from that of rejected children and their parents. Consistently higher levels of positive affect have been found in both parents and children in popular dyads than in rejected dyads. Whereas negative parental affect is associated with lower levels of peer

acceptance, children of fathers who tend to respond to their children's negative affect displays with negative affect of their own are less socially skilled (less altruistic, more avoidant, and more aggressive) than their preschool classmates. The influence of the reciprocity of negative affect has been demonstrated only for fathers, which suggests that fathers may play a particularly salient role in children learning how to manage negative emotions in the context of social interactions. Thus, both the nature of parent–child interaction and the affective quality of the relationship are important correlates of children's social development.

Alternative Pathways: Parents as Advisors and Providers of Opportunities

Learning about relationships through interaction with parents can be viewed as an indirect pathway of influence because the goal is often not explicitly to influence children's social relationships with extrafamilial partners. In contrast, parents may influence children's relationships directly in their role as instructor, educator, or advisor. In this role, parents may explicitly aim to educate their children concerning appropriate ways of initiating and maintaining social relationships, as well as learning social and moral rules. Additionally, parents can serve as gatekeepers and regulators of opportunities to have contact with social resources such as peers and social institutions.

Evidence has suggested that the quality of parental advice is related positively to children's social competence with peers among preschool and elementary school children. In adolescence, parents shift their advice-giving strategies and try to keep their children from being influenced by some peers who may be advocating risky or deviant behaviors. This “parental guidance” approach has been associated with selecting friends with low levels of antisocial behavior and higher levels of academic achievement.

Parents can also impact children's social relationships by monitoring their social activities. Poor monitoring is linked to lower academic skills, peer acceptance, and higher rates of delinquency and externalizing behavior. Monitoring has recently been reconceptualized as a process that is jointly

codetermined by the parent and child (both parent and child mutually participate in defining how much information is disclosed by the child and the level of control the parent will exert). Monitoring may be a function of the extent to which children share information about their activities and companion choices with their parents. Prior research on monitoring may be reinterpreted to suggest that children with poorer social adjustment discuss their activities with parents less than well-adjusted children do.

Parents arrange children's contact with peers by designing children's daily informal and formal activities, which promote or discourage children's peer relationships especially when children are young. Investigators have examined children's informal play contacts by describing who arranges the contacts, characteristics of the children's playmates, and the relations between these indicators and children's development. Parents who initiated at least one informal play contact over the past month had children with a larger range of playmates and more companions. Although the role of parents decreases across middle childhood and adolescence, parents and children continue to share responsibility for the initiation and regulation of peer contacts.

Parent–Child Relationship and Other Family Relationships

Although researchers have commonly focused on the parent–child relationship as an independent unit, this dyad is embedded in a variety of other family relationships, including the coparenting relationship. Coparenting refers to the degree to which individual parent–child relationships and styles of interaction are coordinated between parents in their efforts to socialize their children. These patterns can vary in terms of positive/negative affect and degree of coordination and consistency.

Coparenting

Researchers have become increasingly interested in coparenting in recognition that mothers and fathers operate not only as individual parents, but also as a parenting team. A variety of coparenting alliances

can be formed, including antagonistic and adult-centered or hostile-competitive alliances, where there is a significant imbalance or discrepancy in the level of parental engagement with the child. There are also coparenting alliances reflecting cooperation, warmth, cohesion, family harmony, and child-focused. These patterns have been observed across a range of studies with infants, preschoolers, and school-age children and in both European-American and African-American families.

The family unit may include not just a triadic (mother–father–child) unit, but also a larger set of players as other children join the family. Research on coparenting suggests that the coparenting system may undergo radical modification when more than one child is involved. In two-child families, research has found that each parent tends to engage with one child at a time, and that the four members of the family varied in the quality of interactions and amount of unity depending on outside influences such as siblings' gender, age differences, and temperament. In addition, the nuclear family unit is embedded in the extended family, which has unique influences, as does the society and culture in which the family exists.

Determinants of Parent–Child Relationships

In this section, a variety of determinants of the nature of parent–child relationships will be considered. A three-domain model of the determinants of parenting developed by Jay Belsky includes personal resources of the parents, characteristics of the child, and contextual sources of stress and support.

Child Characteristics

The evolutionary approach to child characteristics focuses on tendencies found universally across children. Over the last several decades, evidence has documented that infants are biologically prepared for social, cognitive, and perceptual challenges, and that these prepared responses significantly facilitate children's adaptation to their environment. For example, the ability to recognize human facial features from early in life facilitates recognition of caregivers and fosters attachment. In addition, individual differences between children across a variety

of behavioral characteristics also shape parent–child interactions. A well-researched determinant of parenting behavior is infant and child temperament. Compared with less difficult infants, infants with difficult temperaments elicit more arousal, distress, and coercive parenting behavior from caregivers. In contrast, fearful children may respond optimally to subtle parental socialization strategies such as reasoning or redirection rather than harsh, punitive, or coercive tactics. In general, more active, less responsive, and compliant children elicit more negative parenting and parental affect.

Personal Resources of Parents

Parental resources such as knowledge, ability, and motivation to be a responsible caregiver alter the parent–child relationship. Recent studies show that parental psychopathology, including depression, alters parenting practices. From early infancy onward, interactions between depressed and nondepressed parents and their offspring tend to be less positive, synchronous, and stimulating. (Synchrony refers to a caregiver's ability to adjust his or her behavior to the infant's signals to maintain a social interaction.) This is especially true with long-term parental depression. Infants of depressed mothers may also develop insecure attachments to their caregivers. Other parental problems such as antisocial personality disorder, schizophrenia, limited education, and poverty all contribute to poorer parenting. Positive personal characteristics such as high intelligence, self-control, and selflessness predict better parenting. Recent theorists have argued that some of these individual differences across parents may, in part, be genetically based. Current studies seek to address the interplay of genetically based individual differences among infants and parents and environmental factors that enhance or suppress the influence of these characteristics.

Families, Social Networks, and Social Capital

The concept of social networks includes people, institutions, and community organizations outside the immediate family structure. Social capital is both the flow of information and the sharing of norms and values that serve to facilitate or constrain the actions of people who interact within the

community's social structures (e.g., schools, places of worship, business enterprises). Children benefit when there is a relatively high degree of agreement about social norms and values among members of their family and the wider community. Social network members may facilitate monitoring of children and help socialize children. For example, one study found that adolescent boys had better school attendance and performance, as well as more positive social behavior, when their social networks included large numbers of nonrelated adults.

Ethnicity and Development of Parent–Child Relationships

There has been a marked increase in attention to how ethnicity shapes parent–child relationships. Recent studies of discipline in different ethnic groups suggest that African-American parents are more likely than European-American parents to use physical punishment, even after controlling for SES. However, although the use of physical discipline often predicts higher levels of externalizing (i.e., acting out, aggression, hitting, etc.) for European Americans, this is not true for African Americans. (Abusive levels of physical discipline, however, are detrimental to children irrespective of ethnic or racial background.) Several explanations for these findings have been offered, including the more normative nature of physical punishment in African-American subculture and the need to enforce rules more strictly in the dangerous environments in which African Americans are more likely to reside. Growing up in dangerous neighborhoods brings greater risks for involvement in antisocial behavior. Under these circumstances, strict obedience to parental authority appears to be an adaptive strategy, which parents may endeavor to maintain through physical discipline.

Future Directions

Families are dynamic and are continuously confronted by challenges, changes, and opportunities. A number of society-wide changes have produced shifts in parent–child relationships. Fertility rates and family size have decreased, the percentage of women in the workforce has increased, the timing of onset of parenthood has shifted, divorce rates

have risen, and the number of single-parent families has increased. These social trends provide an opportunity to explore how parent–child relationships adapt and change in response to these shifting circumstances and represent “natural experiments” in coping and adaptation. Moreover, these historical shifts challenge our traditional assumptions that this relationship can be fully understood from studies conducted at a single point in time. The research task is to establish how parent–child processes operate similarly or differently under varying historical circumstances. Illustrative examples of recent trends in parenting research include emerging work on parent–child relationships in gay and lesbian families, the impact of the new reproductive technologies on parent–child relationships, and the effects of parental incarceration on parent–child ties.

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See also Attachment Typologies, Childhood; Extended Families; Family Relationships in Adolescence; Family Relationships in Childhood; Father–Child Relationships; Mother–Child Relationships in Adolescence and Adulthood

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PARENTHOOD, TRANSITION TO

Prior to the transition to parenthood, the nuclear family is synonymous with the marital dyad. With the arrival of another individual—a first child—the family system increases in complexity. As one new, relatively helpless individual is added to the preexisting marriage/partnership, the number of interpersonal relationships in the family triples from one (i.e., husband–wife) to three (i.e., mother–child, father–child, and husband–wife). Perhaps the most compelling evidence that such profound change in the family system can affect how partners and families function is to be found in research showing that self-reported depression and distress are more likely to develop in the first year of motherhood than at any other time. Many women, in fact, also manifest increased anxiety about the level of their partner’s love, commitment, and support. The fact that the quality of care that depressed mothers provide their infants is often compromised should make it clear that changes in the family system also have consequences for the development and well-being of the new addition to the family.

In view of the dramatic changes that can take place with the arrival of a first child, investigators have spent decades studying how and why marriages change across the transition to parenthood. The first investigations of this topic were cross-sectional in design, with couples without children simply compared to those with children. Ever since the 1980s, however, longitudinal research has been the norm, with couples followed typically beginning in pregnancy through several years after the first child’s birth. In this entry, not only are changes in marital functioning described across this developmental period, but so are factors and processes that account for why some relationships change—for better and for worse—more so than others.

How Marriages Change

However commonplace the birth of a child, for the two parents involved, especially if married or cohabiting, the transition to parenthood is a major life event. As such, it requires both individuals to adapt to changes brought about by the

responsibility of rearing a child. The challenges faced by men and women during the transition to parenthood are often different generally due to the distinctive changes that they experience in their family roles. It is typically these role changes that have implications for how marital/partner relationships will change.

Although typically viewed as a positive experience, the transition to parenthood can exert major strains on the couple relationship. Indeed, having a baby often creates new problems for a relationship and amplifies existing vulnerabilities. Parenthood thus has the potential to change both men’s and women’s feelings about themselves and their relationships as they assume the important role of nurturing a child from birth into adulthood.

Research that has followed marriages over time—from before to after the arrival of a first child—typically chronicles declines in overall marital quality and self-reported marital satisfaction. Although the average level of decline is not large, its consistency makes it noteworthy. The fact, however, that social scientists cannot run experiments in which they randomly assign some couples to the “have-a-baby” experimental group and others to a “no-baby” control group means that it is difficult to be certain that changes in marriage *associated with* having a first child are truly *caused by* the transition to parenthood. This situation is further complicated by the fact that, in general, marital quality declines over time in most households irrespective of whether they have a child. This situation suggests an alternative interpretation of the well-replicated observation that marital quality deteriorates somewhat following the arrival of the first child: This decline is not really a function of becoming parents, but merely of time taking its toll on the marital relationship. Perhaps the soundest conclusion in light of evidence showing that, in general, overall marital quality and satisfaction decline with time, irrespective of the arrival and rearing of children, is that the transition to parenthood accentuates and accelerates this process.

As it turns out, it is not just positive or negative sentiments about the marital relationship that change from before to after a first child’s birth. Indeed, other changes in marital dynamics probably account for much of the change in sentiment. One of the biggest changes—and one that is typically (although not universally) experienced differently

by men and women—involves the household division of labor. Not only do meals have to be made and homes cleaned, just as before a first child's appearance on the scene, but with the arrival of a helpless, dependent infant, an awful lot of new work is added to households. Feeding the infant, doing his or her laundry, and coping with his or her sleep/wake cycles are disproportionately born by the mother/wife even in putatively egalitarian relationships; this typically means that it is mother/wife who first feels the strain of parenting, and, in consequence, it is wives who first begin to experience increased disenchantment with their partners. Men's dissatisfaction with the marriage often takes more time to emerge. Wives frequently complain about partners "not doing enough" as the household division of labor becomes more traditional in terms of sex roles, with men complaining about wives not appreciating what they do. Deterioration in the frequency and quality of sexual relations is another source of dissension, often experienced by men more than women. Sheer exhaustion resulting from repeated night wakings of the infant makes coping with these changes all the more challenging.

Making the situation even more taxing, perhaps, is that many couples end up with less time to spend together as "just a couple." Some research suggests that time spent in joint leisure activities declines. To the extent that it is just such experiences that engender shared positive emotions, one can see how the transition to parenthood does not just exhaust parents, increase their workload, and give them more opportunities for disagreement (e.g., comfort the crying child vs. let him cry it out), but diminishes the opportunity to nourish the relationship emotionally.

Variation in Marital Change

It would be a serious mistake to infer from all this that there are no satisfactions arising from the arrival and rearing of a first (or later-born) child. Nothing could be further from the truth. Moreover, there is clear indication that the general and perhaps depressing picture just painted, although characteristic of the "average" couple's experience, masks a good deal of diversity in how couple relationships change across the transition to parenthood. Not only is it the case that most relationships only deteriorate in

global marital satisfaction to a modest degree, but work by Jay Belsky following working- and middle-class couples from pregnancy until their first child was 3 years of age revealed three other patterns of marital change. Whereas some couples showed dramatic deterioration and others virtually none at all, a small minority actually showed *increases* in marital quality over time. What remains entirely unclear from the available evidence is the proportion of couples that generally fall into the four patterns of change just described (i.e., severe negative change, modest negative change, no change, and modest positive change). One reason for this is that the kind of longitudinal research needed to address this issue has not been carried out on nationally representative samples of families.

Determinants of Marital Change

The reality of diversity of marital change across the transition to parenthood raises the question of what factors account for why some couples experience more negative change than others and why some couples actually experience positive change. As it turns out, there is no single answer or silver bullet to explain the variation that researchers have detected.

One factor, already noted, concerns the division of labor. The more fathers carry a reasonable share of the traditional female workload (i.e., cooking, cleaning, laundry, child care), the better relationships seem to do.

How well parents coparent also matters. Coparenting refers to the manner in which parents function as a cohesive unit, with partners more or less seeing eye to eye about how the baby should be cared for or, if not, at least respecting the different ways that their partner parents. When one parent believes something strongly and expects the other to conform to that expectation, but the other parent does not, parenting becomes a source of tension in the couple relationship, adversely affecting it. In this way, the transition to parenthood creates new problems for couples and, all too often, amplifies existing weakness in their communication and caring.

Expectations matter more generally, especially when they are violated. Parents-to-be sometimes idealize the experience of becoming parents: "It

will bring us closer; we will do more things together; we will share the workload equally." For such perhaps naïve expectant parents, the transition can be a big surprise as things often do not turn out as expected. Seeing the world through "gray-colored glasses" during pregnancy might be a more strategic way to proceed, anticipating just how challenging, demanding, and exhausting the experience is likely to be. In this way, parents will not be surprised, and even perhaps pleased, when events turn out better than anticipated.

A good time to change metaphorical spectacles is once the infant—and all the work entailed—arrives. Putting on "rose-colored glasses" facilitates seeing things in a positive light. To mix metaphors, this enables parents to see the "glass as half full" rather than "half empty," focusing on and appreciating, for example, what a husband did around the house rather than what he does not do. Although many a wife/mother finds this suggestion unfair, if not unreasonable, a basic fact of life is that rewarding valued behavior (e.g., "Thanks for that assistance; it really lightens my load") is far more effective when it comes to changing behavior than engaging in punishment (e.g., "You never do anything").

Conclusion

Although marital relations typically deteriorate across the transition to parenthood, couples need to appreciate that the change is, on average, modest. It tends to occur in time, but perhaps takes a little longer, even in the case of childless couples. Moreover, this change that couples experience on average masks the fact that, whereas some couples experience substantial negative change, many experience little or no such change, and some even show improvement across the transition to parenthood.

One of the unexpected core challenges that couples confront on becoming parents is that men and women typically view what happens in the family with regard to childrearing from vantage points that rely on different points of comparison. The wife experiencing an increased workload resulting from the transition to parenthood often views her partner as "doing nothing" because she compares him to herself and, relatively speaking, he is not doing much. But the husband often sees

himself as "doing a lot" because, compared with his father, his brother, and perhaps his coworkers, he most certainly *is*, again, relatively speaking. Not appreciating these divergent worldviews can contribute to a kind of culture clash in the form of marital disputes, all of which fuels relationship dissatisfaction.

Relationship difficulties associated with becoming parents have been explored predominantly in modern, Western settings. Isolation from extended families and the absence of transition rituals no doubt exacerbates difficulties. For this reason, the observations made herein based on the study of mostly American and European marriages during the transition to parenthood should not be assumed to reflect what goes on in so much of the rest of the world where research is lacking.

Jay Belsky

See also Change in Romantic Relationships Over Time; Depression and Relationships; Family Life Cycle; Pregnancy and Relationships

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PARENTING

Parenting encompasses a wide range of attitudes and behaviors directed toward meeting the physical, emotional, and social needs of children. As the first relationship formed in life, the parent–child relationship serves as a model for later relationships and is one through which children develop both interpersonal skills and intrapersonal attributes. Not surprisingly, there have been extensive empirical studies over the past 60 years focused on parenting behaviors, particularly those that appear to facilitate children's emotional and psychological development. In the course of the investigations, some factors have emerged as critical dimensions of parenting. In addition to describing these dimensions, this entry presents the field's current understanding of how parenting affects children's well-being, the universality of these effects, alternative ways of conceptualizing parenting, and key predictors of parenting behaviors.

Key Parenting Dimensions

Over the years, three important dimensions of parenting have consistently emerged as central to child development: warmth/involvement, autonomy-supportive versus controlling behavior, and structure. They are linked respectively to three basic human needs: those for relatedness, which refers to closeness and intimacy; autonomy, which refers to self-determination and choicefulness (rather than independence); and competence. Although different terms have been used to describe the three dimensions, these terms have in common a link to a specific need.

Warmth/Involvement

The first dimension has been conceptualized in various ways, including parents' expression of love, their affective response, and their nurturance,

warmth, and involvement. These behaviors facilitate a sense of relatedness in children. Although warmth refers to parents' emotional availability and their willingness to show affection and empathy, involvement refers more specifically to parents' provision of tangible, emotional, and behavioral resources (e.g., time) and implies active participation in the child's life, both emotionally and physically. A warm and involved parent would know about their child's ever-changing interests, attend their games and/or performances, and do so in a caring, positive manner.

Across a wide range of ages, parental warmth and involvement have been linked with a variety of positive child outcomes, including higher academic achievement and lower levels of delinquency and internalizing symptoms. They also predict secure parent–child attachment and later adaptive relationship skills. In addition, warmth/involvement has been shown to facilitate positive outcomes by building adaptive self-related beliefs and motivations such as self-esteem, perceived competence, and perceived control. It is important to note a crucial distinction between being involved and being intrusive. One can take an active interest in one's child without taking over. This leads to discussion of another key dimension of parenting.

Autonomy-Supportive Versus Controlling Behavior

The second parenting dimension is autonomy-supportive versus controlling behavior. Autonomy support involves allowing children to be part of decision-making processes and to have a sense of choice. Children, like all humans, need to feel that they are initiators of their own behavior, rather than forced or pressured to do another's bidding (in this case, their parents'). Thus, autonomy support facilitates fulfillment of the need for autonomy. The opposite end of the autonomy-supportive dimension is control. Controlling parents pressure children into doing specific behaviors using rewards or guilt or by threatening to withdraw their love.

Studies have found that autonomy-supportive parenting is associated with more intrinsic motivation in children—that is, children engaging in activities for interest and enjoyment, rather than as a result of external pressure. It is also associated with greater perceived competence, self-esteem,

and self-regulation in children. These findings indicate that controlling, pressuring parenting results in children doing their activities only because they feel as if they have to, hence undermining their own autonomy in carrying them out. Thus, children of controlling parents tend to have less intrinsic motivation to engage in activities and are less likely to internalize the motivation for less interesting activities. Given that the goal of most parents in trying to get their children to do activities such as cleaning their rooms, sharing their toys, and doing their chores is to do them willingly and develop values for cleanliness, compassion, and responsibility, it is clear that autonomy support is an important parenting dimension.

Structure

The third dimension, structure, refers to parents setting up the environment to facilitate competence. Structure is conceptualized in terms of how parents interact with their children (e.g., the extent to which parents anticipate whether a child can do a task and provide information needed for successful completion of the task) or the way home life is organized (e.g., having clear and consistent rules and expectations). By providing information, rules, and expectations, parents create an environment in which children know what to expect as a consequence of their behavior and thus are able to direct their behavior toward desired outcomes.

Various components of structure have been linked with key child outcomes. For example, clear and consistent guidelines and expectations in the home have been associated with children feeling more in control of and competent with respect to school successes and failures. Similarly, greater predictability in the home has been associated with perceived control and grades in school.

Structure is related to other dimensions that have been studied by researchers, such as behavioral control, monitoring, limit setting, and quality of assistance. Behavioral control and monitoring, measured as parents' knowledge of the whereabouts and actions of their children, has been linked to lower levels of acting-out and delinquent behavior. Quality of assistance and limit setting have both been associated with children's academic competence.

Relations Among the Dimensions

The three dimensions—warmth/involvement, autonomy support, and structure—are largely independent. That is, although they may have low to moderate correlations with one another (e.g., parents who are high in structure also tend to be high in involvement), their shared variance is low so that their interactive effects can be considered. For instance, highly autonomy-supportive parents may provide either high or low levels of structure, and parents with a high level of structure might or might not provide this structure in a manner that supports their child's autonomy. Confusion about the meaning of parental control has led to much controversy about its influence on children's development. The term *control* has been used in reference to pressuring, power assertion, and dominance, as well as in reference to discipline, guidelines, and structure. Consequently, there have been different—sometimes directly opposing—conclusions on how it affects development. Measured as behavior monitoring and discipline, control is associated with positive child outcomes like high academic achievement and low externalizing behavior. When measured as dominance and power assertion, parental control is associated with negative child outcomes like lower self-esteem and motivation. This problem is easily solved if a clear distinction is made between structure, which involves providing rules and guidelines, and control, which involves pressure and power assertion.

The term *autonomy* has also been inappropriately used interchangeably with independence, again leading to confusion about the effects of encouraging autonomy. Research has discovered that joint decision making—characteristic of autonomy-supportive parenting—has positive effects, whereas unilateral adolescent decision making—which characterizes independence—has negative effects. Supporting a child's autonomy does not imply giving him or her free reign. Parents can allow children to have input in decisions and choice, yet still serve as the ultimate authority.

Typological and Dimensional Approaches

Parenting has sometimes been studied in terms of typologies based on a combination of the dimensions. For instance, Diana Baumrind combined

different levels of parents' firm enforcement of rules (which can be conceived of as structure), warmth, and encouragement of individuality to create categories of parenting styles. Parents high in firm enforcement, warmth, and encouragement of individuality were classified as authoritative. This style of parenting was associated with children's social competence and higher self-esteem. Authoritarian parenting, in contrast, characterized by high firm enforcement, low warmth, and low encouragement of individuality, was negatively associated with children's psychological well-being. Permissive parenting, consisting of low firm enforcement, high encouragement of individuality, and high warmth, was also detrimental to children's development. Since Baumrind first published her work in the 1960s, many studies have linked authoritative parenting to a variety of important outcomes, including academic competence, good social skills, and psychological adjustment. In contrast, authoritarian parenting has been linked to low instrumental competence and heightened self-consciousness.

In light of the controversy over the influence of control on children's development, the alternative dimensional approach is advantageous in that it brings to light independent and interactive effects of separate dimensions and helps to sift out the individual effects of each dimension. Thus, researchers can determine, for example, whether providing guidelines and rules is important and whether doing so in an autonomy-supportive manner enhances the effects of such guidelines.

The Universality of the Effects of Parenting

Another advantage of a dimensional approach to parenting over a typological approach is that it affords researchers the opportunity to examine not only the extent to which these effects are the same across cultures, but also points at which variations may emerge and the possible reasons for this divergence. In this way, researchers are able to appreciate the dynamics of parenting practices within societal or cultural contexts.

There has been much discussion about whether warm, autonomy-supportive parenting with provision of structure has positive effects on children's well-being in all societies and cultures. For instance,

it has been argued that in collectivist societies such as China and Turkey, where great value is placed on the interdependence of members of a community, encouraging autonomy might not have positive outcomes. The need for connectedness, autonomy, and competence are theorized to be innate and, thus, cut across cultural boundaries. In both collectivist and individualistic cultures alike, children have these needs and fare best when these needs are met. Indeed, studies among not only North American, but Bulgarian, Russian, Chinese, and Latino populations indicate that fulfillment of these needs is positively associated with psychological health.

However, due to differences in societal or cultural norms, the same parental *practices* may be perceived differently by children, and thus may function differently in how they meet children's needs. For instance, differences in the degree to which emotions are outwardly expressed may result in different snapshots of what a warm and involved parent looks like. In some cultures, warmth and involvement may be outwardly expressed through verbal exclamations of praise and affection, such as a parent telling the child how well he or she did and how proud they are of him or her. In other cultures, it may be expressed in more subtle ways (e.g., with a smile or a nod of approval). When these more subtle expressions of emotion are the norm in that culture, a child may perceive his or her parents as warm and involved. Thus, ultimately, the child's need for relatedness will be fulfilled.

Predictors of Parenting

A key issue of interest is whether parenting styles are characteristics of the parents or the result of factors in the parents' environments. Studies have shown that environmental variables, such as levels of stress and economic adversity, do interfere with parents providing conducive parenting to their children. For example, stress and lack of resources have been linked to lower autonomy support and less involvement and structure. Further, characteristics of children predict parenting, with more difficult children receiving more controlling styles. New research by Wendy Grolnick and her colleagues has shown that not only are contextual

stress and pressure associated with more controlling behavior, but parents' own internal pressure to have their children perform, a characteristic of the parent, is positively related to more controlling styles. The interplay between factors within parents and in contexts in predicting parenting is an important topic for further research.

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See also Father–Child Relationships; Mother–Child Relationships in Adolescence and Adulthood; Parent–Adolescent Communication; Parent–Child Relationships; Parenthood, Transition to

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PEER REPORT METHODS

Peer reports are descriptions of target individuals' thoughts, feelings, motives, or behaviors. A strict definition of the term *peer report* refers to raters who are similar in age, grade, or status to the target individual. However, many researchers use the term more generally to refer to friends, lovers,

coworkers, teachers, or anyone who regularly observes a target in naturally occurring social situations. Peer reports are particularly useful when they are obtained from individuals who are well acquainted with a target and have observed him or her in numerous and varying situations. These sorts of reports are useful in describing a target's behavioral tendencies and predicting future behavior. Peer reports may also be useful when obtained from individuals who possess limited but specific knowledge about a target individual. Peer reports of this type are represented by a professor's evaluation of a prospective graduate student or a boss's performance evaluation of a subordinate.

Researchers use peer reports as a source of data to describe the personality, social, and cognitive characteristics of target individuals. They are a valid alternative to self-reports, which frequently suffer from biases such as self-aggrandizement, self-derogation, or repression. Peer reports may exhibit some limitations of their own, typically due to insufficient information or faulty judgments. However, when they are obtained from individuals for whom accuracy is important, such as lovers, friends, or coworkers, peer reports are a source of information that provide incremental validity beyond self-report measures.

Some researchers argue that the beliefs that peers hold represent more than a simple reflection of targets' behavior. They argue that peer beliefs actually influence the development of targets' personality characteristics. This perspective, commonly referred to as the Looking Glass Self, suggests that target individuals (a) observe how friends and family members respond to their social behavior, (b) internalize these reactions, and (c) develop a sense of self based on these internalized perceptions. Although researchers might debate the importance of this process in the development of the self, it is another indication that peers' perceptions of target individuals play an important role in understanding target characteristics.

Methods

Researchers use several approaches to obtain peer reports. The most common approach involves questionnaires, typically converted self-report measures in which pronouns are changed from

first to third person (e.g., “I am angry” to “She is angry”). Peers respond on a scale ranging from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree* to statements that may characterize the target individual. The five-factor model of personality consists of five broad trait dimensions—Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness to Experience, Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness—that many personality psychologists believe form the foundation of adult personality. Popular measures of the five-factor model of personality include both self- and peer-rating versions. These measures were traditionally administered in paper-and-pencil format, but many researchers now present their questionnaires on lab computers or the Internet to eliminate the need for data entry.

The Q-sort approach requires peer raters to sort a deck of cards, each card containing a statement describing a personal attribute, into a fixed number of categories. The goal of the Q-sort approach is to define the characteristics of the target individual that are most and least important. Q-sort decks, just like personality questionnaires, differ depending on the constructs being studied. The California Adult Q-sort, a popular Q-sort deck, consists of 100 statements, each printed on a separate card, that describe a wide range of personality, cognitive, and social attributes (e.g., “Is a talkative person,” “Has a high degree of intellectual capacity,” “Is protective of others”). Raters sort the 100 cards into nine categories ranging from *least characteristic of the subject* (1) to *most characteristic of the subject* (9). The rater is required to place a predetermined number of statements into each category (e.g., 5 in category 1 and 9, 8 in category 2 and 8, 12 in category 3 and 7, etc.). These Q-sort properties help reduce rating biases (e.g., using only ones and fives on a 5-point scale) that are present in typical ratings scales.

Interviews are another approach for obtaining peer information. The interview format may be structured or semistructured, but in both cases the goal is for interviewers to elicit peer evaluations or descriptions about targets. Interviewers might use the information to supplement previously obtained quantitative data, or they might complete a questionnaire or Q-sort to summarize the interview.

These three approaches represent a sampling of possible peer-report methods. These approaches and others are used to assess behavior, personality,

interpersonal relationships, job performance, and more fleeting characteristics such as thoughts and feelings. The validity of peer reports is frequently demonstrated. Furthermore, researchers who obtain multiple peer reports derived from different domains of individuals’ lives (e.g., from an adolescent’s parents, friends, and teachers) are on the path toward capturing the complexity of human behavior.

Research Using Peer Reports

Periodic reviews of current methods inevitably reveal that self-report is the most common method and that the modal psychological study utilizes only self-report. However, despite its frequency, self-report is not the optimal research strategy. Self-reports are limited by a number of well-documented biases. Moreover, there is no single optimal strategy. Rather, an optimal strategy is one in which multiple research methods are utilized. Different methods, such as self-report, peer report, and behavioral observation, each possess unique strengths and weaknesses. When results converge across methods, researchers gain confidence that their results are valid. In each of the research domains described next, peer report methods play an integral role.

Romantic relationships research is a field that, as some have argued, cannot be meaningfully conducted without peer reports. A romantic relationship consists of two people whose thoughts, feelings, and behaviors continuously affect each other. Although it makes sense to collect from each partner how they feel about themselves, it is perhaps even more crucial to collect peer reports indicating how partners perceive each other. Individuals may view themselves as warm and loving, but relationships may perish if their partners view them as aloof and hostile.

In one study of adult aging, self- and spouse ratings on measures of the five-factor model were used to evaluate each participant. Self- and spouse ratings exhibited relatively high levels of agreement on personality traits such as Extraversion and Neuroticism. The couples’ ratings were also used to predict psychological well-being and coping. The self- and spouse ratings did approximately equally well in predicting these important personal characteristics. Although spouse ratings exhibited

statistically significant levels of agreement, they were far from perfect. The researchers interviewed the couples to determine how agreement might be further enhanced. The researchers concluded that several factors influenced agreement, but the easiest way to enhance agreement would be to clarify the wording and meaning of questionnaire items.

Business leaders have come to recognize the high cost associated with replacing members of management teams. As a result, organizational psychologists are often called on to assist in managerial development and to troubleshoot conflict in the workplace. One frequently used approach is called the 360-degree assessment, in which a manager's performance is rated by individuals with differing relationships to the manager. Typically, these raters are the manager's boss, peers, and subordinates. The manager often provides a self-rating, and occasionally family and friends of the manager will also provide ratings. One of the first goals of this approach is to provide a general portrait of the manager. It is also important to determine whether different groups of individuals have the same or different perception of the manager. If perceptions differ, this might suggest that the manager behaves, for example, in a submissive manner around the boss, but is domineering and hostile around subordinates. Self-peer comparisons can also be informative. Large discrepancies might suggest that the manager is unaware of behaviors that are problematic in relations with coworkers. These data are used by organizational psychologists to make recommendations and implement change as needed.

Teacher ratings can be an excellent source of data about children. Elementary school teachers are often with the same group of children for the entire day and have many opportunities to observe each child's intellectual performance and social behavior. Teachers' ratings of children's behavior on questionnaires or checklists can be quite valid. Some researchers are concerned that teacher ratings are biased, particularly when rating children of different ethnic backgrounds. Although rating biases can never be entirely eliminated, a recent large-scale study demonstrated little bias in teacher ratings. In this study, teacher ratings of White and African-American children with ADHD were compared with research staff ratings of the same children. The teachers and research staff (who were presumed to provide accurate assessments) demonstrated a

significant level of agreement. The results suggested that teachers did not evaluate one ethnic group more harshly than the other.

Considerable research has utilized both teacher and parent ratings of children. A recent study found moderate agreement on ratings of hyperactivity, peer problems, and emotional symptoms, which is typical for studies that include both teacher and parent ratings. One reason that higher agreement is not observed may be because certain problem behaviors are more likely to occur in school than home environments. Thus, although parents might acknowledge their child's problem behavior, teachers may have more opportunities in the classroom to directly observe problem behavior.

Historically, the assessment of personality disorders has been accomplished with self-reports. This is not an ideal strategy given that faulty self-perception is characteristic of individuals who have a personality disorder. For example, narcissistic individuals often view themselves as superior to others when there is no objective reason for doing so. Clinical researchers are finding that peers can provide useful information to help in the diagnosis of personality disorders. Research that has examined self- and peer ratings on measures of personality disorders and interpersonal difficulties indicates that individuals do have some insight into their own maladjustment. However, peers appear to be in a better position to report on the interpersonal problems associated with personality disorders. Peers regularly observe the interpersonal limitations manifested in social interactions and provide fairly objective ratings of their experiences, whereas personality-disordered individuals are often unaware how others perceive them.

Self- and Peer Reports Compared

Although most researchers recommend a multi-method strategy, it is helpful to understand how self- and peer reports differ when used in empirical research. It is often stated that a significant weakness of peer reports is that peers do not have access to target individuals' inner thoughts and feelings. Research supports this claim. Researchers found that the experience of positive and negative mood over 8 days was predicted better by self-ratings than peer ratings on Extraversion and Neuroticism. However, in a related study, it was found that

social behavior was predicted better by peer ratings than self-ratings on the five-factor model. Moreover, the average of two peers' ratings generally was a better predictor than a single-peer rating. Altogether, these findings suggest that the self has privileged access to internal characteristics such as thoughts and feelings, whereas peers have a superior vantage point to observe social behavior.

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See also Acquaintance Process; First Impressions; Observational Methods; Quantitative Methods in Relationship Research; Questionnaires, Design and Use of, in Relationship Research

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PERSONAL IDIOMS

“Raining cats and dogs,” “Green with envy,” and “Easy as pie”: What these odd expressions share in common is the classification as cultural idioms. They are colloquial expressions that use the English language in creative ways to capture an attitude, image, or feeling. A person who came to America from another country would have to study the sky during a rainstorm for quite awhile to find cats or dogs. In much the same way, friends, lovers, families, and close-knit social networks have idioms that are unique to their interactions. Outsiders would not understand that terms such as *Boo* might refer to a young man's girlfriend or that *jelly beans* is a shorthand way to say, “You're talking too much.” But, in fact, this is exactly the point of personal idioms. They allow persons in close relationships to communicate with a private language that simultaneously unites them while excluding outsiders. The purpose of this entry is to more fully define personal idioms, describe the categories into which they fall, and explain in more detail how they function within relationships.

Defining and Categorizing Personal Idioms

Personal idioms are symbols or codes within the language of close relationships that have special meaning known only to those members. As people share a history, interact in a variety of situations, and come to know each other well, certain terms, phrases, or nonverbal gestures emerge within their conversations. Sometimes these expressions are adaptations of some famous line or scene in a movie, or a childhood nickname, or are simply the lingering phrase from goofy conversation, misspoken words, or word play. For whatever reason, these expressions are noticed and a meaning is assigned to them. From that point on, they become a shorthand way of communicating the meaning beyond the initial context.

One goal of researchers has been to identify the types of personal idioms that characterize close relationships. Perhaps the most widely accepted typology is that proposed by Robert Hopper, Mark Knapp, and Lorel Scott. These researchers collected

545 examples of personal idioms that they sorted into eight categories: (1) *Expressions of Affection* show love, caring, and appreciation (e.g., saying Hunch Nickle or pulling an earlobe to say I love you); (2) *Partner Nicknames* are terms of address for a close other (e.g., Boo, Tooty, Monkey); (3) *Names for Others* are labels for people outside of the relationship (e.g., Lady of the Lakes for a neighbor who flooded the streets when watering her lawn or Queen Kong for a strict high school teacher); (4) *Requests and Routines* are ways to communicate something in the presence of others without their knowledge (e.g., saying “The dog is calling” as a hint that it is time to leave a party); (5) *Teasing Insults* are humorous ways to tell someone that certain behaviors are bothersome without being directly critical (e.g., asking “Are you protesting?” when a partner forgets to lower the toilet seat lid); (6) *Confrontations* are also focused on bothersome behaviors, but without the element of teasing (e.g., a man says “Vickers!” to his wife Vickie when she becomes argumentative stemming from the name of a British machine-gun manufacturer); (7) *Sexual Invitations* are ways of indirectly initiating sexual interactions (e.g., a wife puts on a particular nightgown or a husband says “George is calling”); and (8) *Sexual References and Euphemisms* are terms for sexual intercourse (e.g., ride the merry-go-round) and “pet names” for sexual organs (e.g., Oscar or George for the penis, Jennifer for the vagina, and Sweet Pea for the clitoris). Some couples also have idioms for a woman’s menstrual cycle (e.g., Aunt Bee is in town).

Functions

As indicated, each type of personal idiom serves a specific communicative function, such as expressing affection, criticizing with humor, and negotiating the sometimes embarrassing aspects of sexual intercourse. In addition, however, the presence of personal idioms within a relationship functions to help close relationships achieve three broader goals. First, they allow relational members to create a culture of shared meaning that sets them apart from the larger culture. In doing so, personal idioms constitute part of the relational identity. In this way, they function to create and manifest intimacy. Second, they allow relational

members to avoid conflict over small problems through their teasing expressions and to reaffirm the relationship following conflict. Nicknames and Terms of Affection, for example, remind partners that they value each other and share something special. Using these terms after a conflict reinstates the feelings of specialness and intimacy. Third, they help partners negotiate potentially awkward situations. For example, Requests and Routines enable relationship members to signal needs and desires within larger groups without offending others, and Sexual References and Euphemisms allow romantic partners to negotiate the sometimes embarrassing circumstances of sexual activity. In this regard, the use of personal idioms allows partners to avoid or manage threats to each other’s face.

Summary

Although we smile when we hear examples of personal idioms like Boo and jelly beans, research indicates that couples who have personal idioms are more satisfied than those who do not. However, research also indicates that the line between Teasing Insult and Confrontation is thin and ambiguous. Although these types of personal idioms allow relational partners to avoid serious conflict, they also have the potential to be used as passive-aggressive conflict strategies. Research also indicates that, although personal idioms emerge most actively during early stages of relationships, they are also present in long-term marriages. Indeed, marital therapists have begun exploring a technique of asking couples to create personal idioms, especially Sexual References and Euphemisms, as part of the counseling process. Finally, although we typically associate personal idioms with romantic relationships and friendships, they are also common in families, especially among siblings.

Future Research

Although the study of personal idioms has been a mainstay in interpersonal relationship research, new technologies like text messaging, instant messaging, and social network Web sites (e.g., *Facebook* and *MySpace*) have changed the complexion of

communication, including personal idiom use. New media terms serve as a source for personal idioms much as famous movie lines do. In addition, the constraints of media channels such as text messaging encourage abbreviated expression, which leads to the creation of personal idioms. At present, we know little about this context for the creation and use of personal idioms.

In addition, research should examine idiom use in problematic contexts such as the serious or terminal illness of a partner, friend, or family member. Just as euphemisms help attenuate the awkwardness of communication about sexual activity, personal idioms may help buffer the uncertainty, awkwardness, and emotional pain that is salient to these experiences. Developing a Nickname for a newly bald partner may help calm fears and insecurity from losing hair due to chemotherapy treatment and may enhance a sense of togetherness and affection during such a difficult time. Understanding the use of personal idioms in this context may help therapists, health care professionals, and families find useful ways to communicate about difficult topics.

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See also Family Routines and Rituals; Intimacy; Play Fighting; Taboo Topics

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PERSONALITY TRAITS, EFFECTS ON RELATIONSHIPS

People bring their personalities to relationships. This statement reflects that social relationships are shaped by the personalities of relationship partners and their interactional history. Relationships differ as a function of enduring characteristics of actors and their partners. From an actor's perspective, personality traits considerably determine how one feels, reacts, and behaves in relationships while the partner's personality represents an important part of the actor's environment. Because of this twofold nature, relationships exist at the interface between the individual's personality and his or her environment. This entry provides an overview of relationships from the perspective of personality psychology. Different levels of personality with different meanings for relationships are distinguished. In particular, the effects of enduring personality traits on relationships and relationship functioning are considered by means of three particular mechanisms: selection, evocation, and proactive change. Finally, the entry discusses whether and to what extent social relationships can be considered as an expression of personality.

Personality and Relationships

Personality is the entirety of characteristics in which people differ consistently and meaningfully. The concept of personality has two features: (1) the individual particularities of a person compared with other individuals, and (2) the temporal consistency of this particularity. These features can be conceptualized at three levels. The first level consists of basic dispositions (e.g., the so-called "Big Five" traits—Neuroticism, Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, and Openness). Individual differences in these traits reflect the dispositional signature of personality. For example, people perceive themselves and others regarding their relative position on the Extraversion–Introversion dimension. These basic traits exhibit modest mean-level changes over the life span, yet at the same time show moderate levels of rank-order consistency and substantial individual differences in stability and change. In other words, people change yet remain who they are (compared with others)

because they adapt to age-related developmental tasks and challenges in a way that mirrors their idiosyncratic dispositions. Across adulthood as people grow older, they tend to become more emotionally stable, more agreeable, and more conscientious. These age-related, mean-level changes in personality can be considered normative and are associated with major life transitions in romantic partnership, family, and work. For example, young adults typically become more emotionally stable and more conscientious when they enter into a partner relationship for the first time. However, it is debated among researchers whether this kind of personality change is due to intrinsic maturation or whether relationships set in motion and reinforce processes that create personality change.

The second level of personality consists of so-called characteristic adaptations, such as attitudes, motives and goals, individual abilities, and certain aspects of the self-concept, such as self-esteem and self-worth, all of which are more malleable and sensitive to environmental influences than traits. Characteristic adaptations are flexible, have moderate rank-order stability, and show large individual differences in stability and change. This is because these adaptations are consequences of negotiating environmental demands, coping with challenges of critical life events, and responding to relationship issues such as supportive partnerships. Certain aspects of relationship functioning (not relationships *per se*), such as global perceived social support, can be conceived as characteristic adaptations. For example, global perceived social support indicates the extent to which people believe that they receive emotional or instrumental help from their social network (i.e., family members, spouses, friends, and colleagues). Individual differences in global social support are relatively stable and are more an indicator of the person's personality (level 2) than a characteristic of specific social relationships. For example, more agreeable people tend to perceive their relationships as more supportive in general.

The third level of personality covers the narratives of individual biography. The way people tell stories about their lives reflects how they construct and define their identity, and this is likely influenced by various age-related developmental conditions (e.g., becoming parents, entering work life) and non-normative life experiences (e.g., facing serious

health problems). Life narratives deal substantially with relationship issues because the most meaningful life events involve social relationships (e.g., with a partner or family members). For example, people typically organize their biography along relationship events, such as dating, marrying, parenting, mentoring, leaving the nest, and so on. These relationship events are the foundation of identity.

Although this view of personality organization is common in personality psychology, a comparable taxonomy of relationships and relationship functioning is still missing. Yet relationships can be defined as dyadic interaction patterns between at least two people that continue over time. To the extent that these interaction patterns are unique and at least intermediately stable over time, they represent consistent dyadic differences between relationships. Thus, personality reflects relatively stable differences between people (i.e., individual differences), whereas relationships refer to persistent differences in the connection between two persons (i.e., dyadic differences).

Relationships are interfaces between individual personality and the environment, or, in other words, they are shaped by characteristics of the persons involved and the environment. The question—to what extent characteristics of relationships represent environmental or personality influences—is complex but answerable by empirical research. For example, a dyadic attachment relationship is influenced, among other things, by the attachment styles of both partners and their relationship history. A wife's secure attachment style is part of her personality, whereas her husband's avoidant attachment style is part of her environment, just as his avoidant attachment style is part of his personality and his wife's secure attachment style is part of his environment. The dyadic pattern of attachment-related experiences within their relationship, however, emerges from continuous interplay of her style of seeking proximity and his style of avoiding intimacy. Fortunately, relationship research now has the methodological tools to disentangle these complex associations (e.g., by using longitudinal designs or dyadic and multilevel modeling).

Inasmuch as differences in relationships depend on the personality of actors and partners, including their interaction history, individual and dyadic characteristics of relationships are thought to be

less stable than individual personality traits. Because relationship characteristics are less stable, enduring personality traits are thought to have a greater chance to influence change in relationship characteristics than relationships have to influence personality change. Thus, by and large, many scholars believe that relationship characteristics are more a function of these personality traits than vice versa. For example, Extraversion is an enduring trait with long-term consequences for the development of friendship networks, with highly extraverted people showing increases in social networks over time and more frequent contact with others. At the same time, Extraversion is relatively immune to changes in specific relationships, with highly extraverted people remaining more extraverted than others despite experiences such as social rejection. By contrast, less stable personality characteristics of level 2 or level 3 may be more sensitive to relationship experiences because these are more specifically concerned with social interactions and relationship issues. For example, people adapt their subjective evaluation of global perceived support to their experiences in specific relationships. The ending of a supportive relationship can alter the global perception of social support even though other supportive relationships remain unchanged. In the same manner, people may tell different life stories depending on variable experiences in meaningful relationships. For example, a wife's self-presentation as "happily married" can be altered after divorce into a self-presentation as "happily separated."

The following sections discuss three different ways that personality influences relationships from formation to maintenance and ending: (1) *selection* of relationship partners and experiences, (2) *evocation* of relationships and relationship experiences, and (3) *proactive change* of existing relationships and relationship experiences.

Relationship Selection

People seek out relationship partners and experiences that are consistent with their personality. Relationship selection thus includes two facets: selection of partners and selection of relationship contexts and experiences. The first is shown, for example, in the similarity or dissimilarity of relationship partners'

personalities, whereas the latter is indicated by correlations between individual personality attributes and specific relationship characteristics such as relationship quality.

How well do the personality profiles of relationship partners match? Lay psychology offers two rules, suggesting that either "birds of a feather flock together" or "opposites attract." Whereas the empirical literature clearly supports the first rule, this does not exclude the possibility that there may be some relationships in which the latter works.

Similarities between relationship partners stem from different sources: social homogamy, selection, and convergence. Partners can be similar because they meet similar people due to shared interests and activities they actively seek out similar persons, and they can become similar because they share relationship experiences and influence each other. Evidence for similarity in dispositional personality traits (level 1) tends to be small and rarely exceeds modest levels. Similarities in characteristic adaptations (level 2) are more important, suggesting that people who deliberately enter into new relationships are moderately to strongly similar in attitudes, worldviews, goals, and aspirations. For example, romantic relationship partners tend not to resemble each other much in levels of extraversion, yet they are more likely to share political attitudes and worldviews. Some studies have also shown that relationship partners become more similar over time regarding both traits and characteristic adaptations.

There are substantial dyadic differences in personality similarity and compatibility that covary with relationship satisfaction, relationship duration, and interaction frequency. Although similarities in attitudes, values, or self-esteem, for example, are related to better relationship quality, these correlations do not allow for causal inferences because it is not clear whether similarity affects relationship quality or the reverse. In addition, these associations also can be due to third variables such as selection.

Selection and convergence also refer to general preferences for relationship experiences that contribute to a more or less stable personality-relationship fit. A fit between one's personality and one's relationships is represented by correlations between personality characteristics and relationship attributes. This fit suggests that people

may self-select into relationships or networks of relationships that suit them, irrespective of whether the fit is adaptive or dysfunctional. There is strong empirical evidence for correlations between neuroticism and relationship dissatisfaction, insecure attachment, and maladaptive relationship functioning. Although processes of relationship evocation and proactive relationship change, as explained in the next paragraphs, might contribute to the development of the relationship, selection of the relationship partners is the first step. For example, people with higher levels of neuroticism are more likely than others to enter difficult relationships, or, in other words, neurotic people are generally less satisfied with their partner relationships. Studies conducted at a single point in time cannot disentangle causes from effects because relationship distress may be affected by relationship experiences, neuroticism, or both. Longitudinal studies, however, show that personality–relationship fits result from powerful mechanisms of active screening, seeking, and molding through which relationships become more in line with personality.

Relationship Evocation

People evoke relationship experiences and feedback from others by virtue of their personality traits. It is not surprising that different people receive different reactions from a given person. For example, individuals higher in Extraversion and Agreeableness tend to perceive more support from their social network. More extraverted people know more people, they ask for help if necessary, and more amiable and conflict-avoidant people are confident about receiving help because they would provide it to partners. Existing evidence shows that these personality characteristics influence support received from family members, spouses, and friends differently over time. The dynamic processes of personality–relationship evocation play an important role in personality and relationship development, and there is good reason to believe that personality characteristics (at least at level 1) are an important causal factor. Empirical evidence from longitudinal studies suggests that in the long run Neuroticism is a good predictor of marital dissatisfaction and instability (i.e., divorce). People higher in Neuroticism may

repeatedly provoke negative answers or rejection, which increase disagreement and conflict between marital partners.

Evocative effects tend to grow stronger as people age because individual differences in personality traits become increasingly stable across adulthood, reaching a plateau after the mid-50s. Longitudinal research in adulthood has shown that dispositional traits have strong effects on relationships, but are relatively immune against relationship influences. For example, highly extraverted people show open and outgoing behavior toward people and elicit social support easily. However, the amount of support received from other people is not related to change in Extraversion (or Big Five traits in general). In this way, basic personality traits may exert cumulative effects on relationships.

This does not necessarily apply to characteristic adaptations or to life narratives, which are more sensitive to environmental influences. Consider again the example of social support. There is substantial evidence that received social support from friends predicts change in social self-esteem. Thus, having reliable and helping friends may strengthen the evaluation and appreciation of oneself especially with respect to social relationships (i.e., social self-esteem).

Proactive Relationship Change

Proactive effects on relationship change emerge when people actively manipulate and alter relationships by virtue of their personality. Proactive influences occur in two directions: provoking a desired behavior and stopping an unwanted behavior. The strategies used can differ and depend on individual personality traits. For example, highly extraverted persons are more likely to apply behavioral strategies that are based on social dominance. Thus, they may attempt to draw their relationship partners into new activities that enhance their social life. By contrast, persons higher in Neuroticism may be more inclined to utilize tactics involving emotional withdrawal, conflict, and confrontation, thereby involving relationship partners in a circle of negative interactions with likely unhappy outcomes.

Like evocative effects, proactive relationship change has been shown in longitudinal research,

such as diary studies and longitudinal studies over many years. For example, as mentioned earlier, higher Extraversion predicts an increase in perceived social support over many years. In terms of proactive change, more extraverted people may alter their relationships to become more helpful, such as by frequently asking for support. Other examples refer to the long-term effects of shyness as a joint facet of Neuroticism and Extraversion, with higher levels of shyness predicting slower growth of friendship networks and delayed marriage. These and other findings are noteworthy because the initial associations between personality and relationships were statistically controlled in these analyses, thereby demonstrating the long-term effects of personality on later change in relationships.

Proactive effects on relationship change may also include feedback effects on personality development. Due to selection effects, people seek out relationships and relationship experiences that fit their personality. In a corresponding manner, these relationship experiences may deepen and even accentuate the traits that have initiated them. For example, consistent with high levels of Neuroticism, some people may actively construe relationship experiences in a negative way, which in turn may foster and enhance their neurotic disposition. The so-called corresponive principle is supposedly one of the most powerful principles in the personality-relationship link, illustrating the interplay of personality effects on relationships and its feedback on personality. Describing personality-relationship transactions in this light suggests the question of whether relationships are just expressions of the two partners' personality traits, rather than unique social phenomena in their own right.

Are Relationships Just Expressions of Personality?

Selective, evocative, and proactive personality-relationship effects produce cumulative consequences (i.e., individual reaction patterns are maintained over the life span by the increasing accumulation of their own consequences in relationships) and synchronic consequences (i.e., individual reaction patterns repeatedly produce supporting and validating reactions from relationship partners). Through both consequences, relationships and their characteristics become more and more the reflection of basic

personality traits, rather than the reverse. For example, individuals with high levels of Neuroticism evoke negative experiences that accumulate over subsequent relationship events, thereby reinforcing and escalating the effects of Neuroticism on other life domains, such as well-being and health.

Thus, the nature and significance of relationships may be understood from the perspective of personality psychology. Nevertheless, social relationships are entities in their own right, characterized by complex dynamics and associated with multiple factors, many of which are independent of personality factors. For example, attachment relationships are not only influenced by attachment styles and related personality traits, but also by many other environmental conditions such as physical factors, family background, cultural construction of relationships, historical influences, and, of course, by chance. The study of personality and relationships will continue to present researchers with challenging questions.

Franz J. Neyer and Cornelia Wrzus

See also Adult Attachment, Individual Differences; Dyadic Data Analysis; Life-Span Development and Relationships; Neuroticism, Effects on Relationships; Shyness; Similarity Principle of Attraction

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PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS, DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS

Defining *personal relationships* is a tricky business. Countless scholars and philosophers agree that humans are fundamentally *relational* or social creatures, but getting researchers to agree on just what exactly that means is a different story. *Personal relationships* are typically seen as based on personal knowledge, affection, and intimacy, and they are compared to *social relationships*, which are role related and based on someone's societal connection to another (one store clerk relates to one customer in pretty much the same way as any other such pair).

Scholars choose different methods for making their definitions and generally differentiate personal relationships from other types of relationships in one of three ways. The first draws essentially on early philosophical or semantically and religiously inflected views of the nature of relationships. The second approach defines the endpoints of a relationship continuum from minimal contact to close personal relationships, sometimes romantic and sometimes friendly. This approach consequently blurs the lines between the aforementioned philosophical approach and the final approach. This final method of defining relationships may be considered a more “scientific”

approach that distinguishes relationships based on identifiable and quantifiable characteristics or features. This entry addresses each of these approaches.

Philosophical Approach to Defining *Personal Relationships*

The most famous and influential relational philosopher was Martin Buber, who grounded his approach in religion as well as philosophy. Buber argued that humans fundamentally see relationships in two ways. The first way of viewing relationships involves treating others as mere objects instead of as mindful people. Buber called this type of relating “I-It” because in this approach an individual (the “I”) views an Other as a depersonalized “It” and not as a soulful, reflective person. Consequently, Buber explained, the I-It approach to relationships fails to acknowledge the humanity and the personhood of the other person(s). Buber argued that when we engage in an I-It relationship with others, we deny their status as unique thinking creatures created by God, and they become *something* to be experienced as opposed to *someone* with whom to have a relationship. This approach, he felt, leaves out the personality and individuality—indeed, the humanity—of the Other.

One can see examples of this type of relationship in the service industry. People frequently interact with salesclerks, servers at restaurants, individuals who clean houses, and individuals who carry luggage as “Its” (or nonpersons), instead of interacting with them as human beings with unique qualities. In many cases, such people are fulfilling a role or performing a low-level, nonpersonal service and are not engaged in personal conversation except at the end of delivery of their services, when they are thanked personally. Often as they go about their business they are simply ignored as if they were not present at all, as when a hotel server delivers coffee and cookies to a room at an appointed break time during a meeting. The conversation in the meeting continues as if the server were not there, although the server may be thanked at the end of the delivery. It is important that such a person is performing a nonpersonal role in that many people would not even notice if the individuals

who perform these acts of service were replaced with simple robots, provided the robots would still perform the job as efficiently and discreetly as the humans currently doing those jobs. Although the person giving you a massage or teaching a class is also enacting a role, the role is more personal than the previous examples and needs to be considered differently, as in the next section. The impersonal role type of relating stands in contrast to the second way of relating discussed by Buber, which he called "I-Thou."

In the I-Thou manner of relating, Buber saw both individuals treating each other as a mindful, sensitive, and aware human being with whom a personal, even deep, relationship can be created. Buber argued that in the I-It relationship there is a "relationship" only in the sense that there are two differentiated entities, ostensibly but adventitiously, if somewhat artificially, connected as objects. The same would be true if the rock were replaced with a stranger passing by: The stranger attracts attention as a visual object momentarily, but there is no real human connection between the object and the perceiver.

It is only in the I-Thou relationship that any true human *relating* takes place because such relating requires two interconnecting, interdependent, and mutually responsive individuals (not an individual and an object). For example, if a person were sitting on a park bench looking at a rock, one would hardly say that the person has a relationship with the rock other than the fact that the rock holds that person's attention momentarily. However, if a person and his or her lover were sitting on the park bench and engaging one another in conversation, one can see that the two are giving their attention entirely to the other, and thus they can be said to have a relationship. In other words, in the I-Thou relationship, an individual embraces the full humanity and uniqueness of the other, and the I-Thou relationship occurs in the "between" of the two souls coming together. Buber's explanation of the I-Thou relationship is much more difficult to describe than the I-It approach, in part, because Buber argued that the I-Thou relationship was a spiritual, almost metaphysical experience, and in some cases the distinction is less clear than we have tried to draw it here.

For example, the way that a man looks at a woman who is a prostitute is different from the

way a man looks at a woman who is his soul mate. In the former case, the prostitute is simply an *object* of his sexual desire by reason of her fulfilling that role alone, whereas the soul mate may do that and much more, including an intertwining of lives over a lengthy period of time and multiple types of interactions, rather than simply short sexual encounters. The man does not attend to her personhood, but rather sees her merely as a *thing* whose purpose in the interaction is to satisfy his desire. This makes the essence of the connection between the two humans involved in this setting merely an I-It relationship. Alternatively, the man who looks at his soul mate sees differently. Indeed, he does not see a *something*, but rather he sees a *someone*. When he looks at his beloved, he sees a *subject*, another unique individual created by God with whom he has a relationship (as discussed earlier). It is in the act of relating in this way that Buber says we can fully express and fully embrace even our own humanity. In other words, the self can be fully realized only in I-Thou relationships with others. If we are surrounded only by objects, there can be no such relationships. Thus, for Buber, personal relationships are defined as I-Thou relationships, in which the self of each partner can only ever be fully realized through recognition and acceptance of a divinely inspired unique humanity.

One interesting relationship in light of this philosophical approach to defining relationships is the parent-child relationship. Although most people would probably assume that the parent-child relationship is automatically an I-Thou relationship, this may not always be the case. An example of the I-It parent-child relationship that is sometimes portrayed in movies is the cold, distant, authoritative father figure. In cases such as this, the father is rarely present, and when he is it is strictly to play an authoritarian role. Lest it be assumed that this is a one-way street, most of us can probably think of examples of children (either real life or in the media) who also treat their parents as objects rather than people. Thus, although the I-Thou relationship may be the "natural" relationship for either biological or cultural reasons, exceptions certainly do exist.

One can easily see that, although a sort of relationship does exist between a person and a thing (in the broadest sense of the word *relationship*), the I-It type of relationship is not *personal* on any

level. For Buber, it is only in the I-Thou type of relationship that one engages in a personal relationship. Buber added another criterion, an insight since recognized by many other scholars, including those from more scientific and less metaphysical backgrounds: exclusivity. According to Buber, for a relationship to be personal, it must be exclusive in the sense that the two parties become fused exclusively to one another on some level, although other scholars allow a larger leeway and assume that only romantic relationships are entirely exclusive. Put another way, the individuals in an I-Thou relationship are irreplaceable to one another, whereas the two persons are interchangeable in an I-It relationship, as in the previous example of the store clerk and the customer.

Clearly, a sustained I-Thou relationship is exceedingly rare. In fact, it may be helpful to understand the I-Thou relationship as reserved for our closest relationships (e.g., family members, spouses, best friends, significant others, etc.). More important, however, Buber explained that, occasionally, we can have “I-Thou moments” and/or “I-It moments” across a wide variety of relationships. In other words, Buber pointed out that these relationship types are fluid rather than set in stone. Therefore, it is likely that even in our closest relationships, we may sometimes treat the other person as an “It” rather than as a “Thou.” Similarly, there may be times and places when, for some unknown reason, rather than treating a store clerk as an automated checkout system, we are struck by his or her personhood and we suddenly remember that he or she, too, is one of God’s unique creatures.

The Continuum Approach to Defining Relationships

Although Buber’s definition is set up in a dichotomous format, more recent scholars have argued that personal relationships and other types of relationships are best conceptualized as lying on a continuum. According to this group of scholars, there are many gradations of relationships that exist—not only between the poles of the I-It relationships and the I-Thou relationships discussed by Buber, but even within each of them.

Julia Wood identified what she called the “I-You” type of relationship as a distinction relevant within

the I-It category. She argued that the I-You relationship is one in which people are treated as more than mere objects, but the relationships do not have the fullness or richness of the I-Thou relationship discussed by Buber. For example, Wood claimed that most people don’t treat all store clerks as soulless robots, but instead they may engage them in small talk and/or some sort of conversation. In some cases, with repeated interactions over time in the same store (e.g., the local supermarket), the two persons may have such frequent interaction over time that they develop a more familiar style of conversation. They may even learn something about one another’s lives and politely inquire about those topics when they meet. Granted, this conversation is not as deep and rich as in the I-Thou relationship, but Wood maintained that this represented something more than the simple objectification of the I-It relationship. According to Wood, most of our interactions with casual friends, acquaintances, coworkers, and distant relatives are I-You relationships.

Laura Guerrero, Peter Andersen, and Walid Afifi also described relationships along a continuum. Like Buber, these scholars argued that close relationships (i.e., what Buber called the I-Thou relationships) are characterized by irreplaceability, but that there are gradations even within that category (e.g., from casual friendship to deep romantic attachment). They also contended that, for a relationship to be considered “close,” there must be emotional attachment and need fulfillment. Alternatively, role relationships (i.e., the I-It relationships) are functional and/or casual in their nature. These scholars pointed out that casual relationships are often temporary instead of long-lasting. However, like Wood, Guerrero, Andersen, and Afifi also labeled a third category of relationships. These scholars made a distinction between *interpersonal* relationships and *close* relationships. That is, the third category of interpersonal relationships does not require the irreplaceability, emotional attachment, or need fulfillment of the close relationship, but it does require that the individuals involved have some degree of meaningful mutual interdependence, a set of interaction patterns that is unique to the individuals involved (similar to, but not quite the same as, Buber’s concept of exclusivity), and repeated interactions over time.

As mentioned previously, the parent–child relationship seems to provide an interesting example of a relationship that is somewhat hard to categorize. Those who take a continuum approach to defining relationships would probably concede that parent–child relationships are laden with cultural expectations associated with occupying a certain place on the relational continuum. However, most of us probably know of some people whose relationship with their parents would fall into either the I–You or even the I–It definition of relationships. Additionally, the type of relationship that parents and their children have may also fluctuate back and forth along the continuum depending on their respective life stages. For example, one would expect that young adolescents are probably more likely to have an I–Thou (or “closer”) relationship with their parents, whereas teenagers may “drift” away from their parents somewhat.

Obviously, the differentiation of relationships along a continuum as discussed by Wood and Guerrero, Andersen, and Afifi begins to extend beyond the simple dichotomies qualitatively defined in Buber’s philosophical approach and offers a quantitative scientific approach that can more accurately distinguish relationships based on specific characteristics or features.

Scientific Approach to Defining *Personal Relationships*

Some scholars have taken an alternative approach to differentiating relationships based on specific measurable characteristics or features of relationships. Unlike the I–It/I–Thou approach or the continuum of relationship types, these scholars assume that relational characteristics can be quantified. To this end, relationship scholars have developed a large number of different scales to answer questions such as “how much” or “to what degree” an individual feels attached to someone else; how emotionally close they are; the degree of trust, intimacy, or satisfaction that they experience; and even the frequency of meetings and topics of conversation that characterize different relationships. Such assessments are used to differentiate relationships by means of the amount of certain properties that they manifest. Researchers then use these instruments to measure how personal relationships

are quantitatively different from other types of relationships along various dimensions.

Keith Davis and Michael Todd explained that when individuals think about relationships, they think about them in terms of a paradigm case. A paradigm case is essentially a prototype or an exemplar of what a certain type of relationship looks like. They explained that prototypes are composed of a list of attributes that describe a relationship, but they note that this list is not complete or comprehensive enough to actually define the category.

Davis and Todd drew up different scales for characteristics of relationships as a whole and split them into those that applied to close friends and same-sex friends, and then differentiations of best friends, close same-sex friend, close opposite-sex friend, social acquaintance, and former friend. They also examined relationship characteristics as a function of the violations of best, close friend relationships as compared with those that simply drifted apart, finding that all of these variables were implicated in those relationships that ended by a violation. Their basic set of variables was viability, support, intimacy, spontaneity, stability, success, and enjoyment. In a comparison of their own and other kinds of lists, they found that affection and enjoyment, authenticity, conflict management, confiding and intimate disclosure, giving and receiving of assistance, reliability and trust, respect and acceptance, satisfaction, self-respect, shared activity and companionship, similarity, and understanding were some of the basic features that people identified as characteristic of their most personal relationships.

Further attempts to identify the properties that make relationships different in degree of personalness have been continued by a number of scholars in different traditions. Guerrero, Andersen, and Afifi also offered a list of dimensions on which relationships are differentiated. They pointed out that relationships can vary along several levels—voluntariness (i.e., voluntary or involuntary), intimacy (i.e., romantic or platonic), satisfaction (i.e., satisfying or unsatisfying), and length (i.e., short or long term). Such items characterize relationships in terms of the different degrees of key variables, but some scholars have argued that specific types of relationships are uniquely characterized by dimensions not present in other types of personal relationships.

For example, Fitzpatrick argued that marriages are one such relationship—they can be viewed in terms of how traditional or nontraditional they are, how connected or separate the spouses are, and, finally, how likely the partners are to engage in conflict. Other scholars such as Hendrick and Hendrick have developed scales specifically to measure personal relationships that are romantic and to differentiate this category of personal relationships in terms of love types. They have identified six different types of love based on different qualities of desire, playfulness, possessiveness, friendship, practicality, and self-sacrifice. More recently, the Hendricks have pointed to the role of respect for a partner as a property correlating with love and sexual attitudes, relationship satisfaction, commitment, and self-disclosure.

Yet again the parent–child relationship offers an interesting example of relational categorization. Scholars in this tradition of relational definition would most likely categorize parent–child relationships just like they would any other relationship type—along a continuum of various aspects of the relationship. For example, a parent–child relationship could be categorized as varying along almost any of the aforementioned relational dimensions (e.g., closeness, playfulness, friendship, intimacy, satisfaction, etc.).

Clearly the properties of relationships are one of the most fertile and prolific areas of the whole field of research into social and personal relationships.

Conclusion

Scholars have made numerous attempts to define characteristics that make personal relationships “personal.” Such attempts have ranged from the religious, metaphysical, and philosophical to the quantified, empirically based assessment drawn from extensive application of questionnaires and the development of scales for measuring features that are prominent in relationships of different kinds. Although broad distinctions can be made between social and personal relationships, the latter being characterized by the irreplaceability of the partners and the former by their interchangeability, there are many more refined distinctions that can be made. We expect the attempts to obtain even greater precision to be one of the continuing developments of the future of this field

as scholars are more exactly able to differentiate and classify types of personal relationships.

Curt Livesay and Steve Duck

See also Affection and Affectionate Behavior; Closeness; God, Relationships With; Intimacy; Love, Prototype Approach; Love, Typologies; Need Fulfillment in Relationships; Role Theory and Relationships

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PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS JOURNALS

Journals are the primary means of publicizing research in science and serve three broad purposes: to communicate the findings of a particular study to other researchers, teachers, and students; to archive research findings for future scholars; and, by virtue of a journal's reputation, to certify the importance and validity of a particular study. Most scholars would agree that journals are the lifeblood of a discipline. This entry provides an overview of the journals that publish research about personal relationships.

What Do Journals Publish?

Most journals in relationship science emphasize empirical articles; that is, papers that report the results of research studies. A large majority of these papers describe quantitative research, although some also include qualitative studies. Some, but not all, journals also publish theoretical reviews, commentaries on studies published in the present or past issues, and book reviews. Manuscripts are selected for publication through a process known as peer review. When a paper is submitted, the editor chooses reviewers to recommend whether the paper is suitable for publication in that journal, and, more important, to raise questions and offer suggestions for improvement. These reviewers are scholars in the field who often have published in that journal and who have expertise about some aspect of the research under consideration. Some journals use "blind review," in which the authors' identities are masked. The reviewers are almost always anonymous to facilitate open and honest comments. Typically, anywhere between two and four outside reviewers are chosen. Virtually all papers that are published go through one or more rounds of revision, some of which can be extensive, in which the authors respond to questions raised during the review process.

Journals vary greatly in the percentage of papers that are accepted or declined; the latter is referred to as the *rejection rate*. A high rejection rate is considered a sign of journal quality. The best journals typically have rejection rates of around 80 to 90 percent. Rejection rates in lesser quality journals tend to be lower.

Interdisciplinary Journals in Relationship Science

Relationships are investigated in nearly all social science and many natural science disciplines, including Psychology, Sociology, Family Studies, Communication, Anthropology, Demography, Economics, Gerontology, Political Science, Biology, Zoology, and Medicine. This means that relationship research is often published in the various journals of each of these disciplines. The advantage of publishing in these journals is that other scholars in one's discipline who do not necessarily

study relationships will be apprised of whatever new advances in knowledge a given study has generated. However, because there are so many outlets that publish research relevant to relationships—certainly hundreds and perhaps more—no individual scholar can hope to keep up with new findings being reported in such a vast array of journals. Indeed, because relationship science is an intrinsically multidisciplinary field, new journals have been established to represent this particular niche. Publishing in these journals has the advantage of exposing one's work to scholars from diverse home disciplines who nevertheless identify as relationship researchers. The disadvantage, of course, is that nonrelationship scholars from one's home discipline are less likely to notice this work. Thus, relationship researchers, like all interdisciplinary scientists, must decide which audience is of higher priority.

Historians of science would probably agree that the establishment of a journal is a key sign that a new area is, or at least is on the path to becoming, an identifiable and accepted area of study. The fact that there are two specialized journals devoted wholly to the topic of personal relationships indicates both that there is a steady and sufficient number of new research papers being generated and that a reasonably large audience wishes to read those papers.

The first personal relationships journal was the *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships (JSPR)*, founded in 1984 by Steve Duck. *JSPR* is home to empirical and theoretical papers on social and personal relationships and currently publishes six issues each year. *JSPR* maintains an informal association with the International Association for Relationship Research (IARR), one of the leading scientific organizations for scholars with an interest in personal relationships (and the only such organization with a broad multidisciplinary focus). The second major journal in the field is *Personal Relationships*, founded in 1994, and owned and operated by the IARR. Patricia Noller was the inaugural editor of this journal. It publishes four issues per year, reporting research on personal relationships conducted from a variety of perspectives and disciplines and with a variety of methods.

Although the study of marriage and family has, to some extent, become an established discipline in its

own right, the fact that contributors to this literature come not only from Family Studies programs, but also from disciplines like Sociology, Psychology, Demography, and Gerontology, suggests that journals in this area should also be considered interdisciplinary. In fact, the first journal to specialize in publishing research on human relationships was the *Journal of Marriage and the Family* (JMF), still considered the leading outlet for research and other scholarly articles on marital and family topics. Founded in 1939, when it was named *Living* (later, *Marriage and Family Living*), with Paul Sayre as the inaugural editor, the first volume included a paper by Pope Pius XII, children's stories, cartoons, and poetry, along with scholarly articles. JMF is owned and operated by the National Council on Family Relations (NCFR), which also publishes *Family Relations*, a more applied journal, founded in 1951.

Disciplinary Journals That Publish Relationship Research

As mentioned earlier, relationship research is conducted in many different disciplines, making impossible a comprehensive list of journals that publish relationship research. Nevertheless, scholars who identify themselves as relationship researchers (and who are members of the IARR) tend to congregate in a few particular traditional disciplines, and these have journals that regularly publish the findings of relationship research. Several of the more popular and highly regarded journals are identified next. These have been chosen according to their "impact factor" scores. Impact is a measure of the degree to which articles appearing in a given journal are cited by others. Scholars generally prefer to publish in high-impact journals because it means that their work is more likely to be noticed, read, respected, and cited, although to be sure there is considerable controversy about the merit of these scores as an index of genuine impact. Journal impact factors and rankings for science and social science journals are reported in *Journal Citation Reports*.

In Social Psychology, relationship research is regularly found in the *Journal of Social and Personality Psychology* and the *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*. Developmental Psychology's highest rated journals are *Child*

Development, *Developmental Psychology*, and the *Journal of Family Psychology*, and research relevant to children's relationships is found in all three. The top-ranked Clinical Psychology journal most likely to publish relationship studies is the *Journal of Clinical and Consulting Psychology*. In Sociology, the leading journals publishing relationship research are the *American Sociological Review* and *Social Psychology Quarterly*. For scholars in Communication, the most influential journals regularly featuring relationship research are *Human Communication Research* and the *Communication Monographs*.

If nothing else, the diversity of journals publishing relationship research provides testimony to the importance of the topic and the vigor with which researchers pursue it.

Harry T. Reis

See also Families, Public Policy Issues and; Personal Relationships, Defining Characteristics; Public Policy and Relationships; Qualitative Methods in Relationship Research; Quantitative Methods in Relationship Research; Relationship Science, Disciplines Contributing to

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PERSONAL SPACE

Personal space, also described as the *body buffer zone*, is the emotionally tinged zone around the human body that people feel is "their space." Its dimensions are not fixed, but vary according to internal states, culture, gender, and context. Personal space has an hourglass shape: wider in

front and back, and more narrow at the sides. People can tolerate the closer presence of a stranger at the side, as in a bus or elevator, than someone sitting or standing directly across from them. Eye contact plays an important role in personal space regulation. We can approach closer to another person whose eyes are closed than to the same person whose eyes are open. Lovers in an intimate embrace often close their eyes to compensate for excessive closeness.

There are gender and cultural differences in the dimensions of personal space. People from Latin cultures tend to stand closer than people from Anglo-Saxon cultures, and two women interacting will stand closer than will two men. Interaction distance is further influenced by the relationship between people. In an intense relationship, personal space can disappear as two individuals merge into a combined self with frequent touching and body contact. There is no concept of a spatial invasion between two such individuals. Beyond intense intimacy when interindividual spacing breaks down, personal space expresses and reinforces the closeness of a relationship. Friends stand closer together than do acquaintances, who in turn remain physically closer than do strangers. In a similar vein, liked individuals, those of the same status, and those with whom we agree are allowed to be physically closer than those whom we do not like, who are stigmatized in some way, or with whom we disagree.

These well-documented findings can be used by others to estimate the degree of closeness in a relationship. Within the realm of nonverbal communication, people can be taught to “read relationships” by noting the proximity of individuals. This has played a role in lawsuits and court cases in which unwanted physical closeness, especially by a supervisor, is considered harassment. In the obverse situation, an authority figure who allows subordinates to come “too close” can be sanctioned. In one example, a female prison guard who allowed male prisoners to stand “too close” was accused of illicit relationships by her fellow guards. Culture may play a role in such accusations, as in the case of a supervisor accused of, among other things, standing too close to women under his jurisdiction who happened to be of a different ethnicity. This behavior made the women uncomfortable, not only because of the spatial invasion, but also the women’s fear that others would perceive a more

intimate relationship than existed. Corporations and government agencies often offer special training in cultural sensitivity, including information on spatial norms, for employees and families being posted abroad.

A preference for close or distant interaction develops early in life, typically is formed by puberty, and is influenced by modeling. Differences in spatial norms, especially if not recognized or acknowledged, can strain a relationship, with one person feeling that the other is cold and distant while the other resents the partner’s excessive closeness. Shared space can also strain a relationship. This introduces the concept of *territoriality*, the ways in which individuals mark and defend turf. Unlike personal space, which surrounds and moves with the body and expands and contracts according to the presence of others, territory does not move; it has clear markings and fixed boundaries. In shared space, some areas will remain in joint occupancy while other areas will be considered as the private preserve of a particular individual, not to be invaded. For the private space, which can be a side of the room, a closet, or a bookshelf, clear designation or marking of boundaries will reduce conflict.

In the digital age, the emotionally charged zone around one’s body can be invaded virtually. Cell phone and iPod users may act as if public space were private space, converting others nearby into nonpersons. The mobile phone advertisement, “Talk all you want and whenever you want for a flat monthly fee,” is an invitation for auditory invasions in public space, leading to “No Cell Phone” or “Quiet Area” signs in restaurants and other public locations. Posted Webcam images and messages may also invite others into a relationship.

This ubiquitous electronic gadgetry, including iPods and personal digital assistants (PDAs), can be seen as a means of escape, a way by which a person can avoid unwanted encounters. People leave more space between themselves and someone using a cell phone or PDA than someone presumably less occupied. Researchers have found that people on cell phones are less aware of their surroundings, except for the immediate ground area around them. College students who were surveyed reported that a cell phone gave them a sense of control over time and space.

Body size affects the dimensions of personal space and is a factor in perceived invasions. Obese individuals take more room than thin people. Having larger bodies, their boundaries plus personal space zones extend further. The effects of this are particularly evident in public locations with fixed seating, such as airports, trains, and theaters. A larger personal space zone makes it more likely that people may unwittingly intrude, thereby provoking an aggressive response. Jail inmates convicted of assaults had larger personal space zones than inmates convicted of nonviolent offenses.

Early research suggested that personal space was part of a *silent language*, existing for most people below awareness. Since then, the term has become part of popular speech. People not only know what it means, they are more aware when their space has been invaded. If someone on a date stands excessively close to the other person, a salesperson to a reluctant customer, or a police interrogator to a suspect, the person whose space has been invaded usually knows what is happening. Nonverbal indicators of tension such as gaze aversion, hair tugs, and foot taps occasionally give way to verbal responses, expressed most directly when the situation permits, as “Get out of my face.” Despite increased awareness, most people still accept invaded space as a consequence of urban life. They don’t like the intrusion, but resist provoking an uncertain response from someone who has already displayed bad manners.

Robert Sommer

See also Communication, Nonverbal; Culture and Relationships; Display Rules; Nonverbal Communication, Status Differences; Nonverbal Involvement

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PERSPECTIVE TAKING

Perspective taking describes a person’s attempt to understand a stimulus from a different point of view. In relationships, perspective taking typically describes one person’s attempt to understand a relationship partner’s mental representations—his or her thoughts, feelings, attitudes, beliefs, preferences, or evaluations. *Perspective taking* is a broad term that is generally used to describe conscious and deliberate attempts to infer other people’s mental states. Perspective taking can lead to empathy, whereby a person directly experiences another’s emotional state or can induce people to experience emotions about another person’s experience, such as pride or sympathy.

Although some evidence exists of perspective taking in higher order primates, there appears to be a dramatic and qualitative difference in both the frequency and elaborate content of perspective taking in humans, making it one mental process that appears to truly distinguish humans from other animals. Accurate perspective taking is a critical feature of successful social interaction, but it is far from invariant. Some situations, some people, and some cultures are more naturally inclined to activate perspective taking than are others. Sometimes the process that enables perspective taking leads to accurate inferences about others’ mental representations, but sometimes it leads to predictable biases in judgment, such as the tendency to overestimate the degree of agreement with another person. Sometimes the attempt to understand another’s perspective has desirable effects on social interactions, such as when it leads to accurate insight about others’ preferences, but it can have negative consequences when biased judgments lead to mistaken inferences about others’ preferences. Understanding the process that enables perspective taking is crucial for understanding the variability in its consequences.

Developing Perspective Taking

Perspective taking is not a skill with which humans are born, but instead must develop over time. Young children, for instance, tend to be profoundly egocentric and do not distinguish between what they know and what others know, do not recognize

the difference between the way an object may appear to them and the way it really is, and do not provide enough contextual information in conversation to identify ambiguous referents. By roughly the age of 5, most children have developed the ability to distinguish between themselves and others, and they have developed the ability to reason about another person's thoughts, feelings, and other mental states as being distinct from their own. Perspective taking develops out of these two abilities. The psychological disorder of autism (and its less severe version, Asperger's Syndrome; proper spelling is Asperger, not Asperger's) represents a breakdown in the development of perspective taking.

Variability in Process and Content

The process by which people adopt another's perspective can include both reflexive (or automatic) and deliberate (or controlled) components. Because people perceive the world through their own senses and interpret it through their own brains, people tend to use their own perspective as a guide for understanding others' beliefs. Although adults have developed the ability to overcome egocentrism when reasoning about others' thoughts to accommodate differences between themselves and others, it does not appear that they entirely outgrow their tendency to begin with an egocentric default. The most common bias observed when people reason about others' thoughts is therefore egocentric bias, whereby people overestimate the extent to which others' perceptions are similar to their own. In communication, for instance, people tend to overestimate the extent to which their intentions are clear to their conversation partner. Because a speaker's intentions are so clear to him or her, it may be difficult to recognize that a listener may easily misinterpret a playful tease, a subtle joke, or a constructive criticism. Such egocentric biases are a frequent cause of discord and conflict in relationships. For instance, those who are personally unsatisfied in a relationship tend to see more hostile intent in a partner's behavior than the partner actually intends. Overcoming one's own egocentric perspective and intuiting another's differing perspective therefore tends to require deliberate effort and attention, and anything that diminishes a person's ability or motivation to

expend effortful thought should generally increase the magnitude of egocentric biases in judgment. Over time, effective perspective takers learn to overcome their own egocentric perspective more readily and consider another's perspective more naturally, but this process does not appear to ever become completely automated.

Not only can perspective taking vary in the extent to which it is activated automatically versus more effortfully, it can also vary in the process by which people try to adopt another's perspective when they are induced or motivated to do so. In particular, individuals can try to adopt another's perspective either by imagining what that other person thinks or feels or by imagining what they would think or feel if they actually were the other person. These two methods of perspective taking produce different physiological and neural responses, and they also differ in their implications for empathic versus self-centered responses to another person. The former is associated with increased empathy, whereas the latter may increase both empathy and personal distress in response to a person in need.

Determinants, Moderators, and Correlates

As with any other skill or ability, possessing a skill and utilizing it appropriately when necessary are two different things. The most important situational, dispositional, and cultural determinants of perspective taking are those that predict when people are likely to try to adopt another's perspective and when they are not.

Because perspective taking is generally an effortful process, the major situational determinants of perspective taking are those that make it easier to imagine oneself in another's position or increase the incentives and motivation for doing so. It is easier to imagine oneself in the position of a person who is similar to the self or who is well liked rather than despised. Both perceived similarity to a target and liking for a target increase the likelihood of adopting that target's perspective. Similarly, prior experience with a situation faced by a target also tends to increase perspective taking. Adopting another's perspective is more difficult when cognitive capacity is limited, such as when one is distracted by some other task that requires attention.

A person has more incentive to adopt the perspective of a person with whom one expects future interaction, and anticipated future interaction therefore increases the likelihood of perspective taking. Individuals who occupy a position of low status or low power within a social organization also have more incentives for adopting the perspective of others and tend to do so more than high-status or high-power individuals. In everyday life, this effect of power and status on perspective taking may also stem partly from the demands and responsibilities that accompany being in a position of power and the diminished cognitive capacity that results from such demands.

Because perspective taking is a mental ability that develops over time through repeated practice, individual differences that index the likelihood of acquiring such practice should predict perspective taking. Chief among these is age: As children get older, they acquire the ability to overcome their own egocentric perspective and reason about others' differing mental states. There is little evidence, however, that such development continues throughout life, and little if any research suggests that older adults are more likely to engage in perspective taking than younger adults. Culture also predicts perspective taking as a function of the frequency and importance of orienting oneself toward another's perspective within that culture. Collectivist cultures (e.g., the majority of Asian and Latin American cultures) place great value on interdependence and define the self in terms of relationships with others, whereas individualistic cultures (e.g., the majority of North American and Western European cultures) tend to value independence and define the self in terms of one's personal accomplishments and status. Members of collectivist cultures, as a result, are more likely to engage in perspective taking than members of individualistic cultures. Finally, self-reported perspective taking is correlated with better social functioning and higher self-esteem, suggesting either that well-adjusted individuals have an enhanced capacity for adopting others' viewpoints or that perspective taking leads to better social function and increased personal well-being.

Relatively less evidence exists for gender differences in perspective taking. Although recent theories suggest the advantage of women versus men in perspective taking is biologically based and that the brain of people with autism—a condition

characterized by deficits in perspective taking—is the extreme form of the masculinized brain, surprisingly few studies support this female advantage. Some research demonstrates that females are more accurate in perspective taking, but only in situations that evoke the expectation that women *should* be better in this capacity. Awareness of the stereotyped concept of “women's intuition” may cause women to work harder at tasks assessing empathic accuracy. These findings suggest that the female advantage in perspective taking may result from differing culturally conscribed expectations for the two genders, rather than from an innate biological sex difference *per se*.

Consequences

Perspective taking produces both obvious as well as nonobvious consequences for social interaction. Because perspective taking involves putting oneself in another's position, adopting another's perspective tends to increase the perceived similarity between oneself and others. This has several interesting consequences. First, perspective taking tends to increase the extent to which people behave charitably toward others. It increases the degree to which people feel empathy for others in positions of need, increases the likelihood of their behaving altruistically, and generally induces more positive evaluations of others. Naturally occurring or experimentally manipulated perspective taking increases the likelihood that people will respond to a request for assistance, donate time and resources to another person, and attempt to provide relief to an individual experiencing pain or suffering. Studies have similarly demonstrated that perspective taking can reduce the likelihood of aggression against another person. Second, perspective taking tends to increase the extent to which people mimic the basic mannerisms of their interaction partner, such as adopting the other person's body posture. Such mimicry tends to increase feelings of social rapport with another person and increases liking for the other person. Third, perspective taking tends to decrease the tendency to stereotype others. Putting oneself in the position of a stereotyped group member means that less attention is paid to the stereotypic features of the group member, which therefore reduces the likelihood that those features are used

when making judgments about these group members. Finally, perspective taking, by its nature, tends to reduce a host of egocentric biases in judgment. People, for instance, tend to overestimate the extent to which others notice and pay attention to them, the amount that they, compared with others, have contributed personally to a group endeavor, and the extent to which a self-serving conflict resolution will be perceived by others as fair. Perspective taking in these interpersonal contexts tends to reduce such egocentric biases and the associated problems that follow. In negotiations between groups, perspective taking tends to increase understanding of an opposing side's preferences and increases attention paid to the opposing side's preferences.

All of these consequences suggest that perspective taking is generally beneficial for social interaction, but there are some negative consequences as well. In particular, adopting another's perspective tends to reduce people's focus on themselves, but people who look into the minds of others do not always do so accurately. Men in abusive relationships who look into the minds of their spouses, for instance, tend to overestimate their wives' hostile intentions. In competitive contexts, people tend to overestimate the extent to which others intend to behave self-interestedly, a tendency that may enhance the consequences of these mistakes. As a result, those who adopt the other side's perspective in a competitive negotiation may overestimate the extent to which others will behave selfishly and therefore behave more selfishly themselves than do people who do not think about the other side's perspective. Whether perspective taking produces desirable consequences for social interaction and relationships depends on what people see when they put themselves in the shoes of another person.

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See also Attribution Processes in Relationships; Cognitive Processes in Relationships; Conflict Resolution; Empathic Accuracy and Inaccuracy; Empathy; Understanding

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PERSUASION

Persuasion is a communicative act in which messages are conveyed with the intention of changing the attitudes or beliefs of others who retain free choice over their response to the message. Persuasion is usually construed as intentional and is thus a type of, but not synonymous with, social influence, which captures a broader range of means by which people affect one another's attitudes and behavior (e.g., social norms, social learning). In addition, persuasion is noncoercive and is thus dependent on the reactions and choices of the recipient. The importance of the intentions of persuaders (usually called *sources*) and the reactions of recipients highlight the fact that they are in a relationship where both players hold at least some power. This entry describes the basic features of persuasion and how persuasion dynamics operate in relationships with groups, romantic partners, and families.

Factors that affect the efficacy of attempts to change attitudes are typically divided into four types: characteristics of the source (e.g., credibility or expertise), message (e.g., number or quality of arguments), recipient (e.g., motives or personality), and context (e.g., close or distant relationships). Changes in attitudes predict changes in behavior, most strongly when the attitude is at the same level of specificity as the behavior (e.g., attitudes toward a specific candidate predict voting for that candidate more strongly than attitudes toward that

candidate's political party). Most knowledge about persuasion comes from studies of short interactions (e.g., experimenter/participant, participant/participant), rather than in the context of preexisting and presumably more important relationships (e.g., friends, romantic partners, families). As a result, the factors considered to influence persuasion tend to consider individuals separately rather than as part of a relationship dynamic.

Greater persuasion is observed when recipients generate more (both in number and magnitude) positive thoughts in response to persuasive messages. If given sufficient attention, higher quality arguments in persuasive messages are more likely to lead to attitude change. To the extent that individuals have the ability and motivation to process persuasive messages in some depth, they have more positive thoughts in response to and are more persuaded by stronger (i.e., more cogent) arguments than weaker arguments. However, to the extent that messages are not deeply processed, stronger arguments may not be preferred over weaker ones. Variables that affect the level of processing include distraction (decreases), time pressure (decreases), personal involvement with the issue (increases), and need for cognition (increases). When individuals are not processing a message carefully, they become more likely to rely on peripheral cues or heuristic decision rules (i.e., mental short cuts) in determining the worth of an argument (e.g., "experts can be trusted," "I agree with people I like"). However, attitude change occurring as a result of deeper processing is more likely to lead to behavior change and is more resistant to counterarguments.

Relational Motives

Although accurately evaluating the validity of an argument is an important motivation in processing persuasive messages, people possess relationship-relevant goals that can be prioritized over objective accuracy. Recipients in close relationships are at times motivated to hold attitudes that are consistent with their partners' perspectives and/or that serve to sustain the long-term health of the relationship. Individuals in romantic relationships, for instance, often hold biased and overly positive views of the partners and relationship, which

satisfy relationship if not accuracy concerns. Further, the types of persuasive messages employed between close relationship partners differ from the messages used by distant others, advertisers, and experimenters; people in ongoing relationships can draw on their knowledge of one another, as well as the relationship.

Persuasion Through Connection to Groups

Although personal attitudes are a strong predictor of behavior, another important influence is the expectations of a social group (i.e., social norms). For example, during a shared meal, individuals tend to match the amount they eat to the amount eaten by others regardless of their own level of hunger, and people tend to express explicit attitudes toward social groups that are consistent with current social norms (e.g., egalitarianism). Thus, persuasive messages are not only successful when targeting a person's attitudes, but can also produce behavior change by influencing an individual's perceptions of group norms. For example, changing perceptions of the nature of alcohol consumption norms on a college campus has been shown to shift drinking behavior in the direction of those perceived norms. Changing perceptions of group norms is especially likely to lead to behavior change for individuals who identify strongly with the groups in which those norms hold.

Persuasion in Romantic Relationships

In general, feeling identified with the source of a message increases the persuasive power of that message. Recipients exhibit greater attitude change when they like a source, when they perceive a source as similar to themselves, and when they perceive a source as physically attractive. Individuals are especially likely to change their attitudes to agree with their romantic partners, particularly when they are made aware of differences in attitudes and the issue is central to the partner but less important to the self. Although romantic partners tend to be relatively high in similarity, underlying differences in beliefs frequently become salient due to partners' high degree of mutual dependence (e.g., raising children

together brings differing views of parenting to the forefront). Persuasion is a common part of the resolution of conflicting needs during relational conflict. For example, people (especially women) indicate greater use of persuasion with romantic partners than with same- or other-sex friends.

Persuasion during the resolution of disagreements in romantic relationships tends to involve greater use of indirect forms of communication. Relative to strangers, romantic partners discussing a disagreement spend less time directly addressing issues and offer less strong arguments. However, romantic partners do exert more pressure on each other for change than strangers. One common, indirect form of persuasion in romantic relationships is the giving and withdrawal of love. Close relationship partners are more likely than less close partners to refer to the relationship when they construct persuasive messages, noting, for instance, that a particular decision would be good (or bad) for the relationship. Referencing the relationship in this manner is an effective influence strategy and increases attitude change. Nevertheless, more satisfied couples tend to use more direct influence strategies, such as the generation of rational arguments.

The degree of persuasion used in conflict resolution varies as a function of couple type. Validating couples tend to exhibit moderate levels of positive and negative behaviors during conflict. These couples appear to use little persuasion during initial stages of conflict and increase their persuasion use as the conflict builds, with persuasion use receding during the final compromise stage. Volatile couples exhibit high levels of positive and negative behavior during conflict, and they use the highest levels of persuasion throughout the conflict. Avoiding couples demonstrate low levels of positive and negative behaviors, and they use little persuasion throughout all stages of conflict.

Persuasion in Families

Persuasion is ubiquitous in family relationships. This form of influence appears to be particularly important in children's internalization of the values of their family and community. Although both power assertion and love withdrawal are common forms of child discipline, induction (or providing reasons for behavior modification) is most likely

to lead to private acceptance of behavioral standards. In particular, calling attention to the consequences of a child's actions for others may be the best strategy for encouraging internalization. Children also engage in attempts to persuade parents, and children at least as young as age 3 are able to influence their parents' decision making, including the manner in which parents resolve sibling conflicts.

Generally speaking, powerful or authoritative sources are more persuasive than less powerful/authoritative ones. Power in relationships can come from a variety of sources: the ability to give rewards, the ability to exact punishments, a legitimate position of authority, social desirability (referent power), or expertise. In hierarchical relationships (such as parent-child), some types of power (e.g., expertise) may lead to greater attitude change than other types of power (e.g., compulsion) because they enhance internalization.

Persuasion as a Bidirectional Process Across Time

As noted, most knowledge about persuasion comes from research assuming that the persuasive process is unidirectional and time-limited. In reality, relationship partners exist in a continual feedback loop in which each tries to influence the other, altering and adapting their persuasive messages in response to the persuasive messages of the other. For example, distressed romantic couples tend to reciprocate negative acts with other negative acts. This cycle has been described as a "black hole" of negativity because each negative act compounds in a way that makes it increasingly difficult to respond with anything other than negativity.

Only one study has directly examined mutually reciprocal persuasion in real family systems. In a study of persuasion in family car-buying decisions, mothers and fathers were shown to have a unique, relational persuasion dynamic between them beyond their persuasive tendencies as individuals. That is, marital partners' detailed knowledge of each other appeared to allow them to adopt persuasive strategies with each other that they did not use with other individuals (including their own children). Further, persuasion around spending

decisions was shown to be highly reciprocal between mothers and fathers. That is, being open to a marital partner's persuasion increased the effectiveness of one's own persuasive attempts. This research highlights the unique persuasive dynamics that can exist in close relationships, and it suggests that a relational approach is likely to be generative for researchers interested in persuasion and social relationships alike.

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See also Communication Processes, Verbal; Conflict, Family; Conflict, Marital; Conflict Resolution; Dialectical Processes; Family Communication; Interpersonal Influence

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PET–HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS

Pets provide a type of close social relationship that may augment or sometimes substitute for relationships with people. In national surveys about pet ownership, the most frequent reasons given for having pets are that they provide friendship, companionship, nonjudgmental social support, and protection from loneliness. The totally nonjudgmental aspect of support is described as an endearing quality unique to pets.

Background

More than half of the households in the English-speaking world have pets. Currently, more American households have a dog than have a child. In the United States, there are more than 70 million pet dogs and at least 75 million pet cats. Americans spend more than \$30 billion annually on their pets, and in national surveys, 90 percent report that their pets are important and cherished members of the family who make them feel calm, happy, and able to handle stress in their lives. Pet owners also emphasize that pets add a much-needed element of nature to their fast-paced and technologically oriented lives. Given that pets require a large investment of time and resources, it is sensible to consider the nature of pet–human relationships and the types of benefits that may result from such relationships.

The idea of animals as significant companions to humans is not new; one of the earliest literary references occurs in Homer's *Odyssey*, in which the otherwise brutal Cyclops, Polyphemus, expresses warm emotion to his favorite ram. What is more recent, however, is the notion that pets are integral members of the family and society, and that they can contribute favorably to the mental and physical health of humans. Although in 1859, Florence Nightingale noted that pets can be excellent companions for people who are ill, it was not until the 1950s that the first journal articles about pets as adjunctive therapists appeared. Over the following decades, hundreds of additional studies have been done by researchers in the fields of psychology, sociology, medicine, nursing, veterinary medicine, ethology, anthropology, physical therapy, and occupational therapy. In these studies, a wide variety of topics have been addressed, including: human–pet relationships and interaction, pets as social support, pets and human blood pressure, pet loss and human grief and mourning, legislation and pets, pets and chronic illness, pets and children, and pets and people who are elderly. Selected findings of recent research are provided next.

Human–Pet Interaction

The most common role that pet animals fulfill is that of companion and friend. Most pet owners form bonds with their animals that are in many

ways similar to relationships they have with other people. For example, pet owners often spend a great deal of time engaged in activities with their pets, they confide intimate feelings and thoughts to their pets, and they express strong feelings of love and affection to pets. In addition, pet owners express the belief that their feelings of love are reciprocated and that their pets help them solve problems by listening.

Marriage and Pets

Research about social interaction has explored how married couples, with and without pets, interact with each other and with their pets. Daily diaries of social interaction were recorded by husbands and wives while at home, work, and social gatherings. Blood pressure and heart rate were recorded during discussions about topics such as finances, relatives, in-laws, and where to spend vacations. Findings include that, relative to couples without pets, pet owners had significantly greater closeness and satisfaction in marriage, more frequent interactions with each other, and lower cardiovascular responses to stress. Among pet owners, those who were more attached to their pets and interacted with them more frequently also reported more frequent and positive interaction with their spouses. No significant differences were found between the responses of men and women or between owners of cats and dogs.

Pets and Elderly People

The relationship between pets and elderly people has been the focus of considerable research. For example, a study of nearly 1,000 Medicare patients found that people with pets were buffered from the impact of stressful life events and made significantly fewer visits to doctors than did people without pets. Similar findings have been reported from the United Kingdom, where it was found that only 1 month after acquiring a dog or cat, there was a 50-percent reduction in reports of minor medical problems. Activities of daily living (ADLs) are often used as measures of ability to live independently. A recent study reported that people with pets had greater self-sufficiency than those without pets. Over the course of a year, the pet owners remained self-sufficient, whereas their

counterparts without pets declined in their ability to care for themselves. Dogs and cats were associated with equal effects. Other research focused on activity among elderly people found that dog owners took twice as many walks as people without dogs, had significantly lower triglyceride levels, and reported significantly less dissatisfaction with their social, physical, and emotional states. Interestingly, it was also found that people without dogs talked only about the past, whereas those who had dogs talked about the present. Increasingly, nursing homes are including resident pets in their environments. Dogs, cats, birds, and fish are most popular, and their presence has been associated with increased social activity as well as decreased use of prescription medications, especially the use of psychotropic drugs to control agitation.

When asked why they have pets, more than 75 percent of elderly people say companionship. The results of many community-based and nursing home studies demonstrate that pets can alleviate a sense of loneliness and isolation and substantially increase social interaction and psychological well-being.

Pets and Children

Surveys reveal that around 70 percent of families acquire some kind of pet when their children are between the ages of 5 and 12. Having a pet fosters sensitivity and responsibility, and it provides companionship. In addition, children who help raise animals are better at empathizing with others. Children have a natural affinity for animals, and the presence of a pet has been shown to have a positive influence on cognitive, social, and motor development. Pets also provide a sense of security for children and always have time to listen. Children form powerful attachments to their pets and consider animals as more comforting than a best friend when they are frightened or ill. Having a pet also has been associated with lower levels of post-traumatic stress among children.

Pets and Social Change

Over the past several decades, relationships between animals and people have changed dramatically. Not only do pet owners consider their pets as close friends, but they buy them special

gifts, take them to daycare and on vacations, purchase veterinary insurance, and refuse to abandon them in times of disasters, such as hurricanes and floods. As an acknowledgment of the importance of pets in the lives of people, many shelters around the United States now have places for pets and owners to remain together. An everyday obstacle that remains is the unwillingness of many landlords to allow pets in apartments. By law, pets are allowed in housing that is federally subsidized, but there is no provision for pets in apartments on privately owned property.

Pets as Social Support: Buffers to Stress

Many laboratory- and community-based studies have considered the role of supportive friends and friendly strangers in buffering responses to stress. In such research, which focuses exclusively on relationships between people, the general conclusion has been that only when friends are perceived as completely nonjudgmental can they buffer stress responses. Although it is difficult to design experiments in which people are nonjudgmental, pets naturally provide total acceptance and never make judgments. Many studies have explored the potential of the nonjudgmental support of pets. In addition, among people with AIDS, pet owners have a lower incidence of depression relative to those without pets. Having a pet, especially a dog, also has been associated with a significantly higher rate of survival 1 year after heart attack, in a manner independent of the physiological severity of the heart attack, demographic characteristics of the patient, and psychosocial factors.

Pets and Blood Pressure

A frequent focus in research about pets and social support is the degree to which the presence of a pet can diminish a person's blood pressure and heart rate responses to a stressful laboratory task such as mental arithmetic. This body of research is based on the idea that people who experience pronounced, frequent, or enduring heart rate and blood pressure responses to stress may be at risk for development of heart disease. Several studies have compared support provided by humans with

that given by pets, and it has been reported that the presence of seemingly supportive human friends has produced dramatic *increases* in blood pressure, whereas the presence of one's own dog or cat has resulted in minimal changes from resting blood pressure. In addition, when pets were present, study participants were significantly better at the difficult mental arithmetic task. When husbands and wives participated in a study, it was found that having a spouse present (regardless of gender) produced the largest of all increases in blood pressure—that is, in terms of blood pressure, it was worse to be with one's spouse than with one's friend while performing mental arithmetic. The best situation for blood pressure response as well as task performance was being with one's pet. This suggests that, regardless of how a spouse tries to be supportive, he or she may be perceived as critical, rather than as nonjudgmental. Interestingly, when pets and spouses were both present during the stressful arithmetic task, blood pressure increases were much smaller, as if the presence of the nonjudgmental pet cancelled part of the effect caused by the spouse perceived as critical.

Work-Related Stress, High Blood Pressure, and Pets

The community-based studies described earlier compared pet owners with people who did not have pets. A valid criticism of such studies is that, because they do not involve random assignment to pet ownership, it is possible that there is no "pet effect" and that pet owners may just be healthier than people who choose not to have a pet. To consider this possibility, a study was conducted in which half of the participants were randomly selected to adopt a pet dog or cat from an animal shelter, while the control group remained without pets. The participants were all stockbrokers who lived alone and described their work as extremely stressful. In addition, they all had high blood pressure and were scheduled to begin taking Lisinopril, a drug that is very effective in reducing resting blood pressure, but not at all useful in blunting responses to stress. The results of this study provide strong evidence for the role of pets in providing a unique type of social support. That is, the drug alone lowered

resting blood pressure, but only when the drug was combined with a pet were blood pressure responses to stress diminished. Interestingly, at the conclusion of the study, when the results of the study were presented to the participants, most of the members of the control group quickly adopted pets as well.

Blood Pressure and Pets: Limitations

Considerable media attention has been given to the “healing power of pets,” and the idea that pets can lower blood pressure has been reported widely. Such reports simplify a complex issue and misrepresent research findings. Although existing research about pets and health demonstrate a significant supportive role for pets, it does not demonstrate that pets can necessarily lower resting blood pressure, but rather that pets can influence the magnitude of blood pressure response to a stressful situation. Consequently, a pet should never be considered a substitute for blood pressure medication.

Future Research

Although research has demonstrated a strong supportive role for pets, a great deal remains to be learned about the relationship between human cardiovascular health and having a pet. For example, it is not known how explanatory mechanisms may be related to or influenced by other physiological factors, such as endocrine function. A recent study has begun to explore this area and has demonstrated that, as blood pressure decreases, levels of the endocrine hormone oxytocin increases, suggesting a relationship between social affiliation and blood pressure responses to stress. A major conclusion of research on the effects of animal companionship is that the degree of attachment to a pet is important. A pet cannot help all lonely or depressed people any more than any other isolated therapeutic intervention can always succeed.

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See also Health and Relationships; Loneliness, Interventions; Social Support and Health; Stress and Relationships

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PHYSICAL ATTRACTIVENESS, DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS

The perception of physical attractiveness involves the judgment that a person's overt appearance is cute, beautiful, handsome, sexy, nice, fashionable, or desirable. The diversity of synonyms conveys the fact that perceptions of physical attractiveness are complex and multidimensional. Judgments of physical attractiveness can vary as a function of the nature of the perceptual target (child vs. adult), the current motives (such as lowered self-esteem or ovulation) and demographics of the perceiver (White, Black, Asian, male, female), and the perceiver's culture and historical epoch (Renaissance vs. present, West vs. East). For example, people use different criteria when evaluating the physical attractiveness of a newborn baby boy, compared with that of a 21-year-old man. Furthermore, some criteria can change over time. For example, male beards were popular in

the 1860s through the 1880s, unpopular in the 1920s through the 1950s, popular again in the 1960s and 1970s, and so on.

Physical attractiveness is based on a combination of desirable features and qualities that communicate diverse messages to the perceiver. Physical attractiveness cannot be reduced to a single dimension, such as youthfulness, sexual dimorphism, symmetry, averageness, or fashion, but each can be influential depending on the facet of physical attractiveness under consideration.

Despite such complexity, judgments of physical attractiveness involve an underlying orderliness that can be interpreted. To understand such judgments, it is necessary to analyze the categories of features and qualities that cause someone to be seen as more or less physically attractive. The categories involve neotenous (babyface), sexually mature, expressive, grooming, and senescence (aging) qualities.

Neonate Qualities

Neonate qualities are the babyface characteristics displayed by infants and young children that contribute to perceptions of cuteness. The young of many mammalian species differ in consistent ways from the adults of that species, such as having larger eyes, more rounded forehead, smaller muzzle, and softer, lighter hair. Such features likely evolved through natural selection, when newborn offspring with those features were seen as cuter and given better care by adults. Consequently, they were more likely to survive and reproduce than newborns with other features.

Through random variation, some adults retained cute babyface qualities as they grew up. Those features may have been adaptive by eliciting a portion of the indulgence and care that is usually given to children. Conversely, it may have been adaptive for perceivers to be attuned to cute features because young adulthood is the period of greatest health and fertility. But perceivers can be deceived by adults who retain the overt appearance of youth, but lack the other gifts of youthfulness and emerging adulthood.

Because youthfulness is more closely linked to fertility than virility, neotenous features tend to contribute more to the physical attractiveness of

females than males. However, both genders are rated more positively when they possess the following cute features: larger than average eyes, smaller than average nose, and smooth, clear skin. Females also are seen as more attractive if they have a small chin and no dark facial hair on their lips or jaw. Other babyish features, such as a round head, bulging cheeks, truncated torso, and short stature, are not attractive in adults and are generally superseded by sexually mature qualities.

Sexual Maturity

Sexually mature face qualities are features and qualities that develop during puberty that contribute to judgments of beauty, handsomeness, and sexiness. Such features reflect sexual dimorphism, or the physical differences between the sexes, and may implicitly convey fertility or virility, and the capacity to assume adult roles, some of which tend to be sex-typed.

Female faces lengthen and widen during puberty, but change less overall than do male faces. Young adult female faces are seen as more attractive if they retain neonate features in the center of the face while showing some mature features on the periphery. Adult female faces are more attractive if they possess the sexually mature features of prominent cheekbones and relatively narrow cheeks.

In males, the surge of testosterone and other hormones during puberty causes the bones, skin, and hair to change to a more rugged and angular form. An adult male face is seen as more attractive with a larger chin and jaw, thicker eyebrows, and visible evidence of beard stubble. The facial features that enhance male attractiveness tend to highlight the difference between males and females, but sexual dimorphism is not the essence of attractiveness. Males generally have thicker brow ridges, causing the appearance of smaller eyes, larger noses, and coarser skin with more acne than females, but such qualities do not enhance male attractiveness. Similarly, a thick beard exaggerates the size of the chin and jaw and is evidence of virilization. But a full beard can make a male look a bit too strong and aggressive for many Western females.

In addition, postpubescent faces are more attractive if the features are bilaterally symmetrical and the overall shape of the face is of average proportions,

rather than extremely long or wide. Both symmetry and average proportions indicate stable physical development and resistance to germs and other factors that interfere with smooth growth.

Measurement

Measurement of the characteristics that contribute to attractiveness is based on a variety of research methods. The most straightforward approach is direct physical measurement of people or photographs. The size of specific features, such as eye height and nose length, or deviations from the midline, is measured using recognized anatomical landmarks. To control for variations, the feature measurements are standardized either by using photos taken to be exactly the same size or by calculating the ratio between the size of a feature and the size of the head. The next step is to obtain ratings of the physical attractiveness and other perceived qualities of the target people. Several dozen people must be used in a study to allow independent variation of the features. For example, if the only people with large noses happen to also have large chins, it is impossible to estimate the impact of either noses or chins. For the same reason, it is essential that the sample have some stunningly attractive people, and their opposites, to ensure that the full range of both appearances and attractiveness perceptions are covered.

A second way to evaluate the defining characteristics of physical attractiveness is to create different appearances, either on paper or in a computer. Such appearances can be created by the researcher through drawing, by cutting and pasting together features from different people to create a composite, or by creating composites by merging whole images from different people in a computer. An outcome of the latter approach is that a face created by merging a sample of same-sex faces generally receives a higher physical attractiveness rating than most of the faces that were merged to create it. The computer merging process smoothes out facial imperfections and asymmetries and takes the average of faces that are too long and those that are too short to produce one that is closer to being just right. The merging of faces that are initially rated as highly attractive produces a face that is particularly attractive because each face contributes

similar exceptional features, and the averaging process tends to exclude imperfections.

A third way to evaluate defining characteristics is to allow people to choose the feature that they like, either through a menu of features or by moving a slider that allows selection of a preferred face that is intermediate between extreme faces. Comparable results are obtained through the different methods, which are applied to both faces and bodies.

Sexually Mature Body Qualities

Sexually mature body qualities also develop during puberty and are even more conspicuous than changes in the face. A female's pubic bones grow during puberty to accommodate pregnancy. The waist-to-hip ratio (WHR) is computed based on the measurement of the waist to that of the hips, as in the last two numbers of the 1950s ideal female figure of 36-24-36 inches. Probably because it conveys fertility, a .7 WHR is seen as physically attractive in many cultures. Female breasts also develop as a result of increased hormones during puberty. Noticeable female breasts are seen as attractive. But there is quite a bit of individual and cultural variation in the preference for large female breasts.

Although puberty transforms the female body to prepare it for childbearing, it transforms the male body to increase its effectiveness in competition with other species during hunting, as well as with other males to achieve dominance and status to attract females. Males are seen as more attractive if they have a WHR of 1.0 (hips are not wider than the waist), if they are taller rather than shorter, and if their shoulders are broader rather than narrower. Males who are exceptionally tall or muscular are preferred to males who are short or average in physical development, but extreme height or extreme muscularity is not attractive to most females. Females prefer a somewhat more mature and masculine appearance when they are midpoint in the menstrual cycle, and ovulating, than at other times.

Puberty causes a change in the individual's physical structure, which produces changes in the individual's movement, and voice. Men with deeper voices sound more mature and attractive than

males with higher voices. Puberty also increases the production of pheromones, which are chemicals responsible for the individual's smell. It is not clear whether natural or artificial pheromones can attract a person from a distance. But females can detect males who are symmetrical and better looking, as well as males whose immune system is more compatible with their own, from the pheromones that unseen males leave behind on their t-shirts.

Expressive Qualities

Expressive qualities are characteristics that convey the individual's prosocial attitudes and positive emotions, which contribute to judgments of niceness, friendliness, and engagement. Although neonate and sexually mature qualities are primarily attributable to genes and physical development during childhood and puberty, and are largely fixed (unless there is intervention by a cosmetic surgeon), expressive features are more variable.

Individuals who display large smiles are seen as more attractive than individuals who display small smiles or no smiles at all. The shape of the jaw, and the skill of the orthodontist, determines whether the person can display a full-beam smile that is visible across a crowded room. Although all people are seen as friendlier and more attractive when they are smiling, the effect is stronger when the perceiver is depressed, and in the Western cultures that value expressiveness than in Eastern cultures that limit the facial display of emotion.

A more subtle expressive signal is pupil dilation, or the opening of the colored iris in the front of the eye. Pupil dilation indicates physical arousal and conveys engagement and warmth. Pictures of individuals with dilated pupils are seen as more attractive than pictures of the same people with constricted pupils.

The lips also dilate during arousal. Full, red lips increase female attractiveness, perhaps by conveying positive emotion. But the meaning of lips is not settled. Some commentators have suggested that full lips are characteristic of a babyface, others have suggested that lip size is an indicator of sexually mature female hormones, and still others suggested that, when relaxed, full lips mimic the shape of an expressive smile. Although neonate and mature qualities seem mutually exclusive, natural

selection could have endowed lips with more than one positive attribute.

Similar complexity is evident in the analysis of eyebrows. People's eyebrows tend to rise when they are interested, surprised, or submissive. An individual whose eyebrows are naturally set high above their eyes are seen as more attractive than others perhaps because they convey a consistent look of curiosity and agreeableness. This may be why the eyebrows of infants tend to be set relatively high above their eyes on their rounded foreheads. The eyebrow ridge is reshaped during puberty, which causes the eyebrows to be set lower and conveys dominance rather than interest and submissiveness. This reshaping is more pronounced in males than females. Consequently, highly set eyebrows may simultaneously convey interest, youthfulness, and femininity.

Grooming Qualities

Grooming qualities are characteristics that the individual has cultivated in an effort to enhance neonate, sexually mature, and expressive qualities, plus convey their social affiliations, knowledge, and status. Females employ cosmetics to make their skin look smoother, their eyes larger, their cheekbones higher, and their lips more vivid, all of which tends to increase their attractiveness. Similarly, fuller and sleeker hair conveys self-confidence and health simultaneously, particularly if the hair is cut in a currently fashionable style.

Similar to cosmetics, clothing can be used to send a variety of messages. Through the careful choice of apparel, individuals can make themselves look more youthful and innocent or more sexually mature and available. Different garments, jewelry, tattoos, and accessories can make a person look more happy, casual, and friendly, or more smart, wealthy, dominant, and aloof. Any of those looks can enhance physical attractiveness depending on the needs of the perceiver.

Grooming effects are not limited to perceptions of females. Males are rated as more physically attractive when they are well shaven and wearing a suit and tie, rather than a t-shirt, or the uniform of a fast-food restaurant. Like female clothing, male clothing not only symbolizes status and resources, but also membership in a specific social

group. The clothing of a Wall Street financier, Texas oilman, and Hollywood actor all convey wealth, but also different lifestyles and geographies, which may differ in their attractiveness to different females.

Body weight is also a grooming quality. Ideal body weight is a cultural ideal, but such ideals are influenced by the local ecology. Heavier body weight is generally seen as more desirable in historical periods, areas of the world, or parts of a city where the supply of food is uncertain. Thinner bodies are seen as more desirable when there are ample food supplies. Of course, individuals and groups in the same time and place differ in their access to food and in their body weight preferences. For example, African Americans prefer larger female bodies compared with European-Americans.

Senescence Qualities

Senescence qualities are characteristics that convey aging and contribute to judgments of wise maturity. Just as puberty produces maturational changes that enhance sexual attractiveness, later stages of development bring with it age-related changes, some of which may enhance nonromantic forms of physical attractiveness.

In male pattern baldness, hair on the top of the scalp changes to the short, translucent form that is evident on the front of the forehead, whereas the hair around and behind the ears retains its thicker, darker form. Baldness increases the perception of age and reduces the perception of romantic attractiveness, but that loss brings with it some benefits. Baldness may serve as an appeasement gesture, which tends to reduce competitive aggressiveness by other males, which is replaced by tolerance or respect. Males with a bald scalp are seen as more social, mature, wise, and approachable than the same males with a full head of hair.

Males who are bald and appear to be middle age may be more physically attractive to females who are middle age than males who are 20 years old. Of course, that depends on whether the evaluation is made in terms of attractiveness for a one-night fling or a longer relationship. The converse is not the case; middle-age males tend to prefer

females who are quite a few years younger than themselves for any type of relationship.

Other senescence qualities may also convey a form of physical attractiveness. Gray hair may make a person look distinctive, and lines in the face can convey character. Such qualities may not be as charming as neonate features or alluring as the full bloom of sexual maturity, but the dignity of graceful aging has its own physical attractiveness.

Familiar Qualities

Familiar qualities are aspects of appearance that are seen frequently. If an individual is repeatedly exposed to a stranger's face, especially under pleasant circumstances, that face will begin to seem more physically attractive than if the same face is newly encountered. Similarly, individuals generally rate their friends, with whom they are familiar, as more physically attractive than the friends are rated by other people. In the same way, if an individual's favorite uncle has a prominent nose, then the individual may see that feature as more attractive than do other people. Familiarity also may explain why people see members of their own race as more physically attractive than members of other races.

Social Influence

Social influence refers to the impact of the actions and opinions of other people on what is seen as physically attractive. If an individual observes a peer choose one member of the opposite sex for a date over another, the individual will rate the chosen person as more physically attractive than otherwise would be the case. Guppies and other species show a similar tendency to engage in such mate-choice copying, but there are limits to that tendency. Observers are influenced when the individual who is preferred by a peer is highly or moderately attractive, but not when the preferred individual is objectively unattractive. People's judgments of attractiveness also are influenced by the comments made by peers about photographs of members of the opposite sex, although the rating shift is less than 10 percent. Females are influenced more than males in both contexts perhaps because a male's social standing contributes to his

attractiveness. Such results, combined with research suggesting similarity in the determinants of physical attractiveness across cultures, indicate that physical attractiveness is not simply an arbitrary social construction, but also varies a bit depending on the individual, society, and historical period and other social determinants.

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See also Attraction, Sexual; Evolutionary Perspectives on Women's Romantic Interests; Facial Expressions; Mate Selection; Physical Attractiveness, Role in Relationships; Physical Attractiveness Stereotype; Waist-to-Hip Ratio and Attraction

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PHYSICAL ATTRACTIVENESS, ROLE IN RELATIONSHIPS

When asked what they find attractive in a potential romantic partner, one of the first features people list is physical appearance. This finding is not surprising given that physical appearance is frequently the first and easiest thing people can learn about one another. We cannot immediately tell whether a stranger is likely to be intelligent or share interests with us, but we can quickly determine whether we like the way that person looks. For this reason, it makes sense that physical

appearance plays a role in attraction. The question is: How much of a role does physical appearance play in early stages of a relationship, and does it continue to play a role in more established, committed relationships? The purpose of this entry is to describe the implications of physical attractiveness for both relationship formation and relationship maintenance over time.

Physical Appearance and Initial Attraction

Perhaps the best documented finding in the literature on physical attractiveness is that attractive people are more popular and sought after than are unattractive people. In a classic study of the factors that predict individuals' initial attraction to potential romantic partners, members of the incoming freshman class at the University of Minnesota were asked to participate in what they believed was a test of a new computer-dating service. Students were asked to complete a number of questionnaires about their personality, background, and interests. In addition, students provided photos of themselves, which the researchers used to rate the physical attractiveness of each student. The researchers then randomly matched students with a date for a Freshman Week mixer; after the mixer, they asked each student whether they wanted to go out with their assigned partner again. The only factor that predicted students' liking for their date and their desire for subsequent dates was physical attractiveness. If students were paired with a physically attractive date, they were more likely to want to go out with them again. However, if students were paired with a less attractive date, they reported less interest in future interactions with that partner. The partner's personality, whether the two people shared interests or came from similar backgrounds, all had no significant influence on the desire for a second date. More recent studies employing a speed-dating format corroborate this general finding. In these studies, participants were asked to interact with several opposite-sex individuals on brief "mini-dates" and then indicate their interest in future interactions with these individuals. Again, physical attractiveness was one of the biggest predictors of participants' liking for their dates. It seems, then, that physical appearance plays a large

role in initial attraction, trumping the effects of many other aspects of the person.

Is physical attractiveness equally desired by men and women? When reporting on the attributes they value in a potential partner, men tend to rate physical appearance as significantly more important to them than do women. This gender difference has been replicated across many cultures, ages, and ethnic groups. Further evidence, however, reveals important qualifications of this effect. For instance, although men report valuing physical attractiveness more than women when considering potential long-term mates, men and women seem to equally prioritize physical attractiveness when contemplating the attributes desired in a short-term romantic partner. Moreover, research suggests that what people say they value in a mate does not always correspond to what people actually seek out when choosing a mate. Several studies suggest that women may underestimate the value they place on physical attractiveness. In one such study, males and females were presented with different kinds of information about potential romantic partners and asked how attracted to each person they were and why. Males reported that physical attractiveness played an important role in determining their interest, whereas females said they were more affected by the person's earning potential and emotional expressiveness. Despite these self-reported explanations, when researchers examined who participants reported an interest in, by far the largest and most potent predictor of interest for both men and women was physical attractiveness. In other words, although women reported that physical attractiveness was less important to them, their behavior revealed that they were just as influenced by physical attractiveness as men.

The Matching Hypothesis

So are people simply looking for the most physically attractive partner they can find? Not necessarily. Rather, people seem to have a reasonably good sense of their own physical attractiveness, and consequently they seek out partners who fall within that same level of attractiveness. Laboratory studies, in which individuals are presented with an array of potential romantic partners and asked to pick which one they most desire to meet, have

revealed that people do not always choose the most attractive option available. Instead, when other aspects are held constant, the most attractive participants often choose significantly more attractive dates than do the least attractive participants. Furthermore, examinations of real-life dating couples reveal that partners tend to be similar to each other in physical attractiveness. This similarity is even more pronounced among married couples, suggesting that perhaps similarity in attractiveness is predictive of courtship success. Together these findings have given rise to the matching hypothesis or the idea that people tend to pair up with partners who are similar to them in appearance.

Several theories have been put forth to explain why people express an interest in partners who match their own level of attractiveness. One such theory involves the fear of rejection. Namely, less attractive individuals may only pursue those partners whom they think might also express an interest in them. As a result, these individuals should avoid the most attractive potential partners because highly attractive partners are perceived as more likely to reject them. A second explanation for why couples match in their appearance draws from equity theory, which argues that relationship partners desire to maintain an equal balance in the rewards each person receives within the relationship. If one partner feels over- or underbenefited in the relationship compared with the other partner, this inequity may lead to relationship tension. Physical attractiveness may be thought of as a rewarding resource that individuals bring to the relationship. An attractive partner not only is aesthetically pleasing to look at, but also may be a source of prestige for the relationship, as having an attractive partner signals to others that one possesses a desired societal commodity. Consequently, if a couple is dissimilar in attractiveness, the more attractive partner may feel underbenefited in the relationship. Moreover, the attractiveness resources of this individual are likely to be valued by romantic rivals, causing the more attractive partner to be less dependent on the relationship and more vulnerable to the advances of other potential suitors. The less attractive partner, then, is under pressure to provide other resources, such as social status or material wealth, to compensate for a lack of attractiveness. Unless this negotiation of resources

proceeds smoothly, the more attractive partner may be less satisfied and more likely to leave the relationship in search of greater rewards elsewhere. Consistent with this notion, studies have shown that dissimilarity in physical attractiveness is associated with lower levels of commitment and a greater likelihood of relationship dissolution. Thus, to avoid the tension of inequity, people may initially seek out relationship partners who are similar in physical attractiveness.

Physical Attractiveness and Relationship Maintenance Over Time

Although a large literature has examined the role of physical attractiveness in relationship formation, less research addresses whether attractiveness continues to be associated with relationship processes and outcomes in established relationships, such as marriage. Yet to the extent that physical attractiveness represents a valuable resource, it may be expected to play an important role in relationships even after those early stages of relationship formation. In fact, research suggests that physical attractiveness is associated with a number of other rewards beneficial for relationships. Physically attractive individuals tend to have higher levels of self-esteem, better employment, higher salaries, and better physical and mental health. Such rewards should make the lives of physically attractive individuals easier, thereby improving attractive individuals' ability to maintain satisfying relationships. Physically attractive individuals also tend to behave more positively in social interactions than less physically attractive individuals. Such positive behavior should generalize to make the relationship interactions of more attractive individuals and their partners proceed more positively as well.

In fact, and in line with the previous discussion of the matching hypothesis and equity theory, some recent research indicates that the discrepancy between partners' levels of attractiveness may influence important marital processes. In one study, married couples were asked to engage in a series of videotaped discussions, in which each spouse was asked to describe a personal goal they desired to achieve. In this way, spouses were given the opportunity to provide

support to their partners during the discussions. Independent observers then rated the attractiveness of each spouse, as well as each spouse's support-giving skills. The discrepancy between husband and wives' levels of physical attractiveness turned out to be a strong predictor of spouses' behavior during the support discussions. When wives were more attractive than their husbands, both spouses were rated as behaving more positively during the interactions. In contrast, when husbands were more attractive than wives, both spouses were rated as behaving more negatively. Why might a discrepancy lead to positive outcomes in one case and negative outcomes in the other? Given that men tend to report valuing attractiveness more than women in long-term relationship partners, a situation in which wives are less attractive than husbands may represent a more salient and important inequity within the relationship, leading to greater relationship tension and worse relationship processes. Conversely, although attractiveness may play a larger role in women's actual mate selection than they recognize, the fact that women do not report valuing attractiveness as much as other potential traits and resources may serve to limit the extent to which couples are bothered by this type of discrepancy.

Relationship Quality and Perceptions of Attractiveness

As a final note, it is important to consider that, although people display a strong liking for those who are physically attractive, the reverse is also true. The quality of people's relationships has been shown to influence their perceptions of their partners' attractiveness, such that being in a satisfying relationship leads individuals to judge their partners as more physically attractive. Thus, the association between physical attractiveness and relationship quality may best be characterized as a reciprocal one. Physical attractiveness predicts who individuals initially pursue for a relationship. Then as the relationship progresses, the quality of that relationship in turn may change the way individuals perceive their partners' attractiveness.

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See also Equity Theory; Interpersonal Attraction; Matching Hypothesis; Physical Attractiveness, Defining Characteristics; Physical Attractiveness Stereotype

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PHYSICAL ATTRACTIVENESS STEREOTYPE

“What does s/he look like?” is often the first question asked about a potential blind date. “S/he has a good personality . . .” is the dreaded reply, although most deny the importance of attractiveness in our relationships. When do people start to care about attractiveness? Is it when they start seeking potential romantic partners? Research shows, perhaps surprisingly, that attractiveness is influential even in infancy. Infants, children, and adults are more likely to choose attractive than unattractive individuals as social partners and to

judge and treat them positively. Most people, even young children, associate positive traits and behaviors with attractive individuals and negative traits and behaviors with unattractive individuals. This entry describes attractiveness preferences and their role in social interaction and interpersonal relationships. Additionally, a discussion of theoretical perspectives is presented.

Preferences, Judgment, and Treatment

Despite common wisdom that beauty is in the eye of the beholder, assessments of facial attractiveness are consistent both within and across cultures. In a review of hundreds of studies, Judith Langlois and colleagues found robust evidence for preferences for attractive compared with unattractive people even among the well acquainted. Even young infants agree with adults about attractiveness and show similar preferences for attractive faces.

Infants

Infants as young as 3 months of age look longer at faces rated by adults as attractive than unattractive regardless of age or race of the faces. By 6 months of age, infants categorize faces based on attractiveness, that is, they perceive attractive and unattractive faces as two distinct types of faces. Categorization into different groups is thought by many social and cognitive psychologists to be a necessary prerequisite before positive and negative traits can become linked to the groups (stereotyping). By 12 months of age, infants associate positive information with attractive faces and negative information with unattractive faces. These early associations may explain why infants treat adult strangers differently depending on the stranger's attractiveness: Infants approach and smile more at attractive strangers, but they avoid and show anxiety toward unattractive strangers.

Not only do infants respond differently to attractive and unattractive people, but they also are treated differently based on their own attractiveness. Adults agree about which infants are attractive and unattractive—not all babies are cute! Adults believe that attractive infants will

become more competent, likable, smarter, and less problematic for their parents than unattractive infants. Premature infants perceived as attractive by nurses thrive and leave the hospital earlier than premature infants perceived as unattractive, possibly because attractive infants receive better care and more attention than unattractive infants. Most important, mothers treat their own infants differently: Mothers of attractive infants behave more positively and focus more attention on their infants than mothers of unattractive infants. Thus, physical attractiveness is important and has mental and physical health consequences even in the earliest social interactions.

Children

Further confirmation of the influence of facial attractiveness on interpersonal relationships comes from research studying children's preferences, judgment, and treatment of peers varying in attractiveness. Karen Dion and others showed that children agreed about who was and was not attractive and were more likely to choose attractive peers as potential friends. When asked to choose which of two children pictured had a positive or negative attribute, children ranging in age from 3 to 6.5 years old chose attractive children for positive traits and unattractive children for negative traits. They judged unfamiliar attractive children as more likable and expected attractive children to behave in a positive, prosocial manner. Children also made similar judgments about their own classmates, with attractive children considered more likable and more prosocial than unattractive children.

Attractive children benefit from positive judgment and treatment by adults, whereas unattractive children suffer negative consequences. Adults judge behavioral transgressions as more negative and antisocial when committed by unattractive children than when committed by attractive children. Adults also suggest harsher punishment for unattractive children. For instance, in a study in which adults judged performance on a cognitive task, women were more lenient toward attractive boys than unattractive boys. These types of judgments and behaviors by adults toward children can have serious implications, especially in educational settings. Teachers have higher expectations for attractive compared with unattractive students. Positive

expectations for attractive children can lead to preferential treatment eventually leading to a self-fulfilling prophecy in which students perform up to expectations, whereas the opposite effect can occur with negative expectations for unattractive children. Studies have shown that students who had teachers with high expectations received better grades and performed better on intelligence tests, whereas students who had teachers with low expectations did not do as well in schoolwork or on intelligence tests at the end of the school year.

Adults

Years of research have focused on how adults judge and treat other adults based on attractiveness. For example, male undergraduates judged an essay more positively if a photograph of an attractive female accompanied the essay than if a photograph of an unattractive female accompanied the essay. Attractive political candidates receive better evaluations than unattractive politicians, especially if little additional information (e.g., political ideology) is available. Multiple studies involving mock juries and job-related outcomes showed that attractive individuals fared better than their unattractive counterparts. Data from studies in which the attractiveness of the defendant in mock trials varied showed that members of the jury found attractive defendants innocent more often than they found unattractive defendants innocent. Additionally, if the jury found attractive defendants guilty, they gave lighter sentences than they gave to unattractive defendants. Regarding job-related outcomes, attractive individuals received more promotions and better pay than unattractive individuals of similar abilities. In fact, attractive people make 5 to 10 percent higher salaries than unattractive people of comparable skill level. Each of these examples indicates that there can be significant consequences associated physical appearance.

Not surprisingly, attractiveness influences romantic and friendship dyads. College students state that physical attractiveness is one of the most important components in choosing whom to date. They believe attractive partners are more popular and likable. Males are especially likely to assume that dating attractive partners increases their own status. In general, romantic couples match on level

of attractiveness, although most people, regardless of their own attractiveness, prefer to date more attractive people than themselves. Although attractiveness is only one of many characteristics that show such a matching effect, it serves as an important initial filter for establishing a romantic relationship. Attractiveness is less predictive for friendships: Male friendship dyads often match in level of attractiveness, but the same is not true for female friendship dyads.

Why Do People Like Attractive People?

Theorists from three approaches offer explanations for why attractive people are preferred. For instance, social theorists assert that attractiveness preferences are culture specific and are learned through socialization, including media exposure; however, studies show that people across cultures and age agree on who is attractive. Furthermore, infants show attractiveness preferences before they have had substantial exposure to media.

The evolutionist perspective suggests that attractiveness preferences evolved as signals of fitness, good health, and reproductive potential. Accordingly, individuals across cultures agree on perceptions of attractiveness because standards of health and fitness have evolved universally. Because humans prefer good health, they prefer and treat targets that represent good health differently than targets that do not. With species propagation as the primary goal, individuals wish to mate with those who are most likely to reproduce successfully and to pass on good genes to descendants. Attractive individuals appear to be healthier than unattractive individuals and are preferred as mates. Along these same lines, parents expect attractive children to be more reproductively successful than unattractive children, thus more likely to perpetuate the parents' genes to future generations. Whether attractiveness is a true indication of health is still under investigation, but studies with hunter-gathering societies have found that attractive women are more fertile than unattractive women of the same age group, whereas studies with modern Western societies have not found relationships between attractiveness and objectively measured health.

Langlois and colleagues have proposed and empirically supported a cognitive explanation for attractiveness preferences. Their model asserts that attractiveness preferences are universal because they derive from cognitive "averaging" resulting in prototype formation. This averaging takes place automatically when people perceive multiple members of a category (e.g., faces). Individuals process stimuli by cognitively comparing and combining them with previous exemplars within the same category. In this way, infants, children, and adults develop and maintain a prototype of that category that represents the mathematical average of experienced category members. Because the prototype is the central tendency of several members of the category, it is treated as the most representative example and is processed more fluently than individual members of the category. Prototypes in general are judged as familiar and attractive, whether the category is birds, furniture, sounds, dot patterns, or faces. Ease of processing results in positive affect toward the prototype. Additionally, examples that closely resemble the prototype are also preferred to examples that are different from the prototype.

Attractive faces are more similar to the prototype than unattractive faces and are thus judged as good examples of the face category. A representation of a face prototype can be computer generated by morphing multiple faces together. Adults judge these computer-generated prototypes as more attractive than most individual faces used in the morph. Infants also perceive computer-generated facial prototypes as attractive. If infants are shown the individual faces repeatedly, infants will then treat the computer-generated facial prototype as familiar even if they have not previously viewed it. Furthermore, research shows that both computer-generated prototypes and attractive faces are processed as faces faster than unattractive faces. Perhaps the ease of processing promotes positive emotional response that influences other judgments of attractive faces, including likability, intelligence, and sociability. Ultimately, such associations may lead to preferential judgment and treatment of attractive people. Although both facial symmetry and youthfulness have been proposed as explanations for attractiveness judgments, neither has shown the robustness of cognitive averaging in explaining attractiveness preferences.

Conclusion

Physical attractiveness is influential in social interactions regardless of the level of familiarity between social partners. We judge attractive people as more likable, popular, sociable, and intelligent than unattractive people. Even from the earliest relationships (e.g., mother–infant, teacher–student), attractive individuals receive preferential treatment and less punishment than unattractive individuals. In adolescence and beyond, attractiveness plays a major role in who we want to date, whereas our own attractiveness influences who we actually date. Preferences likely originate due to automatic information processing, such as cognitive averaging. Preferences resulting from cognitive averaging establish the basis for attractiveness associations and attitudes manifested in interpersonal interactions. Once established, attractiveness preferences and associations may be further maintained and elaborated by socialization processes. Prototype formation is not limited to human faces and appears to be a general mechanism used for comparisons between established knowledge and new stimuli, whether faces, birds, or cars. Perhaps the only way to counteract such a prevalent propensity to judge and treat others based on attractiveness is with knowledge of how influential attractiveness is to interpersonal relationships.

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See also First Impressions; Interpersonal Attraction; Physical Attractiveness, Defining Characteristics; Physical Attractiveness, Role in Relationships

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PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT AND RELATIONSHIPS

Personal and professional relationships are embedded in physical environments—residences, offices, city streets, and so on. Researchers study these settings with respect to how they support or undermine relationship processes and how people use the physical environment as intrinsic aspects of relationships. Research questions include: Is the home designed to support family relationships? Is it decorated and configured to display important meanings in relationships? Does office space allow a balance of individual and communal work? At their core, these questions are about viability: Can the relationship achieve stability as well as growth? Do social relationships support team goals? This entry reviews research on the physical environments of interpersonal relationships in residential, neighborhood, and work settings.

Proximity

Proximity is a well-known prerequisite to many relationships. Relationships are more likely to form among people who come into contact and have opportunities to interact, such as people

whose houses or apartments are close together. People whose apartments are centrally located (e.g., close to mailboxes) are likely to know more fellow residents. Residents of retirement housing are more likely to report socially supportive relationships when they live near the central activity building or near well-used paths in the facility.

Location and Possessions

Locations and objects are integral to relationships. In individualistic societies, partners meet independently of their families. Many couples meet at school, church, neighborhood events, or workplaces. If the courtship progresses, couples often seek out more private places to nurture their relationship. After a wedding, the young couple is expected to live independently, rather than reside with extended family.

Other societies are more communal, and marriage is often viewed as a union of families, rather than a marriage between two individuals. In these cultures, parents exercise more influence over where, how, and when couples meet, including provision of supervised settings where young people can observe or interact with prospective partners. After the marriage, the couple is expected to stay close to either the groom's or the bride's family, even moving in with the extended family. Wedding practices often symbolize the unity of families, such as when both the bride's and groom's families participate in building and furnishing the new dwelling.

Material objects often symbolize the unity of the new relationship, such as wedding gifts that can be enjoyed or used by the couple. In one study, couples were asked to identify objects in their home they liked the most and whether the objects had been acquired by one partner or by the couple. Individuals who were most satisfied with their marriage were more likely to select jointly owned objects as their favorites. A study of polygamous families found that some families provided a separate home for each wife and her children, whereas other families lived communally. Common to both arrangements was the wife's control over the décor. When sharing a home, the wives cooperated in decorating public areas, symbolizing family unity, but each wife had a uniquely decorated bedroom, reflecting her unique dyadic bond with her husband. Thus,

objects and places reflect couple bonding, links to family and friends, and are tangible and visible manifestations of the relationship and their links to larger family and cultural networks.

Privacy Regulation and Relationship Viability

One of the primary ways that people use their environments is to manage interactions with others. Studies of privacy regulation examine how people use environmental and other mechanisms to open themselves to others or to close themselves off. *Privacy regulation* is defined as "selective control over access to the self or group." Individuals and groups decide on their ideal blend of openness and closedness and use regulatory mechanisms to try to attain their privacy goals. Control over access could involve moving close or far from family members, selecting a home with an open or subdivided layout, and so on. A study of space usage in homes found considerable variability in where family members congregated; some used the kitchen and others used a family room depending on the configuration of the home, the family, and their needs.

Residential Environments

Whether one lives in an apartment, duplex, single-family detached house, or other housing form, the privacy gradient of a dwelling can support or undermine relations with others, especially outsiders. Generally, in European-American dwellings, people consider the main entrance to be the most open to outsiders. Outsiders tend to be limited to the front room, often a room not used by the family, but maintained to be presentable to unexpected visitors. The privacy gradient continues toward the back of the home, with semipublic areas (e.g., a guest bathroom), communal areas for close friends and family members (e.g., kitchen, family room), and ends with the most private (e.g., family bathrooms and bedrooms). Some studies indicate that closeness of a relationship is associated with access to different places in homes (e.g., casual acquaintances are restricted to public areas, whereas friends are more welcome in personal areas).

Some groups screen and greet visitors outside the entrance, such as Egyptian Nubians, who build a bench or *mustabah* outside their compound where they visit with neighbors in the evenings.

Effective use of the physical environment can help people manage relationships and maintain orderly lives. Parents can open or close their bedroom doors to signal children when they would or would not be welcome. Children often put up “go away” or “come in” signs to control access to their bedrooms. Some families maintain order by encouraging individuals to sit at the same place around the dinner table, whereas others prefer more spontaneity in seating choices. Similar claims over places can be seen at more microlevels, such as when partners split storage space into “my things” and “your things.” In a study of a senior center, groups of “regulars” begin to think of the center as theirs and tried to block access by “nonregulars,” creating conflicts. Studies of naval recruits underscore the importance of being able to maintain control over one’s things and one’s places. Recruits were housed in pairs to simulate the close quarters of submarine life and then assigned a number of tasks. Those recruits who quickly established territories (“This is my chair and my side of the table”) were more likely to successfully complete the experiment.

Research on crowding in settings such as college dormitories, daycare settings, and homes demonstrates how the physical environment supports privacy regulation. The experience of crowding often relates to the lack of control over contact with others. In large dormitories, with long hallways and undifferentiated spaces, students were overwhelmed by the numbers of other students. They constantly ran into other students, had difficulty finding quiet settings when desired, and eventually began ignoring other residents. In contrast, in dormitories with shorter halls that housed approximately half as many students, there was more socializing among residents and fewer complaints. In another study, the social withdrawal shown by residents living in crowded homes was maintained even when residents were away from home. Other research shows that even in high-density settings, residents can maintain social relationships if the building has interior hallways and small rooms that allow control over interactions.

These and other studies led universities to design dormitories around a “cluster” or “suite system” that provides residents with greater control over privacy regulation. Each suite is designed with common living areas for small groups of residents who have individual or shared private bedrooms. Students visit the common areas when they want to be open to others, and they can go to their individual rooms when they need to be alone. As another benefit, suitemates provide an available and natural group of friends that prevents the social isolation that can occur in large universities.

Community Environments

Social relations with friends and neighbors are also important. Neighborhood physical environments can provide environment supports and cues that keep people away (fences, barriers, “do not disturb” signs) as well as welcoming them (community gardens, holiday decorations). When residents feel that neighbors are trustworthy and/or friendly, they tend to experience many positive outcomes, such as lower levels of crime, less fear of crime, and more positive child outcomes, including good academic performance, less criminal involvement, and less distress. Physical features that may engender neighborly relationships include communities designed to be “walkable.” When communities have many attractive destinations, a dense network of pathways to get there, and enough people to support these facilities, people are more likely to walk and to know their neighbors. Attractive green spaces draw adults and children together, providing more adult-child interaction opportunities, as well as adult oversight of children. Neighborhoods also contain several features that may impair relationship development. For example, children and adults residing on highly trafficked roads tend to have fewer neighborly relationships than those residing on quieter streets.

Neighborly relationships can also be reflected in and supported by the environment. Decorations, upkeep, and landscaping signal residents’ attachment to their home and also convey interest in fitting into a neighborhood and meeting neighbors. In one study, people were asked to look at photographs of homes and decide what kinds of

people lived there. They expected greater friendliness from residents of homes that were well maintained and nicely decorated, suggesting that people can use decorations to communicate openness and elicit interactions with neighbors.

When residents age and have more limited mobility, neighborliness may provide both welcomed social contacts and a sense of well-being. Neighborhood designs that support relationships may be especially important for elderly residents whose friends move away but who themselves are reluctant to move because they are attached to their homes.

Work Settings

Work settings also provide physical environmental supports that foster and impede relationships. Individual offices are usually preferred to open-plan offices because they provide control over interactions. Workplace environments often convey information about status, such as the size and location of a private office, and when one attains the privilege of personalizing the décor. An in-depth examination of culturally diverse work groups indicated that many conflicts occurred because of different beliefs about openness and closedness. Some workers believed an open-plan office meant that other workers should help them with tasks, whereas their coworkers from different cultural backgrounds felt that each individual needed to complete work independently. Some workers enjoyed ethnic symbols in the workplace, whereas others were put off by them and experienced strained relationships. Work settings also need to provide gathering places that support informal interaction. One study found that work rooms that were accessible, allowed surveillance during personal conversations, and were accepted as social settings provided good opportunities for building informal relations at work.

Conclusion

At many levels of scale (couple, kin, community), the physical environment helps people achieve relationship goals. Skilled use of the physical environment helps people make themselves more or less available to others, to signal their desires

for openness or closedness, and to mark the environment with objects that reflect their values, identities, and relationships. These processes are made easier by well-designed environments, as well as skill at delivering and interpreting various messages. These processes are made more difficult when participants come from different backgrounds and cultures, have different relationship expectations, and where meanings of environmental cues are different and easily misunderstood. Good designs and skilled uses of environments will continue to be essential tools for improving development, change, and stability in relationships.

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See also Arranged Marriages; Couple Identity; Courtship and Dating, Cross-Cultural Differences in; Newlyweds; Privacy; Proximity and Attraction; Workplace Relationships

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PHYSICIANS, RELATIONSHIPS WITH

In fiction and nonfiction, the patient–physician relationship is depicted as a source of comfort, pain, friendship, shame, love, bad news, good news, fear, hope, disappointment, renewed life, and more. In these interactions, patients and families can help these interpersonal relationships go well, contributing to feeling in control of their health. Conversely, when these relationships do not go well, frustration and disappointment can ensue. This entry addresses patient, family, and physician roles in these relationships, with particular attention to the ways in which patients and families can maintain positive outcomes.

Relationship-Centered Care

Relationship-centered care is a new framework for conceptualizing health care, focusing on the importance of the involved individuals' relationships with each other and with their community, with the goal of providing meaningful relationships in health care. Relationship-centered care is founded on four basic principles according to the Relationship Centered Care Network:

1. Patients and physicians bring their unique experiences and qualities to the relationship. Hence, physicians are advised to remain explicitly aware of their own "personhood" and encouraged to manage their emotions in a way that facilitates connecting with patients. A physician is encouraged not just to act respectfully, but to develop genuine respect for patients.
2. Physician affect and emotion powerfully impact patient care. Physicians are discouraged from excess detachment and encouraged instead to connect through the provision of empathy, incorporating self-awareness.
3. Physicians and patients have a mutual effect on each other. Although the patient's needs take clear precedence, the physician also benefits and grows from the relationship.
4. There is a moral basis to the patient–physician relationship. A caring relationship in which the physician takes his or her role seriously and works to educate and support the patient and relevant family is morally desirable, beyond the fundamental purpose of providing quality medical care.

Patient-Centered Care

Patient-centered care is complementary to relationship-centered care, prioritizing the patient's communication style and biopsychosocial needs in each medical encounter. The physician should express him or herself as if "in the shoes of the other," known as empathy, in response to patient affective and situational cues. Statements such as "I can imagine that would be difficult" or "That sounds scary" have proved beneficial to both parties. Experienced physicians, physicians in training, and medical students who provide empathy to patients are less burned out and more satisfied than their counterparts who do not. Patients who receive empathy from their physician are less anxious and depressed, more satisfied, and more likely to adhere to their physician's recommendations. There is also evidence that these skills are able to be taught. Regrettably, there is evidence that physicians often do not provide adequate empathy in response to patient cues, a phenomenon that has been linked to increased malpractice claims, lower scores in performance evaluations, and decreased patient satisfaction.

Reasons for Inadequate Physician Responses

Medical training can result in emotional numbing and distancing due to such stresses as sleep deprivation, the pressure to succeed in a high-performance environment, role modeling, and coping with the futility of addressing human tragedy and incurable disease. Seven to 10 years of training with 60- to 90-hour work weeks can leave a physician in financial debt, with poor health habits and lack of supportive personal relationships. Continued time stresses in medical practice without much support can tax physicians' emotional resources despite the best intentions. Systems in place throughout training and afterward to address these troubling events include informal and formal support networks, stress management, and educational programs. Fortunately, physicians enter their careers with a desire to help patients, and most learn sustaining coping skills that allow them to work hard to provide high-quality patient care.

Physician Communication Skills

Patient-centered (as opposed to physician-centered) communication skills start with mindfulness of the physician, which includes the physician being centered and self-aware. Being self-aware does not mean, however, that the physician is helpful when sharing these and other personal details about him- or herself. In fact, the physician must focus on the patient and the patient's concern, story, and context, screening out internal and external distractions.

Generally, a visit begins with a greeting, followed by the physician asking about the patient complaint or concern. The physician then asks for all the concerns the patient wishes to address in that meeting, establishes their priority, and, if necessary, limits them to a manageable number. (This organization is important to prevent the patient remembering the most important concern for the day at the end of the visit or in the parking lot.)

Beginning with the most important concern, the physician then elicits the narrative, or story, from the patient about that problem. The physician needs to listen carefully, without interruption. This is a skill that often is not practiced, as evidenced by research showing that physicians interrupt, on average, within 23 seconds of the patient talking. The physician should provide support and empathy, listening for patient and family strengths alongside the health problems. During the patient's story, the physician listens for contextual factors affecting the patient's concern. How do poverty, ethnicity, or family problems affect the presenting concern or the likelihood that a treatment plan will be followed? When family members are present, the description of the problem is deeper and the implementation of the treatment plan is more successful. If they are not present, the physician should ascertain who is relevant to the diagnosis or treatment plan and how their support can be secured.

Negotiating the diagnostic and treatment plan requires that the physician establish a collaborative relationship with the patient and family. Problems that are concrete, primarily biological in nature, and circumscribed are the easiest problems to address. However, frequently, patients arrive with a mixture of biopsychosocial issues that come together and affect each other (e.g., depression and cardiac disease in an immigrant patient). In this context,

biopsychosocial can be defined as an integration of the effects of mind, body, and social environment in a complex fashion. It is the physician's job to elicit the relevant diagnostic information from the patient and relevant others and then formulate a mutually agreeable and realistic treatment plan. Along with other members of the health care team, education about the physical, emotional, and interpersonal aspects of the disease and its treatment are a central part of the physician's job.

Lifestyle issues such as diet, exercise, substance use or abuse, and interpersonal conflict or violence can contribute to the development and deterioration of many chronic illnesses. The physician-patient relationship is a primary vehicle for developing the trust and motivation to address these underlying health problems. For physicians, this means assessing the patient's motivation for change, amplifying patient and family strengths, and avoiding or addressing the blame or criticism that can occur when lifestyle issues affect health.

The Primary Care Physician's Role in the Context of Health Care

Today's health care is provided by a team of health professionals. The primary care (or family) physician and his or her relationship with the patient and family are often at the center of care. Together, the team of professionals seeks to attend to and advocate for the biopsychosocial health of the patient. This means promoting all aspects of health, from the biological to the psychological and sociocultural factors that influence health. The primary care physician and the primary care team provide the medical home for the patient to address concerns about acute, chronic, and terminal diseases. For some patients and insurance carriers, the patient may schedule an "annual physical" with the primary care physician, where health care maintenance will be comprehensively addressed in an age-appropriate manner, including immunizations and blood tests or other evaluations. In some cases, the primary care physician will need to take that initiative when the opportunity arises at problem-oriented visits. The primary care team is the central organizing force in health care; it coordinates and integrates care with specialty physicians and other health care services in order to

provide comprehensive care that meets the patient's needs. This team also tends to the patient's special needs, such as translators and equipment to provide access to people with disabilities.

Physician Knowledge, Judgment, and Ethical Obligations

It is incumbent on the physician to acquire and maintain his or her biomedical knowledge and skills and to develop sound medical judgment to synthesize all of the data. This means that the physician has a moral and ethical responsibility to keep up to date on knowledge in a field so complex that it is impossible to know everything. Hence, he or she must know the limits of that knowledge, when to look up the information, and when to seek consultation. Patients should be able to trust their physicians to meet these obligations.

Numerous ethical issues may arise in the course of medical care, such as end-of-life concerns; medical errors or substance abuse by a member of the team; a physician in educational, financial, or research roles with a patient; and boundary issues in the relationship. Boundaries are defined by the limits placed on the relationship by virtue of the inherent power differences between physician and patient, requiring that the physician consider the patient's dependency on him or her when considering any kind of secondary relationship. Medical boards and associations, such as the American Board of Internal Medicine, universally require that physicians in all of these situations, including medical errors, be honest with the patient and family and prioritize the needs of the patient. If a physician's religion or beliefs mandate against certain treatments, he or she is obligated to refer elsewhere. Additionally, physicians have an obligation to report knowledge of ethical or legal violations committed by other medical professionals to the appropriate board or supervisor.

The Patient's Role in the Doctor–Patient Relationship

With more collaborative, less authoritarian approaches to medicine, the role and responsibility of the patient in the doctor–patient relationship have received more attention. The following

recommendations for patients suggest how one might become an advocate for one's own health and develop a strong and healthy relationship with physicians and other health providers:

- Be realistic (recognizing that no one person can be perfect or meet all of your health care needs).
- Plan ahead and limit your concerns to two or three problems in one visit.
- Announce your agenda at the beginning of the visit and share responsibility for making sure your concerns are addressed.
- Model the respect and caring behavior you hope to receive.
- Ask for help with lifestyle issues (e.g., “Losing weight is a good idea. How can I get help with that?”).
- Ask your primary care physician or nurse practitioner to do preventive testing or immunizations, coordinate care, and communicate with specialty physicians or other providers.
- If the physician becomes angry or defensive, do not escalate, but try to acknowledge his or her time, effort, and frustrations.
- If time runs out, state that you have more questions and request another visit.

The physician–patient relationship is two way; the patient can have an important effect in how it functions. Both members of the relationship have the same goal: a healthy patient. The patient–physician relationship is not an equal relationship because the physician brings professional responsibilities to the patient and family. Yet both sides have important roles in making the relationship a positive one.

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See also Dependence; Empathy; Families, Coping With Cancer; Health, Relationships as a Factor in Treatment; Health and Relationships; Illness, Effects on Relationships; Listening; Rapport; Self-Disclosure; Social Support and Health; Transference

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PLAY FIGHTING

Play is a common feature of many young mammals, including humans. Although difficult to define objectively, play is readily recognized by observers and has several consistent features: It is engaged in voluntarily, has no obvious utilitarian value, and appears to be enjoyable to the participants. Play can be solitary or social. The most striking form of play seen in both humans and nonhuman animals is “rough-and-tumble play” or “play fighting,” where the participants jostle for some advantage over one another. Unlike serious fighting, play fighting has an organization that ensures that it remains playful, and, remarkably, playful encounters rarely escalate to serious fights.

For play fighting to remain playful, there must be a reciprocal exchange, where enough effort is expended by the participants to ensure that victory does not come too easily, but not so difficult as to make it impossible to attain. By not abusing their advantage once gained, victors ensure that play fights are reciprocal, and, indeed, a common marker of that reciprocity is the presence of frequent role reversals between attackers and defenders. That is, both participants have a chance to gain the advantage. In contrast, in serious fighting, participants do

all that is possible to prevent their opponent from gaining the advantage. The reciprocity inherent in play fighting allows participants to use this experience in functionally beneficial ways.

Although most often associated with the prepubertal period, in many species, play can continue into adolescence and even adulthood. However, play fighting before and after puberty can differ strikingly. Prior to puberty, it is more cooperative. Studies on rats and monkeys provide considerable evidence that the experience of play fighting in this period is important for the development of social skills. An animal that has had the experience of play as a juvenile will have a greater ability to solve novel social problems, be less likely to antagonize its fellows, and not be so stressed by novel social situations. The reciprocity needed to maintain play fighting as playful has the right mixture of competition and cooperation to provide the experience of uncertainty and unpredictability in vigorous social interactions. This experience seems critical for animals to learn to not be flummoxed by the unexpected. The same is likely true for people.

After puberty, play becomes more overtly competitive. When an animal transgresses the bounds of acceptable behavior during play, the partner must determine whether that transgression was intentional. This ambiguity allows an animal to explore the boundaries of its relationships. There are two situations among adolescents and adults in which play fighting is most commonly reported: in social groups between males of differing status and during courtship.

Following puberty, male rats use play fighting to negotiate social relationships with other males and so learn their place in the social hierarchy. A subordinate partner may play in a juvenile-like manner with a dominant animal to ensure that their relationship remains intact. Alternatively, a subordinate can become rougher in its play, thus using it to determine whether its relationship with the dominant can be reversed. Similarly, the dominant partner can increase the roughness of its play, subtly punishing the other animal, thus reinforcing the status quo. Such uses of play fighting seem to be widespread. For example, among adolescent boys, a gentle form of play fighting occurs within the group, which reinforces social bonds. Playing with a boy who is not from the group can be rougher, reinforcing his outsider status.

Among many species, when play is used in courtship, partners use actions typical of play fighting to overcome the reticence of a potential mate in making close bodily contact. There is considerable cross-species variation as to which sex takes the lead in these encounters, but in all cases, the reciprocal exchanges present in play fighting provide a nonaversive means of evaluating the potential partner. For example, playful flirting in humans can be used to determine a potential mate's interest. If one is rebuffed, such an overture can be shrugged off as only playful, which diminishes any loss of face or self-esteem. Females have greater latitude in the force of their actions: They can strike a male more forcefully than would be tolerated if the reverse were the case. These inequalities add to the ambiguity of such play, but also increase its informational value—by exhibiting the appropriate level of restraint, the male can be evaluated for his potential as a mate.

What both the dominance and courtship uses of play fighting have in common is the playful banter that allows participants to assess and manipulate their partners. For nonhuman species, play fighting involves physical contact, but in humans there are also noncontact forms. Verbal joking and its associated laughter, for instance, are human-typical derivations using the essential ingredients of play fighting, and they provide a wider range of options to navigate complex social networks. At school and in the office, boys and men are particularly likely to use jokes as a way of probing and asserting dominance.

Play fighting is competitive, but not too competitive, and jokes can be hurtful, but not too hurtful. Of course, mistakes do happen, and throughout a play fight, participants must continually pass judgment on whether a blow that was delivered too hard was accidental. Similarly, in a work setting, you may wonder, "That's the fifth joke at my expense this week, what's going on?" Contestants can use playful banter to push a little harder than usual, to see what happens, and then, if anyone shows that they are angered, the one that transgressed can back down with "it was only play." Many animals that use play in this manner also have signals that can inform the partner that what is to come or what has just happened was play.

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See also Bullying; Communication, Nonverbal; Flirting; Social Skills in Childhood; Trust

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POLITENESS

See FACEWORK

POLYGAMY

Institutionalized mating relationships are found in three primary forms. Monogamy is the marriage of one person with another person of the opposite sex or the same sex. Polygyny consists of the marriage of one man with two or more women, whereas polyandry entails the marriage of one woman with two or more men. Polygamy includes both polyandry and polygyny. Cenogamy is the name given to a group marriage in which any male or female may have sexual relations with any other female or male in the group. Although practiced by a few small experimental communities, such an arrangement has never received institutional status in a culture as a whole. Other polyamorous relationships, such as the union of three or more men, three or more women, and two or more men with two or more women, may occur, but lack names and recognition as social institutions. This entry describes the prevalence of polygamy, determinants of polygyny, the impact of polygyny on women and children, and the determinants of polyandry.

Prevalence of Polygamy

Current Western governments recognize only monogamy, but that is not the case worldwide. Among the 1,231 societies in the *Ethnographic Atlas Codebook*, 186 (15 percent) were monogamous, 453 (37 percent) had occasional polygyny, 588 (48 percent) had more frequent polygyny, and 10 (less than 1 percent) had polyandry.

The foregoing does not mean that 85 percent of the world's population supports polygamy. Many polygamous societies are small, underdeveloped cultures. Nonetheless, polygyny is considered to be a legitimate form of marriage in Algeria, Benin, Chad, Congo, Gabon, Ghana, Kuwait, Nigeria, Saudi Arabia, Togo, and Tanzania, as well as among the Bedouin-Arabs in Israel and Xhosa in South Africa.

The prevalence of polygyny also does not mean that a male may choose any female as an additional wife. In many polygamous societies, the first spouse must consent to the choice of a second spouse. Fifteen percent of societies in which multiple wives were common also emphasized sororal polygyny, limiting the male to his wife's sisters, such as Native American Sioux and the Zulus of Africa. At other times, an additional spouse is obligatory. In 69 percent of polygynous societies, a man was expected to marry the widow of his brother and to raise the nephews and nieces as his own. In 62 percent of polygynous societies, the cowives live in separate dwellings.

The original religious teaching of the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints (LDS) encouraged men to have at least three wives. Polygyny is illegal in the United States, and the LDS church hierarchy banned the practice of plural marriage in 1890 as part of Utah's application for statehood. Nonetheless, polygyny continues to be practiced in some fundamentalist LDS sects, primarily located in Utah, Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas.

Islam permits polygyny with up to four wives. Some Muslim immigrants in the United States from the Middle East, Africa, and Asia bring multiple wives with them during the immigration process, concealing the females' identity as sisters or daughters. Other Muslim men take a second, third, or fourth wife in Islamic religious ceremonies that are not recognized by civil law, leaving the later wives and children in jeopardy in matters of health care, social security, and inheritance.

Determinants of Polygyny

Because polygyny is so widespread, it is difficult to identify variables that consistently predict its acceptance. Among societies that permit polygyny, however, it is practiced more frequently in some cultures than others in terms of the percent of females involved in polygynous unions. More females tend to be involved in polygynous unions and fewer in monogamous unions meaning-wise, but it seems clearer in harsh environmental circumstances, including tropical climates with a higher level of infectious disease and in societies with a lower ratio of eligible males to females, including due to the loss of males in warfare. It also is more frequently practiced in cultures that have greater income inequality, including concentration of a large amount of wealth and arable land in few hands, and delayed age of marriage for males due to the need to accumulate resources in order to marry. Such environmental conditions seem to accentuate the natural selection tendency for the strong and fit to reproduce more than the weak and poorly adapted.

Although some aspects of a harsh environment occur naturally, it should be emphasized that the concentration of wealth and land-holdings occurs only when social norms and structures emphasize individual acquisition rather than communal sharing. The determinants of such norm variations are unclear. Regardless, females in such harsh physical and social environments may be forced to choose between marriage to a healthy and wealthy male who can support multiple wives, a poorer or sicklier male, or no marriage at all. Further suggesting that polygyny is an institution associated with reduced female options are findings that it is practiced more intensely in societies with a low rate of female literacy and little exposure to mass media.

Impact of Polygyny on Women

Information on the impact of polygyny on women is mixed. In polygynous societies, such as among fundamentalist Mormons and Islamic groups, women often have little access to education or careers and may be restricted from owning property or exercising overt political power. Some report jealousy due to their husband sleeping with

other women and resentment when dominated by their husbands' earlier wives. In some polygynous subcultures, girls younger than the age of consent in the larger society have been forced into marriages against their will, providing *de facto* support for rape.

Some women in polygynous societies have expressed dissatisfaction because of their lack of personal funds, transportation, and saleable skills, which creates formidable barriers to divorce. A woman who leaves a polygynous marriage may be ostracized and shunned by the polygynous community, creating strong obstacles to her seeing her children again if she did not retain custody.

Other women in polygynous communities express satisfaction with their lives. They report pride in being linked to a prosperous husband, they enjoy their close relationships with their sister wives, and they benefit from sharing household work and child care. These women also report feeling that they wield considerable influence in the management of domestic activities and in the welfare of the community.

Impact of Polygyny on Children

Children born in a polygynous family may benefit from receiving the genes of successful fathers and in living in the household that such men can provide. The children also may benefit from having multiple role models and receiving the warmth, affection, and care of several mother figures.

At the same time, polygynous marriages are more likely than are monogamous marriages to have spousal conflict, tension, and jealousy. There also is more father absence if the wives live in separate houses, and there may be financial stress if the number of children borne by multiple wives is not paralleled by increased income. There are reports of adolescent males being ejected from polygynous compounds in the United States to reduce competition for the adolescent females. Lacking education or skills for dealing with the outside world, these unfortunates are known as the "lost boys of polygamy."

Some studies have documented the negative effects of polygynous marital structure on the developmental outcomes of children, whereas others have not found evidence that polygyny

places children at risk for adverse cognitive, educational, or mental health consequences compared with children from monogamous families. Disentangling such conflicting results may require knowledge of the religion, economy, and social structure of polygamous cultures, including whether the cowives are sisters or live in separate dwellings. In societies in which polygyny is highly valued in the religion and is a sign of high status, the children of polygynous marriages may thrive. However, when polygyny is stigmatized or an indicator of impoverishment, then children of polygynous marriages may fare less well. Similarly, societies that emphasize communal rather than individual values and involve the extended family in childrearing may buffer the impact of the stressors associated with polygynous marriage, especially on older children who typically spend less time in the home.

Determinants of Polyandry

The marriage of one female with two or more males occurs in less than a dozen cultures, including the Toda of south India, the Nyinba of north-west Tibet, the Pahari of Nepal, the Marquesans of Polynesia, and the Kaingang and the Shirishana of Brazil. The Toda practice fraternal polyandry, in which two brothers marry a woman. Not only are both males related to the offspring, but they have an incentive to work cooperatively on land that stays undivided in the family. Among the Marquesans and Kaingang, by contrast, two males who are not closely related marry one woman.

Polyandry is not an institution in which successful women maintain harems of attractive men. Instead, polyandry tends to occur in cultures with weak economies, in which individual men tend to be poor and have difficulty supporting wives on their own, and women tend to be marginalized and have minimal opportunity to contribute to family subsistence. In such situations, it often takes two men and a woman to make ends meet. The Shirishana are not characterized by poverty, but the society consists of only a few hundred people who live by hunting and horticulture in the more remote regions of Brazil, and they have unstable sex ratios. Because of the relationship between

polyandry and economic and demographic instability, it is difficult to determine the impact of polyandry on women and children, although issues of jealousy and marital conflict have been reported.

To the majority of the world's people, who were brought up within the norm of monogamy, the institution of polygamy may seem exotic and can elicit a reflexive response of ethnocentric disdain. But polygamous institutions appear to have been adaptive in some past and present ecologies and may be so in the future. For example, because of a cultural preference for sons, countries such as China have seen examples of selective abortion and infanticide over the past quarter century used to increase the ratio of males to females. Institutionalization of polyandry could help alleviate the looming wife shortage in such countries.

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See also Alternative Relationship Lifestyles; Marriage, Historical and Cross-Cultural Trends; Marriage Markets; Parenting; Sex Ratio

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POPULARITY

Popularity is a term used to describe the social status of an individual. Broadly, popularity refers to high peer acceptability. Popularity indicates that an individual has more social power than other members of a reference group, and this social power may be prosocial or antisocial in nature. Examples of prosocial behaviors include being kind and likable, whereas examples of antisocial behaviors include being aggressive and dominating. The significance of popularity may peak during adolescence, a time during which individuals tend to be particularly concerned about who is popular or unpopular in their peer group. Beyond adolescence, popularity receives relatively little attention in the psychological literature, although popularity in adulthood has been linked to more frequent respiratory infections presumably because popularity leads to increased contact with a greater number of people. This entry describes the phenomenon of popularity, how it is measured, what factors are associated with it, and its role in human relationships.

Conceptualization and Measurement

Historically, *popularity* has been defined in two major ways. Until the 1980s, it was primarily conceptualized and measured using sociometric methods. That is, popularity was measured by examining the position of individuals within groups. More specifically, the sociometric definition of popularity examines the extent to which individuals are rated as likable and socially preferred by their peers. Thus, individuals who are liked and deemed desirable as social partners are viewed as popular. To measure popularity in this way, researchers collected rating scale data to determine whether individuals were liked or disliked by others in their peer group. An individual who received many liked ratings and few disliked ratings by peers was deemed popular.

Other methods of assessing popularity include paired comparisons techniques, in which each participant is presented with the names of two peers and is asked which of the two he or she prefers or likes better. The same participant is then presented with other pairs of peers' names until all individuals

in the group have been contrasted and an overall measure of popularity may be computed for each target. Another common technique is the nominations method, in which each individual is instructed to list a number of peers (typically three) who are best liked and a list of peers who are least liked. These assessment methods are useful across the life span (even preschool children are able to provide meaningful sociometric data), are correlated with teacher reports of peer acceptability, and are related to the quality of peer interactions, including initiation of play and friendships.

In the 1980s, researchers began to theorize that popularity involved more than a single rating of likability. Instead, it was proposed that popularity was composed of two dimensions: (1) social preference, the extent to which an individual was liked; and (2) social impact, the extent to which an individual was perceived to have social power. More in line with a sociological approach, this two-dimensional theory measured popularity in terms of the individual's characteristics (e.g., friendly or unfriendly) and status in the social group (e.g., high status or low status). Popularity was defined in terms of social centrality, and individuals with a reputation of social power and impact were perceived as popular.

Early on in this tradition, popularity continued to be measured using liking and disliking nominations by peers. Individuals were asked to rate their peers as liked or disliked. In addition, researchers measured social preference (liked minus disliked) and social impact (liked plus disliked). Using this model, five sociometric types were derived: popular, rejected, neglected, controversial, and average. Popular individuals receive many liking ratings and few disliking ratings; thus, they are high in both social preference and social impact, and they are liked and desirable as friends. Rejected individuals are similarly high in social impact, but differ from popular children because they may or may not be liked. Neglected individuals are low in social impact and moderate in social preference, receiving few positive or negative peer nominations. Like popular individuals, controversial children are high in social impact, but unlike popular children, they receive many positive and negative nominations by their peers. Interestingly, it is possible to be simultaneously liked and disliked by peer group members. Research findings show that

high numbers of liked and disliked nominations are indicative of high social status, albeit a controversial one. Further, research suggests that children classified as controversial make up only a small proportion of the group and that they do not remain in that category for long. The remaining third of children are classified as average: They receive moderate numbers of positive and negative nominations by their peers.

When researchers found that popularity was not linked solely to an individual's likability, they began to study popularity in terms of two distinct, measurable phenomena: sociometric popularity and perceived popularity. *Sociometric popularity* was defined in terms of likability. Perceived popularity was defined in terms of social power or status. To measure sociometric popularity, individuals were asked to name peers with whom they would like to be friends. To measure perceived popularity, individuals were asked to name peers whom they perceive to be popular. Sociometric popularity and perceived popularity do not always overlap. That is, an individual may have substantial social power, but may not be well liked by peers or vice versa. Interestingly, using measures of both sociometric popularity and perceived popularity led to a heterogeneous group of individuals who are considered popular.

Individuals who were rated high on perceived popularity and low on sociometric popularity were seen as dominant and aggressive. Individuals who were rated low on perceived popularity and high on sociometric popularity were viewed as friendly and trustworthy. Finally, individuals who were rated high on both perceived and sociometric popularity were perceived to have all these characteristics.

Popularity in Childhood and Adolescence

Popularity as a phenomenon is most apparent in middle childhood and adolescence. By the fourth grade, perceived popularity is well established, and children are able to identify characteristics of popular and unpopular peers. These characteristics range from positive, prosocial behaviors to negative, dominating behaviors. Some positive descriptors that are associated with being popular include being cool, athletic, smart, and friendly. Negative descriptors include being stuck-up and relationally or overtly aggressive toward peers.

Relational aggression refers to acts that intentionally manipulate or damage social relationships via behaviors such as teasing, spreading rumors, or exclusion. There is evidence that highly aggressive boys may be some of the most popular children in school. Other characteristics that are commonly associated with popularity are attractiveness and having many material possessions. Studies have found that girls may be more aware of the characteristics associated with popularity than boys.

As discussed earlier, although high social status is typically viewed as desirable, not all popular individuals are liked. Many popular children are not prosocial. Indeed, children and adolescents who are perceived as popular can be some of the most aggressive (relationally and overtly) members of the peer group. Some potential reasons are that, once students achieve high social status, they may feel a need to continue to engage in aggressive behaviors to maintain their status.

Factors That Affect Popularity in Childhood and Adolescence

Role of Family

Another factor that has been found to influence popularity is the quality of family relations. Research indicates that family cohesion, adaptability, and marital satisfaction predict children's popularity over time. Possible reasons for these findings are that parents who are emotionally positive and who model prosocial behavior tend to raise children who emulate these behaviors in their peer relationships. Birth order has also been related to popularity: Children who have older siblings tend to be more popular than first-born children presumably because they have more interpersonal experiences with other children within their homes. Further, parenting styles have been linked to children's popularity. Authoritative caregivers who provide a combination of warmth and articulated limit-setting tend to parent children who are well liked by peers and adults.

Other Correlates

Research has linked popularity to a number of positive attributes. Generally, high peer acceptance

is related to short- and long-term psychological well-being. For example, popular individuals tend to be more intelligent, socially skilled, and physically attractive. Behaviorally, popular children are viewed as friendly, cooperative, extraverted, and competent in initiating, maintaining, and resolving conflict within relationships. Popularity has also been linked to better emotion regulation. Popular children tend to perform well academically relative to their rejected peers, who tend to perform poorly in school. Additionally, popular children tend to be more engaged in school. Children with common names also are more likely to be popular than their peers with more atypical names.

Gender Differences

There may be gender differences associated with changes in an individual's perceived popularity and likability over time. Research indicates that boys who are well liked tend to be perceived as more popular over time, whereas girls who are perceived as popular tend to become less liked over time. One possible explanation for this finding is that girls may increase relationally aggressive behaviors after they achieve popular status in an effort to maintain it. Another potential reason for this trend is that less popular girls tend to be envious of girls who are perceived as popular and therefore rate them as less likable.

Risks Associated with Popularity

Popularity may be a risk factor for some individuals. Children and adolescents who are popular tend to be more influenced than their less popular peers by broad social reference groups. Once popular, individuals have a significant amount of social power within their peer group, but they must actively work to maintain their status in their social hierarchy. Popular children and adolescents are likely to emulate positive and negative behaviors they observe in society at large. These behaviors are perceived as useful for maintaining their social status. As one example, prosocial behavior is favored over serious deviant behavior such as hostility and aggression in society at large, and there is evidence that hostility and aggression decrease with popularity. As another example, sexual

activity and alcohol and substance use are largely acceptable behaviors in society, and there is evidence that popular adolescents are at greater risk of engaging in these activities relative to their peers.

It is important to note that individuals who are not popular also may emulate the risky behaviors of popular peers in an effort to increase their own social status; however, these individuals have fewer of the protective factors that popular individuals have, putting them at increased risk. Although specific protective factors have not been identified, it appears that engaging in risky behaviors during adolescence has less potential for long-term consequences when these behaviors occur within the context of other, more positive cognitive, emotional, familial, and social factors.

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See also Affiliation; Children's Peer Groups; Friendships in Childhood; Life-Span Development and Relationships; Liking; Peer Report Methods; Socialization, Role of Peers; Social Skills in Childhood

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PORNOGRAPHY, EFFECTS ON RELATIONSHIPS

Researchers over the past three decades have been investigating how pornography and erotica affect viewers' attitudes toward women, appraisals of their romantic relationships, and tendencies toward aggressive behavior. More recently, they have begun investigating the impact of pornography use on both the viewer and on his or her romantic partner. With the explosion of personal computers and Internet connections in the home, as well as the number of pornography sites on the Internet, ease of access to pornography is unprecedented. Yet at present, relatively little is known about the effects of pornography on romantic relationships. According to a recent report in *Time* magazine, the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers stated that pornography use has been implicated in more than half of recent divorces in the United States. Studies have primarily examined such use in Western cultures, although research in Eastern cultures is beginning to emerge. A number of important findings have appeared consistently and are described in this entry.

To begin with, there are qualitative and meaningful differences between sexually explicit materials that are pornographic and materials that are erotic. Pornographic materials combine sexual explicitness with degradation and/or violence in a manner that appears to condone the degradation or violence. Degrading elements commonly include depicting women in subordinate positions and roles or portraying them as degraded persons. Violent elements can include slapping, punching, gagging, and other physical contact that would likely result in discomfort or pain. Of note, perpetrators of aggression are rarely punished for such acts, and targets of aggression appear to thoroughly

enjoy such degrading or violent treatment. In contrast, erotic materials present egalitarian and consensual depictions of sexuality, in which the pleasure of both partners is the focus.

Researchers have found differences between the effects of pornographic and erotic materials. Generally, men report feeling positively about both types of sexually explicit materials and report that such materials enhance their sexual knowledge and attitudes toward women and sex. However, after viewing pornographic (but not erotic) movies, they are (a) more likely to feel that a female victim is at least partially responsible for sexual assault, (b) more likely to endorse sexist attitudes, (c) less likely to report being in love with their romantic partner, and (d) less likely to find their romantic partner attractive. Women see pornographic and erotic materials differently. In general, erotic materials are seen positively, whereas pornographic materials are seen as disgusting and/or disturbing. However, there appears to be a trend toward more accepting attitudes toward pornographic materials on the part of women.

When examining relationships between sexually explicit material use and couple satisfaction, studies to date have been unable to accurately differentiate between pornographic and erotic materials. However, interesting findings have emerged from research that focuses on sexually explicit materials as a whole. Generally speaking, the majority of people who view or whose partners view explicit materials do not report their own or their partner's use of such materials as problematic for the relationship. Notwithstanding, studies have shown that between 20 and 35 percent of women whose male partners view sexually explicit materials do report distress over such use. (In contrast, fewer than 10 percent of men report similar distress over their female partner's use of such materials.) This distress often takes the form of women stating that their partner's use feels just like an affair. Distressed women report that a partner's heavy use of sexually explicit materials compromises their sense of intimacy and closeness to the partner, makes them feel like sexual objects rather than true partners during sexual relations, and leaves them feeling physically inadequate as they compare themselves unfavorably to the women portrayed in the pornographic materials. Married women and those whose partners use sexual materials frequently are

more likely to express distress than women who are just dating their partner or whose partners report less frequent usage.

How use of sexually explicit materials relates to couple satisfaction and sexual satisfaction depends on who is viewing the materials and the purposes for which they are viewing it. Research has found that women's use of sexually explicit materials is associated with an increased sense of sexual satisfaction for both her and her male partner, as well as increased relationship satisfaction for her male partner. In contrast, men's use of sexually explicit materials relates to *decreased* sexual satisfaction for both him and his female partner. Expressed differently, the more women report using such materials, the more sexually satisfied they and their partners are; but the more men report using such materials, the less sexually satisfied they and their partners are. Other studies have confirmed a relationship between men's use of sexually explicit material and lower relationship satisfaction with a romantic partner.

Why would satisfaction ratings differ depending on whether it is men or women who are viewing sexually explicit materials? The answer to this question appears to lie in the reasons for such usage. An overwhelmingly consistent finding dating back for more than 30 years, across multiple studies, and in various countries is that men view sexually explicit materials significantly more often than women. Recently, researchers have investigated the reasons for such use. What this research suggests is that the primary reason that men use sexually explicit materials is to aid in solitary masturbation. In contrast, the primary reason that women report using these materials is as part of and an aid to lovemaking with their romantic partners. In other words, most of the time they use sexually explicit materials, men use them in a relationship-*distracting* activity, whereas women commonly use such materials in what can be called a relationship-*enhancing* activity. (Although men also see explicit materials with their partners, more often they report using such materials alone.) Therefore, when the primary reasons for such use are considered, it makes sense that higher use of sexually explicit materials by women results in greater sexual satisfaction for couples, whereas higher use by men results in lower satisfaction.

Although future studies need to better discriminate the different effects of pornography versus erotica on romantic relationships, it is encouraging that researchers are beginning to examine how such materials affect not only individuals, but also couples. Given how accessible such materials are, an increased understanding can help couples better manage such use for their long-term relationship happiness and success.

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See also Media Depictions of Relationships; Media Influences on Relationships

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POSITIVE AFFECTIVITY

Conventional wisdom holds that happy people have stronger social relationships than their less happy peers, and empirical research supports this popular belief. In this chapter, we examine how social relationships are influenced by positive affect (PA)—the feelings reflecting one's level of pleasurable engagement with the environment. High PA is characterized by excitement, alertness, and enthusiasm. High negative affect (NA), by contrast, is a

state of subjective distress and encompasses a number of unpleasant moods, such as anger, disgust, fear, and nervousness. Both PA and NA play important roles in interpersonal relationships; however, this entry is limited to discussing PA.

Assessing PA

PA Measures

PA is commonly measured using self-report questionnaires that require participants to rate various mood descriptors. Disagreement exists, however, regarding the subcomponents of PA, and this is evident in the discrepancies in content among PA measures. Consider, for example, the widely used Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS). Its PA scale contains 10 descriptors (e.g., *enthusiastic*, *confident*, and *alert*) that assess the PA subcomponents of Joviality, Self-Assurance, and Attentiveness. In contrast, the Profile of Mood States scale only assesses the Vigor subcomponent of PA (e.g., *active*, *lively*, and *energetic*). The Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale contains four items measuring enjoyment, happiness, optimism, and self-esteem. The Multiple Affect Adjective Checklist–Revised divides positive mood into two subscales—Positive Affect (e.g., *friendly*, *happy*, and *satisfied*) and Sensation Seeking (e.g., *active*, *daring*, and *enthusiastic*).

In addition to self-report questionnaires, PA is also assessed using a number of other methods, including observer ratings, counts of positive emotional words in narratives or essays, and the coding of facial expressions (i.e., sincere or so-called “Duchenne” smiles).

Despite the diverse approaches in PA assessment, both self-report and non-self-report measures of PA evidence high convergent validity, suggesting that they are tapping the same construct. Nevertheless, it remains unknown how different PA assessment tools might impact studies of interpersonal relationships.

Related Constructs

PA is closely related to other positive psychology constructs and is sometimes considered equivalent to them. The most common of these is the Extraversion personality factor, which is strongly

correlated ($r = .46$) with the PANAS PA scale. Measures of subjective well-being and self-esteem are also closely related to PA. However, these measures do not directly assess pure PA, and they often contain a low NA component in addition to a high PA component.

Stability

Trait PA has been found to be remarkably stable across time, suggesting that people typically return to their individual baseline affect levels soon after the occurrence of significant life events. However, although PA is often studied as an enduring trait, it also can be measured and manipulated as a short-term state.

PA and Relationships

Frequency of Social Interactions

What are the implications of individual differences in trait PA for social relations? Anecdotal evidence suggests that people who experience frequent positive moods are viewed more favorably by others and are more likely to engage in social interactions than those with rare positive moods. This association between level of PA and frequency of social activity has, in fact, been demonstrated in several studies. For example, in one study, researchers tracked participants' daily moods and social activities over a 6- to 7-week period and found a significant correlation between PA and socializing.

Sociability

High- and low-PA individuals appear to differ in their temperaments. As mentioned earlier, those high in trait PA are likely to have extraverted personalities—that is, they are warm, energetic, and seek to affiliate with others. Their sociable, pleasant natures may lead them to actively search for opportunities for interpersonal contact; likewise, others enjoy interacting with them. For example, one study examined the influence of affect on social interactions between unacquainted dyads. The results showed that participants who interacted with high-PA partners rated their experiences as more enjoyable than those paired with low-PA partners. Additionally, independent observers

judged the videotaped interactions involving high-PA partners to be of relatively better quality.

Social Networks

One of the most robust findings in the literature on PA is that happy people have relatively stronger interpersonal relationships. Indeed, given that high-PA individuals are generally sociable, it is not surprising that they are more likely to be involved in a romantic relationship than their low-PA peers. In a longitudinal study, women whose facial expressions showed high levels of genuine PA in their college photos were relatively more likely to be married 6 years later and less likely to have remained single 22 years later. PA is also significantly associated with the number of friends one has, as well as one's amount of social support and perceived companionship.

Satisfaction and Quality of Relationships

Studies further suggest a link between PA and satisfaction with social relationships. In the context of romantic relationships, this effect has been found among both married and dating samples. High-PA individuals rate themselves as relatively more committed to their intimate relationships, and they evaluate their relationships as being of higher quality. Those high in PA are also more likely than their low-PA counterparts to feel close to a friend, to experience few friendship conflicts, to report having high-quality friendships, and to be rated by their peers as having high-quality relationships. Furthermore, high-PA individuals are not the only ones who benefit from their abundance of positive emotion: The spouses of high-PA individuals are relatively more likely to experience increases in marital well-being across time.

Conclusion

Throughout much of the history of psychology, researchers have emphasized negative affect. This entry reflects newfound attention to PA and its role in interpersonal relationships. Studies conducted in recent decades have reliably demonstrated that PA is correlated with numerous indicators of social bonds, including social activity, sociability, size of

social network, and satisfaction and quality of relationships. However, the direction of causality remains unclear. In particular, researchers do not yet know which is the stronger influence—namely, whether PA promotes these social indicators or whether these social indicators foster PA. Currently, empirical evidence points to both paths. For example, longitudinal studies have shown that happier individuals are relatively more likely to attract friends and marriage partners, and laboratory experiments have demonstrated that those induced to feel happy are more likely to socialize, self-disclose, and show interest in social activities than those induced to feel neutral or sad. Conversely, high-quality relationships and frequent social engagement are associated with positive emotions and overall well-being, both cross-sectionally and across time. This growing evidence supports the folk belief that happy people have better relationships than unhappy people.

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See also Emotion in Relationships; Extraversion and Introversion; Happiness and Relationships; Mood and Relationships; Personality Traits, Effects on Relationships

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rates remain near 50 percent, and marital dissolution is now an accepted feature of our social landscape. Indeed, the recent advent of “divorce announcement” stationary appears to signal a new level of public acceptance of postdivorce life as a normative life transition. Popular media, for example, are increasingly likely to represent postdivorce adults and single-parent and stepfamilies as valid and functional examples of family. Such trends reflect evolving social norms and expectations of marriage and divorce across the life span, and they represent the larger context in which individuals shape their own personal expectations of postdivorce relationships. This entry focuses on the postdivorce relationship between former spouses in particular, with the understanding that divorce affects the entire family and social network of a couple.

The postdivorce relationship between former spouses builds, by definition, on prior marital dissolution. Divorce is nearly always a disruptive and disturbing experience for the former spouses and their family members. Postdivorce couples often face diminished financial resources and a reduced standard of living, particularly among women. Former spouses must often relocate to new home(s). When children are involved, the postdivorce relationship between former spouses is likely to be much more complicated, but ultimately more significant, given parental responsibilities to provide continuity and care for children experiencing a reconfiguration of their family. Researchers and mental health clinicians (therapists) who study the long-term effects of divorce on adults and children have sought to explain those factors that contribute to positive and negative outcomes of postdivorce relationships. This entry summarizes relevant constructs and highlights significant findings regarding postdivorce relationships between former spouses. Suggestions for future directions in research and interventions are considered.

Concepts Relevant to Postdivorce Relationships

Despite a greater acceptance of divorce in American culture, individuals who divorce generally experience a profound sense of loss, sadness, and even failure. Although the end of a difficult marriage can be a relief and opportunity for growth, divorce

POSTDIVORCE RELATIONSHIPS

Americans continue to favor marriage as a desired and normative adult life transition, but divorce

most often signifies a loss of an intimate other, an extended family and social network, as well as an imagined future.

For many former spouses and their family members, divorce and the postdivorce relationship can evoke a form of *ambiguous loss*. Such losses are marked by uncertainty regarding the presence or absence of a loved person, place, or state of being. Certainly, one or both members of a divorced couple can experience a lack of clarity or agreement about the nature of one's former spouse role or place in one's life. The former spouse is still there but not there. Such ambiguity also can complicate the resolution of former social and familial identities and roles for both the individual and the larger family and social network. For example, a noncustodial parent is still a mother or father, but may have more limited opportunities to fulfill his or her parenting role. Similarly, former in-law relatives may still feel like family even when they are no longer legally or socially viewed as such. Pauline Boss, who first identified ambiguous loss as a distinct concept in family stress research, reports that such boundary ambiguity can be particularly difficult to negotiate and can threaten psychological well-being of both the individual and the larger family system if left unresolved.

Similarly, postdivorce relationships must address other coexisting aspects that can be challenging to resolve. For example, a postdivorce relationship is premised on a life event (i.e., divorce) that is both deeply personal and openly public. It is a relational event, but one that has its own ongoing process dynamics, such as for former couples with children, who must negotiate their parental roles separately and together. For divorced adults who remarry, they are both divorced from one partner and married to another. In these ways, postdivorce relationships require some level of disengagement and dislocation even while it presents opportunities for rediscovery and reconnection.

Such dualities reflect the inherently layered and complex state of postdivorce relationships that can contribute to a heightened sense of *boundary ambiguity*. Boundary ambiguity is a family systems concept that reflects a lack of clear or shared understanding of who is in and out of one's family. Unresolved boundary ambiguity can significantly intensify personal and relational stress between former spouses and can add considerable confusion

for involved children. It is, therefore, important for researchers and clinicians alike to consider and assess the levels of loss and unclear relational boundaries experienced by former partners and family members in order to support their respective well-being and facilitate optimally adaptive postdivorce relationships.

Relational Antecedents as Predictors of Postdivorce Relationships

Researchers have increasingly sought to detect which particular spousal relationship factors predict postdivorce outcomes, such as continued contact, contact quality, and individual well-being. For example, the duration of a marriage prior to divorce, the presence of children, shared economic ties such as a joint business, and time since divorce all contribute to the quality and nature of postdivorce relationships between former spouses. Marriages of shorter duration generally result in less postdivorce interaction between former spouses compared with couples who were married for longer durations, whereas former spouses without children have less contact over time postdivorce compared with former spouses with children. Former couples that had close extended families and/or intertwined social networks prior to divorce often face additional emotional challenges in the early postdivorce periods.

Relationship quality prior to divorce is another critical aspect to consider when examining postdivorce relationships. Researchers have found that former spouses who struggled with serious behavioral conflicts prior to divorce are likely to have far more antagonistic postdivorce relationships compared with those couples that did not report serious or chronic conflicts. Similarly, those who divorce amicably are much more likely to have more positive postdivorce relationships than those individuals who become engaged in antagonistic or contested divorce proceedings. It must be noted that most divorce research has been based on middle-age adults and has focused on issues particularly relevant to midlife, such as coparenting. To date, later-life marital dissolution and repartnering have largely been overlooked in the divorce and step-family literatures despite increasing rates of divorce and remarriage among adults more than 65 years

of age. As our society continues to age, it will be critical for more empirical and policy research to document the content and nature of divorce and postdivorce relationships among later-life adults and their intergenerational family members.

It is also worth noting that a great deal of this research has relied on divorced individuals seeking mental health intervention or support. The use of such populations that are distressed enough to seek out a therapist, as opposed to more representative samples, necessarily limits the predictive quality and generalizability of research findings.

In the past, traditional therapy treatment of divorced adults typically encouraged a complete dissolution of any emotional connection between former spouses. It was assumed that divorce terminated any form of relationship between former spouses, and that continued contact and feelings for the former spouse signified poor adjustment to the divorce. Studies examined the role of *negative attachment*, as defined by ongoing hostility toward, or preoccupation with, a former spouse. Such research determined that preoccupation with a former spouse or the failed marriage, in particular, represented postdivorce attachment distress and bereavement and negatively impacts well-being.

Mounting evidence on the negative effects of divorce on children, however, highlighted the potential value and need for continued contact and collaboration, at least between former spouses with children. Research reporting that divorce often resulted in the loss of father-child contact and persistent parent conflict led researchers to recognize that the end of a marriage should not always or necessarily be the end of the former spouses' relationship in most cases. Recently, researchers have interpreted the presence of more positive forms of attachment between former spouses as natural and even beneficial, especially for those with ongoing parental contact and responsibilities. Family researchers and therapists, including Constance Ahrons, have asserted the existence and importance of *the good divorce* and have stressed that a more collaborative, mutually supportive postdivorce relationship is both possible and desirable for former spouses. This line of research has acknowledged and affirmed that the lives of former spouses, especially those with joint children, continue to intersect in important ways over time and throughout the life course. Given

this, divorced couples may benefit significantly from well-timed support from social networks, counselors, and institutions to successfully negotiate the challenges of postdivorce coparenting. Inclusive communication and policies in school and other family settings, for example, can go a long way to optimize divorced parents' ongoing involvement in the important developmental transitions in their children's lives across the life span.

Conclusion

No two divorces are exactly alike. Therefore, it should come as no surprise that postdivorce relationships reflect great heterogeneity as well. Increased attention to issues of diversity is needed in research and development of clinical interventions. Concerns relevant to couples that divorce in later life need to be explored and documented. Late-life illness and caregiving issues, as well as financial issues regarding inheritance and long-term care support, will present significant challenges to postdivorce former spouses and their family members. In addition, the current postdivorce relationship research literature focuses exclusively on heterosexual couples and their families. As homosexual couples increasingly seek access to legal marriage and choose to have or adopt their own children, it is critical to incorporate these families into ongoing research, therapeutic, and policy efforts.

Given significant demographic shifts in ethnic, racial, and age occurring in the United States, it will be increasingly important to expand research efforts directed at charting those factors that predict better or worse outcomes for former spouses, their children, and other family members. Such research will continue to benefit those most directly involved and inform those concerned and actively engaged with promoting family well-being across the life span.

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See also Divorce, Children and; Divorce, Effects on Adults; Stepfamilies

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POWER, PREDICTORS OF

Power is typically defined as the ability to shape, influence, or control the behavior of another. Although power is often described as something that people possess, power is actually a dynamic of social relationships. That is, the exercise of power is rooted in the interaction of specific individuals, with specific characteristics, in specific contexts. Being able to predict power dynamics, or an individual's ability to exercise power, means knowing something about the social location (or social status) of each actor, the relationship of the actors to each other, and the context in which the interaction takes place. This entry examines the power bases (tools or resources) that individuals bring to a particular situation and the power processes (interactional dynamics) of that situation to understand (and predict) power outcomes.

Resources as Predictors of Power

Most discussions of power are rooted in resource-exchange theory understandings of human behavior. According to these perspectives, people give and receive benefits (or exchange resources) as part of normal interaction. Resources can be anything of value—tangible or intangible—that individuals desire, and they serve as the bases for exercising power. The most obvious resources include money,

material goods, and status/prestige, but there are others as well: love, affection, sexual favors, specialized knowledge, social approval, time, attention, and other services (including everything from cooking and cleaning to giving backrubs). In any relationship, these resources are exchanged on an ongoing basis. Sometimes like is exchanged for like, as in a romantic relationship, where both partners give and receive love, affection, and attention. In other circumstances, partners exchange different or even complementary resources. For example, in conventional marriages in Western cultures, men have traded the income they earn as sole (or major) breadwinner for the homemaking and child-care services of their wives.

Relationships develop and continue because each partner has something to offer the other, meaning that, over time, stable and harmonious relationships depend on the continual exchange of resources. Further, there is an implicit pressure toward equitable exchange. It is uncomfortable for participants if one person is giving more (or taking more) than the other; each partner wants to feel that she or he is both giving and receiving something of value and that, on balance, the exchange of resources in the relationship is “fair.”

Achieving this balance depends on a number of factors: specifically, the needs and alternatives of both individuals. The value of the resources exchanged in any relationship depends on the appetite, desire, or need one has for a particular resource, as well as the opportunities one has for satisfying that desire or need elsewhere. For example, if Person A needs monetary resources, she or he will appreciate Person B for providing them. If Person A can provide something of equal value, harmony and stability are achieved. However, if Person A's need for money continues and if she or he cannot find anyone else to provide it, Person B's money becomes even more important. If the resources that Person A has to offer in return are not as attractive or can easily be found elsewhere, an imbalance creeps into the relationship.

This imbalance in resources is critical because an imbalance in power could develop from it (i.e., an imbalance in resources exchanged in a relationship is a predictor of an imbalance of power). In the prior example, if Person B knows that Person A needs money and also knows that Person A has

few options to obtain it elsewhere, Person B could ask a higher “price” for this resource (e.g., by demanding more services or even deference). The only counterbalance that Person A has to these increasing demands would be to withdraw from the relationship. But if Person A’s needs for money continue to be high and few alternatives are available, Person B will continue to enjoy a power advantage in the relationship.

This means that possession/control of resources that are highly valued in a particular context is predictive of higher power in a relationship. The previous example draws on a popular and widely valued resource: money. However, the same dynamics could hold true for other resources, such as love or attention. Individuals who possess or control these resources can potentially exert a great deal of power over the behavior of another. Parents, for example, can withhold love or attention as a means of controlling the behavior of their children. Individuals may withhold affection or sex in an attempt to control the behavior of their intimate partners. However, children can decide that pursuing their parent’s approval is fruitless or not worth the effort; lovers can leave to build healthier relationships with others, rather than give in to sexual or emotional blackmail.

Although love can be used in these destructive ways to attempt to gain control, love or affection can also act as a temper on the potential power embedded in the control over resources. Within close friendships, love relationships, or relations among family members, the calculations of fairness and equity will also be shaped by cultural norms of selflessness and altruism. Friends, lovers, and parents accept that giving more than the other, without thought of personal benefit or gain, is often part of their role and is seen as evidence of their love and commitment, rather than an indicator of power. Context, then, is key. Resources per se are not predictive of power, but they can be used to one’s power advantage under specific circumstances.

Power and Social Location

Although relative resources and access to resources can serve as predictors of power, this is not always the case. The value of the resource can also depend on the social location or social status of the giver. In

other words, power exercised on the interpersonal level is linked to patterns of domination and power on the social structural level. Inequalities along the axes of gender, race, social class, sexual orientation, and so on shape the value of the resources available to and controlled by individuals. Those in subordinated statuses (all women, men of color, the poor, gays/lesbians/bisexuals, etc.) often see the value of their resources diminished in their attempts to negotiate power in their relationships.

For example, for generations, men have been sole (or major) breadwinners in most households, and contributing this important resource has been a source of power for them. First, men have been able to secure the homemaking and childrearing services of their women partners and wives. (One might be tempted to argue that women hold equal power to force men to provide in order to continue receiving women’s services. However, the asymmetry of this argument lies in the fact that men can leave families and do well—perhaps better—economically, whereas wives who leave—or attempt to force husbands to leave—would find themselves in substantially reduced circumstances.) Second, because the family’s economic survival has depended on the man’s ability to perform (often physically demanding) labor, men have been able to lay claim to greater leisure time and a larger share of food at the family table. Finally, and perhaps most important, men have controlled family finances and reserved the right to make any and all household decisions. Of course, the specific practices vary. Some husbands have controlled all financial and household decisions directly. Others have delegated financial management of the household to their wives (after taking the funds they required for their own use and leaving wives to worry about how to cover family expenses) or allowed women to make some everyday household decisions while reserving the right to control important matters (by “putting their foot down”). Whatever the practice in any particular family, these arrangements have largely reflected *men’s* preferences. This sweeping power that men enjoy has long been justified through resource-exchange theory logic: Men get more in their relationships because they are contributing the most important resource in that context.

However, as women have moved into the workforce in large numbers and become equal financial

providers in many instances, and primary or sole providers in others, their incomes have not been as highly valued and, therefore, have not conferred the same kind of power that men have historically enjoyed. Wives are not able to ensure the equal participation of their husbands in household responsibilities (although a substantial majority explicitly state this as a goal). Wives also tend to have much less control over family finances and household decisions than men in similar circumstances have had even when they earn more than their husbands. This means that the value of resources is “gendered”: Money is used as a power base more directly and efficiently by men than by women. Put another way, the value of money contributed by men is higher and, therefore, a better predictor of power.

Power Processes

Although two people may share goals or desires and work cooperatively toward reaching them, the focus on power processes highlights circumstances where two individuals desire different ends or outcomes and examines how these individuals negotiate a final outcome or decision. It is useful to think of power processes as an array of strategies that each person can draw on in an effort to prevail. These strategies include nagging, withdrawing, bargaining, persuading, compromising, and commanding (or issuing ultimatums). At the end of these negotiations, a final outcome is reached. To the extent that the outcome is more closely aligned with the initial preference of one individual (rather than the other), that person is assumed to have exercised greater power in the process.

Throughout the negotiation process, individuals may draw on various resources in their attempts to prevail. Those with money may be able to sway the negotiations by arguing that it is *their* cash that will be spent. Those with greater knowledge of a particular topic may convince their partners that they know best in this area. Those with greater personal or social charm may simply be more skilled at getting others to go along with their desires. For immediate results, the ability to issue orders is perhaps the most effective exercise of power; however, this ability may come at a cost. The other person may come to resent not having a say in what happens in the relationship and, over time, may find the relationship unattractive.

Theoretically, each of these strategies should be available to both participants in the process. However, some individuals in particular social locations will have greater access to (or success with) certain strategies. For instance, it is easier and more effective for parents to issue ultimatums to their children than the reverse. Parents' status gives them the “right” (legitimate authority) or power to make decisions regardless of their children's preferences. Unilateral decision making in other contexts must draw on some socially recognized position or authority to be effective.

Returning to the earlier example of married couples further demonstrates how one's ability to affect the power process will be linked to social location or status. The money that husbands and wives bring to the table is valued differently. Similarly, spouses also draw on different strategies in the decision-making process; many husbands still exercise veto power, whereas wives more often report using logic and persuasion as they attempt to make their points or try to change their husbands' minds. This gendered difference in strategies in the power process reflects larger differences in gender expectations for men and women. Despite changes in behavior on the part of many men and women over the last several decades, there remain some strong, underlying cultural norms that encourage men to be forceful and aggressive and encourage women to be nice and compliant—anything but domineering. These cultural pressures limit women's options in the power processes and diminish their ability to influence final outcomes in their relationships.

Predicting power outcomes, then, requires understanding the nuances of a given situation. It requires knowing something about the resources and strategies on which each participant can draw because these represent potential tools for exercising power. However, these tools are not neutral because what works for one individual in a specific setting may not work for another. Predicting power dynamics and outcomes requires understanding how larger cultural demands impinge on individuals' behavior and shape their options in the interactional context, as well as how these options enhance or limit their power.

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See also Communication Processes, Verbal; Exchange Processes; Power Distribution in Relationships; Resource Theory; Social Exchange Theory

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POWER DISTRIBUTION IN RELATIONSHIPS

The *power distribution in a relationship* refers to who has greater ability to influence or exert control over others in the relationship despite resistance. Power is fundamental to all human relationships no matter how close or distant. Further, all relationships—heterosexual, homosexual, romantic, family, coworkers, and friends—can be characterized as power relationships regardless of whether power is an obvious component of the relationships. The distribution of power also affects a wide range of other relationship matters, including feelings of trust, satisfaction, violence, leisure, and longevity.

Power is not an individual trait such as physical appearance. There are no inherently powerful (or powerless) people; certain people are powerful because they possess more resources or other qualities than others. In this sense, power distributions are relative in nature. Another way in which power can be thought of as relative is that a person's power must be understood in the context of a particular relationship. Thus, an individual may have a high-status job or prestige in the community, but this does not necessarily translate into higher power within his or her marriage or other intimate relationships. Whether one's social power contributes to greater power within intimate relationships is

dependent, in large part, on how much power one's partner has. A woman manager, for instance, may be capable of exerting considerable power within the workplace, but may not be able to do so within her romantic relationship, especially if the partner is of equal or higher status. Cultural traditions and norms, especially gender expectations, also dictate the distribution of power within relationships.

Power may be manifested in various ways, such as having greater say in making important decisions, veto power (having the ability to veto the less powerful member's decision), dominating conversations, and so on. Power can also be overt (exercised outwardly) or latent (hidden); verbal, psychological, or physical; or spoken or unspoken. Indeed, it is not necessary for power to be exercised at all in order to have it. Take the case of a child who "walks on eggshells" around his father, trying hard not to upset his father. The child's fear may be rooted in previous violence, but it might also stem from knowing that the father simply has the ability to punish. Researchers also make a distinction between *orchestrative* power (making decisions about what gets done) and *implementation* power (deciding how it will get done).

Generally speaking, power can be distributed unequally or equally. When power is unequally distributed in a relationship, one person or group has greater influence over the course and definition of the relationship. In cross-sexed relationships, an unequal distribution of power can be characterized as either male-dominant (men hold most of the power) or female-dominant (women have more power). When power is equally distributed, no one person or persons dominates the relationship and interactions. This doesn't mean that they share power across all areas or domains of the relationship; rather, on balance, everyone is recognized as being equally powerful. When individuals exercise power in different domains, but essentially have equal power, the relationship is said to be *autonomic*. When individuals share power across domains, they are said to be *syncratic*.

Determining whether a relationship is equal or unequal is not an easy task for a number of reasons. For one thing, what goes on in the privacy of individuals' lives is usually hidden from outside observers. Even the individuals involved in the

relationship may not agree on whether and who among them has more power. Research has shown that individuals tend to underestimate their own power in relationships.

Another reason it is difficult to determine whether a relationship is equal or unequal is that there are so many areas in which power can and is exercised—or potentially can be exercised—that it is difficult to gain a clear sense of its balance in a relationship. Suppose it was within your power to make the important decisions for your family, such as whether to have another child, whether to move the family to another town for your job, whether to initiate a divorce, and so on. The fact is, these decisions affect everyone profoundly, but are made infrequently; thus, it might be easy to lose sight of how much power you really have in the family. Suppose you do not have control over the big decisions, but can affect many small decisions, such as what the family will eat for dinner, whether the children will go to after-school care this week, or whether to invite friends over for dinner this weekend. It may appear and feel like you have most of the power in the family because these decisions are so much more immediate, but the reality is more complicated than that.

This scenario leads to another important factor with respect to determining the distribution of power in relationships. Suppose a couple has a traditional, autonomic relationship: Her primary roles involve taking care of the house and children and she has nearly complete control over issues such as decorating the house, what to feed the family, whether to home school the children, and so on, whereas his responsibilities center on supporting the family financially. On the surface, it would appear that the couple's arrangement is egalitarian (autonomic). But what if her husband is thrilled that she is taking on domestic and child-care responsibilities because he has no interest in such matters and even considers them to be "below" him? In such cases, it could be argued that power is not equally distributed and that in an autonomic relationship the respective domains must be valued equally by all in order for it to be egalitarian.

Research has shown that couples commonly engage in "myth making" in order to convince themselves (and others) that their relationships are consistent with what they value.

Who Has the Power in Relationships?

Research has shown that power is usually not distributed equally in relationships. The earliest studies on marital power revealed that husbands had slightly more power than their wives. For instance, with respect to decision making, most couples were "autonomic," although husbands had more say than their wives; in conflicts, husbands were more likely to get their way; and when it came to making major changes for one's partner (such as relocating for one's spouse), wives tended to make such sacrifices more than their husbands. Studies of dating relationships revealed similar patterns.

As families and relationships change over time, expectations concerning power within these relationships also change. Prior to the mid-20th century, most marriages in the United States were considered patriarchal or autonomic. It was generally assumed that men made the important decisions and had final say. The Women's Movement challenged men's presumed privilege, and women entered the labor force in record numbers, giving them more equal standing in their relationships. However, even in contemporary intimate heterosexual relationships, men are likely to have slightly more power than women. Such power is likely to stem from two major sources: persistent gender inequality within society that grants greater privilege and status to men and values masculine traits and skills over feminine ones, and the fact that power is based in part on resources (e.g., expertise, money, education) and men tend to be older, more educated, and earn more money than their partners.

What happens when gender is taken out of the equation? Research has shown that in same-sex relationships, power continues to shape the relationships. Lesbian couples tend to be more egalitarian than either gay or heterosexual couples, whereas gay couples tend to be less egalitarian than heterosexual couples. Similar to heterosexual couples, power in same-sex relationships largely depend on who brings what to the relationship in terms of status and resources, and what the couple values.

In recent decades, parents' power over children has also been challenged. Whereas parents were once assumed to have nearly complete control over their children's lives, cultural influences in children's lives such as media and consumerism have

instilled a greater sense of power among children and has led, to some extent, to a redistribution of power between parents and children. Research shows, for instance, that most parents today consult their children before buying clothes for them or give them the money to purchase their own clothes, whereas parents in past generations were more likely to buy children's clothing with little or no input from the children. As children's dependence on parents declines, parents' power also declines.

The Egalitarian Myth

In some relationships, power is a clear and fundamental aspect of the relationship, and it is clear to everyone who should have the power. In employer–employee or parent–child relationships, for instance, everyone expects the employer and parent to be more powerful (although the reality is not always so clear). Other types of relationships, such as friendships, however, are expected to be more egalitarian. In the United States, power in romantic partnerships is also largely expected to be relatively balanced. To acknowledge to others or even oneself that the relationship is unequal is to go against strong cultural norms about how relationships should work.

When cultural expectations dictate that relationships should be egalitarian, individuals may work hard to hide signs of inequality from critical outsiders and even to convince themselves that the relationship is balanced. Sociologist Arlie Russell Hochschild studied how couples manage the housework within busy families and negotiate rules for doing so. She found that most couples want to share equally in the housework, but that usually didn't happen. To obscure that unpleasant reality, they might develop myths to convince themselves that everything was fair. For instance, one couple that had fought continuously over who did the housework finally "resolved" the issue by symbolically dividing the house into the "upstairs" and the "downstairs." The upstairs, which the wife handled, was most of the house; the downstairs, which was basically the garage, was the husband's domain. On the surface, things appeared fair, and the tensions that had evolved around doing housework had been quelled. The problem was that there were

many more tasks associated with the upstairs than with the downstairs.

The Changing Nature of Power

Power is a fluid concept—a person's having power at one point in time does not necessarily mean that he or she will be powerful throughout the relationship. Consider what can happen over the course of a marriage—the couple may break up and reunite, marry, divorce, bear children, change or resign from jobs, and so on. Friendships often experience periods of intense intimacy and times of greater estrangement. Children begin their lives completely dependent on parents and others, usually gain independence in young adulthood, and finally may be responsible for the well-being of their aging parents. All of these factors influence the distribution of power.

Elizabeth Grauerholz

See also Gender Roles in Relationships; Marriage, Expectations About; Power, Predictors of; Social Inequalities and Relationships

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PREDICTING SUCCESS OR FAILURE OF MARITAL RELATIONSHIPS

Intimate relationships usually begin as a great source of satisfaction; however, many relationships show declines in satisfaction over time and ultimately end. This phenomenon has generated a vast research literature attempting to delineate the critical differences between relationships that succeed and those that fail. This entry first addresses the definition and measurement of relationship outcomes, followed by a discussion regarding the importance of, and methodological issues related to, this domain of research. It concludes with a review of variables shown to predict relationship outcomes.

Defining and Measuring Relationship Success and Failure

One measure of relationship success is whether the relationship persists over time or ends. *Relationship dissolution* refers to a relationship ending in separation or divorce; it is measured by assessing relationship status (intact or terminated). Assessing dissolution alone does not enable researchers to examine the process by which some relationships change from initially satisfying relationships to unions that dissolve. Thus, relationship success or failure is also defined in terms of how satisfied or dissatisfied each partner is with the relationship. *Relationship satisfaction* encompasses an individual's evaluations of and feelings about his or her relationship or partner. It is measured using *self-report questionnaires* in which individuals rate their level of satisfaction. Dissatisfying relationships are certainly at greater risk for dissolution; however, the association between relationship satisfaction and dissolution is not as strong as one might intuit. Dissatisfying relationships endure for many reasons, and satisfying relationships may dissolve in certain circumstances. Although couples vary widely, on average, the longer relationships persist, the more stable and less satisfying they become, reducing the correlation of satisfaction and stability as relationships develop. This suggests that relationship dissolution and satisfaction are distinct outcomes that should be investigated

separately to fully understand the variables that predict relationship outcomes.

Importance of Predicting Relationship Outcomes

Gaining a better understanding of the factors that predict relationship outcomes is critical because relationship distress and divorce have negative consequences for children and adults. Divorced individuals experience higher rates of stress, depression, and other health problems than their married counterparts. Furthermore, children raised in families experiencing high levels of conflict suffer more conduct, psychological, social, and academic problems. As adults, offspring of divorced parents have more mental and physical health problems, as well as greater relationship distress and instability. The best interventions designed to prevent and treat relationship distress are those based on research identifying the factors that lead to relationship dysfunction.

Methodological Issues in the Prediction of Relationship Outcomes

The best way to predict relationship outcomes relies on *longitudinal research designs*, in which a sample of engaged or newlywed couples is tracked and assessed prospectively over time to measure changes in relationship satisfaction and status. Longitudinal designs are generally favored over *retrospective designs*, in which participants rely on their memory to report on past events, and *cross-sectional designs*, in which data are collected at only one point in time. The prospective nature of longitudinal designs largely solves memory problems associated with retrospective designs and enables a better understanding of developmental change, which is at the heart of predicting relationship outcomes. In other words, longitudinal designs provide an answer to the question, "Why do some relationships that start out so well fail?"

Variables That Predict Relationship Success or Failure

Hundreds of variables have been studied to answer this question. The following sections summarize a

vast body of research regarding the prediction of relationship outcomes. For the sake of brevity, only those variables found to predict relationship outcomes consistently across several studies are described. It should be noted that researchers do not make specific predictions for individual couples regarding relationship outcomes and then follow up to see whether predictions were accurate. Rather, these studies use statistical methods to examine the extent to which certain variables of interest are associated with later outcomes across a sample of many couples. Although some research has identified sets of variables that account for close to 90 percent of relationship outcomes (e.g., occurrence of divorce) in particular samples of couples, these same sets of variables have not been subsequently shown to predict outcomes for different samples of couples with the same accuracy rate. This occurs because the specific statistical equations used to predict outcomes in a particular sample of couples may not generalize well to samples of different couples. Taken together, marital research highlights variables that generally increase or decrease the likelihood of divorce or distress, but assertions that one can reliably predict relationship outcomes for particular couples are as yet not supported by available research.

This entry uses Karney and Bradbury's Vulnerability-Stress-Adaptation (VSA) Model to organize description of the factors that predict marital outcomes. This model posits that three broad, interrelated constructs account for relationship outcomes. *Enduring vulnerabilities* refer to stable demographic and individual difference variables. *Stressful events* refer to the stressors and transitions that a couple experiences. Finally, *adaptive processes* refer to the ways in which a couple manages the conflicts that inevitably arise as a result of enduring vulnerabilities and stressful events. The following sections describe each predictor in turn.

Enduring Vulnerabilities

Each partner brings to the relationship a set of experiences and relatively stable personal characteristics that influence how partners respond to and behave toward each other. Family-of-origin experiences constitute one class of enduring vulnerabilities. Coined the *intergenerational transmission of*

divorce, parental divorce increases the likelihood that offspring will experience relationship distress and divorce as adults. Adults whose parents divorced report higher levels of aggression and negative affect (e.g., anger, contempt) in their own marriages. This suggests that negative behaviors (or the lack of adaptive behaviors such as problem-solving skills) observed in one's family during childhood may influence adult behaviors with romantic partners.

Early childhood experiences also influence one's *attachment style* or working model of close relationships. Individuals with a secure attachment style feel worthy of love and expect loved ones to be responsive to their needs. In contrast, anxiously attached individuals feel unworthy of love and experience anxiety about potential rejection and abandonment. More securely attached individuals maintain more stable relationships and report higher levels of relationship satisfaction than their insecurely attached counterparts perhaps because they utilize more adaptive communication and conflict-resolution skills (e.g., attentiveness, compromise).

Neuroticism, or *negative affectivity*, is a stable personality trait marked by the tendency to experience and express *negative affect* (e.g., anxiety or irritability). Although various dimensions of personality affect relationship functioning, neuroticism is one of the strongest and most consistent predictors of relationship dissatisfaction. Negative affectivity is associated with higher rates of destructive communication behaviors during relationship conflicts. Conversely, individuals with higher levels of *positive affectivity*, or the tendency to experience positive emotions, report more satisfying and committed relationships.

The influence of psychopathology has also been investigated, with depression being the most extensively researched psychological disorder. Stress-generation theory suggests that depressive symptoms create relationship stress. Studies indicate that depressed spouses are more apt to seek negative feedback and excessive reassurance from their partners. Depressed individuals with low self-esteem may seek negative feedback in an effort to verify that their own negative self-views are consistent with how others view them. These behaviors create interpersonal stress that, along with increased negativity during conflict, maintains depressive symptoms in a cyclical manner.

Evidence also reveals a longitudinal association between substance abuse and relationship distress. Alcohol abuse predicts increases in relationship distress and the likelihood of divorce or separation. In fact, individuals with alcohol problems are more likely to divorce than individuals with any other psychological disorder. Rates of divorce among problem drinkers range up to seven times rates among the general population. An associated danger of alcohol abuse is its tendency to increase the likelihood of aggression, which predicts relationship dissatisfaction and dissolution and is discussed later in this entry (see “Adaptive Processes”).

Premarital cohabitation, or the decision to live together before marriage, is also associated with relationship dissatisfaction and dissolution. Recent research suggests that couples who cohabit before engagement to marry are at the greatest risk for poor relationship outcomes, with slightly lower levels of risk for couples that cohabit after formal engagement. Recent and ongoing studies are attempting to identify the mechanisms behind this association, but initial results suggest there is no simple explanation.

Finally, various demographic variables represent enduring vulnerabilities to relationship dissatisfaction and dissolution. Greater *age* at the time of marriage predicts increased relationship satisfaction and stability. Relationships in which husbands report higher *income* and *employment* levels are less likely to dissolve. Relationship dissolution is more likely when women report greater income and employment levels than their partners for reasons that remain unclear. Divorce rates decline somewhat with increased *educational attainment*; however, people who graduate from high school or college have lower divorce rates than people who complete only some college. Greater *religiosity* is associated with lower tolerance for divorce and greater commitment. Evidence is mixed, however, as to whether more religious couples are actually less likely to divorce. Previous marital status predicts relationship dissolution because *remarriages* are slightly more likely to end in divorce than first marriages. This is notable because approximately half of all first marriages in the United States end in divorce, and close to 85 percent of divorced individuals remarry.

Stressful Events

Stressful events (e.g., unemployment, illness) may generate new sources of conflict between partners or exacerbate existing conflict, rendering couples more vulnerable to relationship dissatisfaction and dissolution. Furthermore, enduring vulnerabilities, such as neuroticism, may create stressful life circumstances or cause partners to experience events as more stressful. In general, stressful events predict relationship dissatisfaction and dissolution.

One exception to this general finding is stress associated with the transition to parenthood. Becoming a parent is associated with declines in relationship satisfaction; however, having a child makes couples less likely to dissolve their relationships. This may reflect the tendency for couples to stay married for the sake of their children, or it may occur because parenthood is considered a normal, positive event, whereas other stressors are not. Couples that engage in adaptive problem-solving and supportive behaviors during stressful events are less vulnerable to dissatisfaction or dissolution.

Adaptive Processes

Adaptive processes refer to the ways in which a couple manages the conflicts that inevitably arise as a result of enduring vulnerabilities and stressful events or from issues associated with the increased interdependence that follows marriage, such as sharing finances or raising children. When conflict between partners is not well managed, the accumulation of negative interactions erodes relationship satisfaction. Accordingly, the behaviors enacted by partners during relationship conflicts have been extensively investigated as predictors of relationship outcomes.

Studies have generally demonstrated that negative behaviors predict relationship dissatisfaction and dissolution. Negative behaviors include *negative affective behaviors* and *negative communication skills*. Negative affective behaviors refer to nonverbal displays of negative emotional states, such as anger or hostility. Negative communication skills are defined as verbal expressions that impede adaptive communication, such as generalized criticism or defensiveness. Couples that become less satisfied over time also exhibit two

particular patterns of negative behavior. A pattern called *negative reciprocity* occurs when one partner responds to the other's negative behavior with more negative behavior, thus perpetuating and escalating the cycle of negativity. *Demand-withdrawal patterns* develop when one partner becomes demanding and critical and the other partner withdraws from the negative interaction. Engaging in physically aggressive behavior is a particularly maladaptive way of handling relationship conflict. However, it is not uncommon: It occurs in approximately half of all newlywed couples. Although less severe acts of aggression (e.g., pushing) are initiated by men and women with comparable frequency, the effects of these behaviors on relationships differ as a function of the perpetrator's gender. Specifically, husbands' physical aggression early in marriage predicts declines in satisfaction, whereas wives' physical aggression early in marriage predicts relationship dissolution.

Alternatively, positive behaviors during conflict have also been investigated. Positive behaviors are categorized as *positive affective behaviors* and *positive communication skills*. Positive affective behaviors refer to nonverbal indicators of positive emotional states, such as affection or humor. Positive communication skills refer to verbal expressions that facilitate communication, such as the use of paraphrasing or compromise. In general, lower levels of both types of positive behaviors predict relationship dissatisfaction and dissolution, whereas higher levels enhance relationship satisfaction. More important, positive affect weakens the harmful effects of negativity on satisfaction, suggesting that the impact of negativity may depend on the larger interpersonal context in which it occurs. For example, negativity in a generally affectionate relationship may be experienced less negatively or viewed more benignly.

Partner behaviors outside the context of conflict also predict relationship outcomes. For example, declines in love and affection over time are associated with relationship disillusionment and subsequently relationship dissolution. Similarly, partner behaviors observed during discussions of problems outside the relationship (i.e., individual problems) also influence relationship outcomes. Engaging in more negative behaviors (e.g., negative affect, critical remarks, disinterest) and less positive

behaviors (e.g., reassurance) during the provision of support predicts relationship dissatisfaction. This association holds even when accounting for the detrimental effects of negativity during conflict.

Partners in satisfying relationships also engage in *relationship-maintenance behaviors* that promote relationship persistence. *Accommodative behaviors* indicate a partner's willingness to respond to negative behavior in a relatively constructive manner and are more likely to occur when partners report a strong sense of commitment to the relationship. *Commitment* is comprised of an intention to persist in the relationship, coupled with a sense of attachment to and dependence on one's partner. Satisfied, committed partners also demonstrate a *willingness to sacrifice* their own self-interests to enhance the well-being of their partner and the relationship. They are also more likely to exhibit *forgiveness* in response to perceived partner transgressions.

Partners' *cognitions*, or thoughts about and interpretations of each other's behavior and the relationship, consistently predict relationship outcomes. Maladaptive *attributions* are explanations for perceived transgressions that identify one's partner to be the cause of the transgression and assign blame. Maladaptive attributions predict declines in relationship satisfaction, as do unrealistic *relationship beliefs*, such as the belief that any disagreement with one's partner is destructive.

Conversely, certain cognitions promote relationship satisfaction and persistence. Adaptive attributions positing mitigating situational factors as the cause for negative relationship events predict positive outcomes. Satisfied individuals also attribute positive relationship events to their partners and develop idealized beliefs about their partners and relationships that maintain relationship satisfaction. Idealized beliefs are formed not only by reconceptualizing negative partner qualities as positive ones, but also by believing one's own relationship to be superior to other relationships and by actively minimizing the positive qualities of potential alternative partners.

Whether adaptive or maladaptive, the aforementioned behavioral and cognitive processes are influenced by enduring vulnerabilities and stressful events. Stress affects several aspects of adaptation, such as the likelihood of engaging in, and making

maladaptive attributions for negative behaviors, as well as the capacity to provide partner support. Enduring vulnerabilities also impact the degree to which couples experience and successfully adapt to stressful circumstances. Thus, stressful events and enduring vulnerabilities affect relationship outcomes via their influence on adaptive processes. Adaptive processes influence relationship outcomes, such that adaptive behaviors and cognitions enhance relationship satisfaction and persistence, whereas maladaptive behaviors and cognitions render relationships less satisfying and more vulnerable to dissolution.

Summary

Specific enduring vulnerabilities, stressful events, and adaptive processes predict relationship satisfaction and dissolution to varying degrees. Understanding the strength, nature, and moderators of these predictors enables the development of interventions to prevent or treat relationship discord. Enduring vulnerabilities and stressful events are difficult to modify, so most of the empirically supported interventions developed to date have focused on adaptive processes. Increased understanding of the factors that predict relationship outcomes will allow these interventions to be more effective. Given the numerous negative consequences associated with relationship dissatisfaction and dissolution, understanding their predictors has the potential to have a tremendous impact on the psychological and physical well-being of adults and children.

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See also Change in Romantic Relationships Over Time; Conflict, Marital; Longitudinal Studies of Marital Satisfaction and Dissolution; Marital Satisfaction and Quality; Marital Stability, Prediction of; Vulnerability-Stress-Adaptation Model

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PREGNANCY AND RELATIONSHIPS

Pregnancy is an event experienced by most women. Normal pregnancy lasts 40 weeks. During this period, women experience changes in their appearance and size, physical condition, family and work roles, and interpersonal relationships. As explained in this entry, pregnancy affects many human relationships, including those with spouses or partners,

other family members, and female friends, and it even affects interactions with strangers. This entry also discusses how relationships affect pregnant women and can influence aspects of the birth and the health of the child.

Impact of Pregnancy on Human Relationships

Women often express concerns about the changes that may occur in their relationships during pregnancy. Women pregnant for the first time tend to be particularly concerned that their relationship with their husband or other committed partner may decline as a result of the changes that they are undergoing. However, studies find that husbands typically feel closer to their wives during pregnancy and that both partners experience an increase in marital satisfaction *prenatally* (during pregnancy). This changes after birth, however, especially after the birth of a first child, when marital satisfaction usually declines. Relationship satisfaction may also be associated with sexual interest and activity: Many women report that they experience enhanced sexual pleasure during pregnancy compared with other times in their life. Although there is much individual variability in sexuality, studies find that women on average experience decreased sexual interest and activity in the first trimester of pregnancy, increases in the second trimester, and a decrease in the third trimester and after birth.

Pregnant women who are already mothers typically express concern about the impact of being pregnant on their other children. There is little research examining this type of impact, nor on how pregnancy affects a woman's relationship with her other family members. Some nonscientific sources have suggested that being pregnant leads a woman to desire a closer relationship with her mother and to resolve any existing relationship difficulties with her.

Pregnant women often seek out other women for information and inspiration to help them adjust to the changes they are experiencing, particularly women who have just had babies. Pregnancy also affects pregnant women's interactions with strangers. Some studies find that strangers, especially men, react to a pregnant woman by staring or avoidance. However, other research

indicates that a pregnant woman is more likely than a nonpregnant woman to receive assistance in daily life, such as having a door held open for her. Pregnant women also report that strangers frequently offer unsolicited advice, touch their pregnant bellies, and make comments about their physical size. Such experiences, which pregnant women widely report as aversive, may help explain why they tend to stand at greater distances from other people than do nonpregnant women, a phenomenon that is often attributed to pregnant women's distorted body image, but that also may reflect an attempt to avoid some interactions.

Impact of Human Relationships on Pregnancy

Supportive human relationships provide a variety of benefits to pregnant women. The term *social support* is used to describe these beneficial provisions of relationships. As it is typically defined, social support includes emotional concern, affirmation, material or tangible assistance, and the provision of information.

Over the last few decades, there has been increasing evidence that these types of social support are associated with better physical health and psychological well-being in pregnant women and a reduced likelihood of adverse birth outcomes such as low birth weight or preterm delivery. Babies born preterm (before 37 weeks of pregnancy) usually have not completed normal development and growth. Preterm delivery and low birth weight (less than 2,500 grams, which is approximately 5.5 pounds) contribute to serious cognitive, medical, and other problems in infancy, childhood, and adulthood.

Supportive relationships are believed to benefit pregnant women in part because supporters can provide information that leads women to take better care of themselves or to get needed medical assistance, and supporters can help with tasks that might otherwise be difficult for pregnant women. Women who receive more social support during pregnancy are more productive at work and report that they function better in their roles at home. Supporters can also provide comfort or affection that helps reduce the stressfulness of pregnancy, resulting in what is known as a stress-buffering effect. This is important because stress in pregnancy

has been shown to elevate women's risk of delivering a preterm or low-birth-weight baby.

Various dimensions of social support have been examined in pregnancy, including quality of support, satisfaction with support, perceived availability of support, and actual receipt of support. Some studies find that particular dimensions of social support are associated with different outcomes in pregnancy. For example, one study found that women who were more *satisfied* with the support they were receiving from the baby's father and from their health care providers delivered babies with better Apgar scores (a measure of the newborn's physical condition); those who reported *receiving* more social support during pregnancy were less likely to experience problems during childbirth, and their newborns also had higher Apgar scores. Finally, women who had at least one relative or close friend living nearby and who lived with the baby's father during pregnancy were least likely to deliver a low-birth-weight baby.

There is also evidence that the benefits of social support to pregnant women are influenced by who provides the support. Support from the baby's father appears to be of particular value to most pregnant women; support from other family and from friends is especially beneficial to pregnant women who do not have a committed or stable relationship with the baby's father.

Most studies of social support during pregnancy have been *correlational*. That is, they examine existing interpersonal relationships and social support and measure their associations with variables such as a woman's emotional status, her health, and the outcome of her pregnancy. However, some *experiments* have been conducted in which women with little existing social support receive assistance or companionship during pregnancy from people provided by the researchers. Most of these experiments find that the women who are randomly assigned to receive this support experience better psychological and emotional states, fewer physical complications during pregnancy and childbirth, and healthier birth outcomes than those who do not receive the support.

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See also Health and Relationships; Marital Satisfaction and Quality; Marriage and Health; Social Support and Health; Social Support Interventions; Work–Family Conflict; Work–Family Spillover

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PREJUDICE

Prejudice is a negative evaluation of a social group or an individual that is based on the individual's group membership. Prejudice is the negative affective component in attitudes, and it can set the stage for discrimination—differential treatment toward members of groups that are the targets of prejudice. Prejudice can be overt and conscious and is widely recognized in this form. But it can also be subtle, and people can be mostly unaware that they harbor negativity toward some groups.

Prejudice can affect close relationships at every stage of their development, whether it is prejudice by race, gender, status, weight, religion, ethnicity, accent, political attitude, hobby, or even zip code. Most of the research in this area has focused on race, religion, and gender, and these are the prejudices that are most likely to be important in relationships. Prejudice affects attraction between potential partners, relationship formation and maintenance, and the type and length of relationships. It can lead to stress, conflict, and even relationship dissolution. Close relationships, in contrast, can reduce or even eliminate prejudice.

This entry defines *prejudice* and traces its effects on close relationships. It begins with relationship formation, follows the course of relationships, and ends with the role that relationships can play in the reduction of prejudice.

Initial Contact

Prejudice can prevent people from forming friendships and romantic relationships. When these prejudices are overt, their effects on relationships are straightforward: People neither initiate nor prolong relationships with people they hate. But prejudice often affects people's behavior without their awareness, and unconscious prejudice can even prevent relationships from developing. Because these effects are subtle and outside of awareness, they might be harder to detect, are often expressed in a way that people don't perceive as prejudice, and might be more resistant to change.

Relationships begin with an initial contact, often face to face. Proximity and similarity are two major factors in attraction and relationship formation. As a result, within-group contacts are more likely to occur than between-group contacts. The foundation of within-group relationships is based on segregation. Similar people meet each other because they find themselves in the same places: neighborhoods, schools, universities, sporting events, e-mail listservs, Internet chat rooms, or social networks like *Facebook*. This lowers the initial chances of people from different groups interacting and forming a relationship. There are other reasons that people tend to have less interaction and form fewer relationships with minority and stigmatized groups members, including: (a) the smaller number of minority members leads to a lower likelihood of initial contact, (b) the geographical distribution of minority members and physical segregation, (c) language and cultural differences can make interaction between members of different groups cumbersome, (d) exposure to peers' prejudice, and (e) anxiety based on unfamiliarity with outgroup members.

Anxiety is an especially influential obstacle to the initiation of new relationships. Because members of one group are often anxious about interactions with members of other groups (e.g., they lack knowledge of how to act in such an encounter,

they may have different cultural expectations, or they may anticipate hostility from the outgroup), such relationships are less likely to be initiated. Anxiety makes people less willing to form close relationships across racial, religious, linguistic, or other cultural boundaries. Anxiety may also lead to awkwardness and avoidance—even in the absence of prejudice—which in turn may lead to the perception that someone is motivated by prejudice. With a realistic concern about encountering prejudice, one might interpret awkwardness and discomfort as signs of prejudice, leading him or her to withdraw.

Prejudice not only serves as a motive for maintaining separateness and frowning on across-group relationships, it may also contribute to the motivation to maintain ingroup-only relationships. Across-group relationships may be seen as threatening; small ethnic groups might slowly disappear through across-group marriages, and many times such groups try to discourage their members from relationships (especially long-term and serious ones) outside the group. For example, in Hebrew, the word *Hitbolelut* means assimilation, but carries the negative connotation of a Jew marrying a non-Jew.

People may still have reasons to initiate a relationship with an outgroup member, including curiosity, preference, previous experiences, values, rebellion against one's group, and simply liking people for who they are. People who choose to overcome or ignore the difficulties often make an extra effort to overcome the effects of segregation or prejudice.

Relationship Maintenance

People who overcome obstacles to initiate a close relationship may still face difficulties maintaining it. One reason is that couples from different racial groups are less likely to share views and values about family and childrearing. For instance, research has shown that sex-role ideology and housework-sharing attitudes differ between same-race White couples and same-race African-American couples; this can make coordination of day-to-day activities harder. Second, although some conflict is normal and healthy in relationships, across-group relationships have been shown to have more sources of conflict than within-group

relationships. One reason for this is the extra stress to which people in these relationships are exposed. Across-group relationships (especially intra-ethnic couples) are subject to more discrimination and criticism in public from strangers and in private from close friends and family members (e.g., in the United States, marriages between African Americans and Whites are still less likely to be accepted than same-race marriages). Criticism is likely to add stress, which in turn incubates more conflicts.

One critical asset that people in relationships have is social support. Support from peers and family provide emotional and practical resources that help partners repair relationships. Not having this support—or, worse, experiencing anger or disdain instead—may increase tension in one's life and can undermine relationships. This may be one reason that adolescents involved in interracial romance tend not to reveal their relationships to their families and friends and why they are less likely to meet their partners' parents. Studies show that when interracial or across-group relationships do go public, peers and family members tend to exhibit explicit prejudice toward the relationship partner, and they tend to be less willing to give practical or emotional support to the couple. The failure to obtain encouragement and support can, in turn, worsen relationship quality, speeding dissolution.

Various factors affect the amount of prejudice that couples experience. Some communities are more tolerant than others, which substantially affects the rate of interracial marriage. National norms in the United States and Europe are changing; interracial marriages are increasingly more common today than they were 50 years ago (0.4 percent of U.S. marital partners had a mixed racial makeup in 1960, compared with 5.4 percent in 1999), and younger generations report fewer such challenges than their older, intermarried peers. As communities diversify through migration and intermarriage, familiarity is likely to reduce prejudice against interracial couples.

However, most U.S. marriages at the beginning of the 21st century are still between members of the same racial ethnic and religious groups. To some extent, this "assortment by group" is caused by factors other than prejudice. Demographic and social factors such as differential geographic distribution

of racial and ethnic groups, or attraction to people with similar attitudes, beliefs, or religious observances, issues of language, socioeconomic status, and other customs, all contribute to staying within one's group. But the underlying mechanisms of these variables at a structural level (e.g., segregation, group inequality) are closely intertwined with prejudice and discrimination at the psychological level. Segregation may lead to few intergroup friendships and marriages *because* of prejudice, rather than as an independent contributor.

Relationship Dissolution

Differences between partners (e.g., language barrier, cultural gaps, social norms) can make across-group relationships more prone to failure. Adolescents involved in interracial romantic or friendship relationships are more likely to terminate their relationships than those in same-race relationships even after adjusting for individual, relationship, and social network factors. Although the literature about the length of interracial marriages is not entirely settled, evidence seems to suggest that interracial marriages are more likely to dissolve than intraracial marriages (especially in the first 10 years of marriage) due to factors that are either directly or indirectly related to prejudice and discrimination.

Despite their difficulties, interracial couples show equal if not greater levels of commitment than intraracial couples. Research suggests that people in interracial or interethnic relationships tend to bolster the strength of their relationships not by perceiving themselves as satisfied, but rather by reducing their sense that they have alternatives to the current relationship. Still, findings suggest that, whereas among the general population 50 percent of marriages are likely to end up with a divorce, 66 percent of interracial marriages in the United States end in divorce.

Relationships and Prejudice Reduction

Although there are barriers to across-group and interracial relationships, acceptance of interracial relationships has been increasing for decades. In the 1967 decision *Loving v. Virginia*, the U.S. Supreme Court struck down all laws that prohibited

interracial marriage, and since then interracial marriages have increased. Acceptance of these couples has increased along with this and is highest in younger generations. More and more across-group relationships are likely to succeed, and partners in interracial relationships are likely to approach the same level of relationship satisfaction as those in intraracial relationships. Whether it is overcoming adversity that improves the relationship or whether only the strongest interracial relationships survive, success in these relationships is possible. Such success, in turn, is likely to lead to a decrease in prejudice not only toward one's partner, but toward the partner's group as well.

One of the most common and reliable ways of reducing prejudice is through intergroup contact. Romantic relationships and friendships both provide motivation to keep in contact, which in turn reduces prejudice. Reviews of the research on "the contact hypothesis" (nonconflictual contact between groups reduces prejudice) have concluded that indeed contact is a powerful influence for reducing prejudice. The more intimate the contact (i.e., more open communication, self-disclosure, and sharing of activities), the stronger the effect. In other words, the closer the relationship between members of different groups, the more likely contact is to reduce prejudice.

Even indirect contact can reduce prejudice. The more close relationships that a person's friends and family have with outgroup members and the closer these relationships are, the less prejudice a person is likely to report. This "extended contact hypothesis" can reduce the acceptability of prejudice, reduce the anxiety people might feel about making friends, increase the information available about different groups, and provide a social network that facilitates new contacts. This reduction in prejudice can be as large as the reductions that come from having a relationship with an outgroup member. The extended contact principle also works when people read books or are exposed to media about across-group relationships.

Evidence for the positive effects of close relationships also comes from experiments on attachment security. People who perceive themselves as worthy of being loved and perceive other people as trustworthy and supportive—people who have a secure attachment style—show less prejudice toward members of outgroups. When people's

sense of attachment security is temporarily increased in laboratory experiments, their prejudice is reduced in the short term, even in the face of perceived threats from outgroup members.

Conclusions

Prejudice affects relationships at every stage. Whether open and acknowledged or largely unconscious, it inhibits opportunities and the desire to meet, it interferes with the smooth operation of such a meeting, and it tends to slow the growth of intimacy. Once relationships are formed, prejudice may increase conflict within the relationship, reduce obtained and perceived social support, and increase the probability of relationship dissolution. However, overcoming these obstacles and remaining in an across-group relationship, especially close friendship and romance, turn out to be the most effective ways of reducing prejudice.

Omri Gillath and Christian S. Crandall

See also African-American Families; Attachment Theory; Culture and Relationships; Dissolution of Relationships; Causes; Interracial and Interethnic Relationships

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PREVENTION AND ENRICHMENT PROGRAMS FOR COUPLES

Although individualized face-to-face therapy is designed to remediate couple problems or distress, a growing array of structured programs target couples that are experiencing little or no distress with the goal of improving or maintaining the couple's relational harmony. These programs have been variously labeled "marriage enrichment," "marriage education," "premarital preparation," "relationship enhancement," "psychoeducation for couples," or simply "relationship education." Although relationship education may be delivered through books, pamphlets, media campaigns, Web sites, and fact sheets, most programs involve structured, face-to-face workshops or classes in community settings such as churches, schools, universities, hospitals, or family resource centers. These structured programs are delivered by clinicians, counselors, clergy, peers, teachers, and trained lay leaders to couples or individuals at various stages of the relationship life cycle (e.g., dating, engaged, married, transition to parenthood, divorced, remarried).

The umbrella term *couple relationship education* (CRE) is used here to encompass this diverse array of approaches and programs designed to strengthen couple relationships before problems become entrenched, overwhelming, and destructive. *Couple relationship* rather than *marriage* is used as the umbrella term to be inclusive of other forms of couple bonding and to limit the focus of this entry to programs that address relational as opposed to institutional, legal, or other aspects of a couple union. This entry provides an overview of the history, current status, efficacy, and typical features of CRE programs.

History and Development

Across cultures and time, wide variations exist in the degree to which marriage and close relationships are an arena open to public scrutiny and expert advice. In the United States, until recently, there was strong resistance to research and education on the seemingly intangible, natural if not spiritual, and exceptionally private processes of love, mate selection, and matrimonial functioning. However, events in the second half of the 20th century heralded an unprecedented call for societal attention to strengthening couple relationships. Social scientists began in earnest to study not just individuals, but relationships, and thus relationship science was born. Research revealed that close, intimate relationships were not simply nice, but essential for human thriving and constituted the core context for human development. Science was able and ready to explore the nature and functioning of these critical relationships with the hope of improving the quality of human lives.

During this era, researchers were documenting the skyrocketing divorce rate and the increasingly unhealthy state of Americans' relationships: Extramarital affairs occurred in as many as one third of marriages, more than 50 percent of marital relationships dissolved, and in at least one half of intact marriages partners experienced significant relational strain and unhappiness. A host of negative consequences for both parents and children were identified—from reductions in work productivity, to conflict and stress, and ultimately compromises in physical and emotional functioning. In contrast, couple relationships characterized by effective communication, closeness, and flexibility were found to be associated with a positive quality of life.

Against this backdrop, at least three separate developments entwined to support the current popularity and proliferation of CRE programs: research on marital and family interaction processes, grassroots marriage enrichment, encounter and related "growth" movements, and federal and state support for family life education.

Marital Interaction Research

In the 1970s, clinical psychologists such as John Gottman and Robert Weiss began conducting

observational studies of the interactions of married partners to identify behavioral differences between happily and unhappily married couples. By illuminating relational processes associated with successful marriages, this pioneering research provided an empirical basis for skills-based educational programs for couples. What was found to be critical to a healthy conjugal bond was not whether partners have differences and disagreements, but how partners handled those relational differences. Previous research on the predictors of marital success focused on static variables such as family-of-origin issues, demographics, or personality—variables not easily amenable to change. Attention to behavioral interactions reoriented the field to factors that empirically were shown to make a difference and were, at least in principle, amenable to change. A path breaker in this area, Howard Markman, one of Gottman's students, translated the insights derived from this new research tradition to a prevention program for couples (initially designed for couples at the transition to marriage), creating one of the first evidenced-based CRE programs. Based on the research findings, Markman's Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program (PREP) focuses heavily on teaching effective communication skills related to managing conflict. However, PREP and other research-based programs were offered to couples primarily through university clinics and departments, and little or no dissemination resulted from this work during the early stages of its development.

Grassroots Support for Marital Enrichment

Although developments related to remedial interventions for couples have always been the province of professional therapists, prevention and enrichment programs for couples began as popular grassroots movements and continue to be fueled by them. The early roots of CRE can be traced to the inception of the Roman Catholic Marriage Encounter program in 1962 in Spain and to similar faith-based and secular programs in the United States. Despite different formats and approaches, these early CRE programs shared a foundation in a humanistic philosophy, encouraging growth in personal and relational domains. From this perspective, relationships, and marriage in particular, were seen as a primary arena for actualizing human

potential. Like CRE programs today, the emphasis in these early programs was on the betterment of family life through improved communication. Through grassroots support and coordination among numerous faith-based as well as secular organizations, premarital preparation and marriage enrichment programs became widely disseminated in the United States, Australia, and other Western countries. For example, the Catholic Church began requiring an educational premarital counseling program of any couple marrying in the Church. By the early 1990s, about 30 percent of couples were receiving some form of CRE prior to marriage, primarily through programs developed outside the university and with little or no research basis.

State and Federal Support for Family Life Education

As a public institution, marriage is in the direct eye of the government; despite some pockets of public indignation related to interference with such a private affair as a romantic and sexual relationship, both state and federal government entities have exerted direct and indirect influence on the nature of romantic, marital, and family relationships. Although a range of government policies have shaped the character of marriage and family life in the United States, the discussion here is limited to government support for family life education, an important stream of influence for present-day CRE programs.

In 1914, Congress established the Cooperative Extension Service (CES) as a partnership among the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the state land-grant universities, and county governments. CES was explicitly designed to help citizens use research-based knowledge to improve their lives in selected areas, including family life. CES offices are located in almost all of the 3,077 counties in the nation and are staffed by county extension faculty who bring research knowledge from the university out to their constituencies. The outreach efforts of Extension have brought Family Life Education to the nation's families for decades in the form of workshops, pamphlets, fact sheets, newsletters, and other educational materials. The National Council on Family Relations provides credentialing for family life educators, ensuring a qualified and professional workforce.

In the late 1990s, the federal government began to take a more active role in supporting CRE as part of a major “Healthy Marriage Initiative” spawned by societal trends suggesting erosion in the institution of marriage and by the rise of a popular “Marriage Movement” calling for a return to more traditional marital arrangements in U.S. society. Although the government initiative is much broader in scope than the prevention of relationship distress, a cornerstone of the new initiative is an emphasis on the quality or health of marital relationships, and relationship and marital education were identified as part of the solution. Under current federal policy, states are allowed to use Temporary Assistance for Needy Families funds to support marriage education programs for disadvantaged families. Some states have mandated basic marriage and relationship skills training in public high schools or reduced the cost of a marriage license if the couple enrolls in a premarital education program. Other states have supported training in CRE programs to help disseminate marriage education within their borders. Within CES, the National Extension Marriage and Relationship Education Network was formed to provide research-based resources and catalyze new partnerships to advance knowledge and practice of CRE.

The Face of CRE Today: A Convergence of Streams Brings a New Tide

At the dawn of the 21st century, not only is there an acceptance of research on topics such as intimacy, infidelity, and infatuation, but there is also a hunger for expert guidance on the steps needed to achieve a satisfying and stable couple relationship. The landscape of CRE initiatives and programs today is diverse and complex precisely because it represents the convergence of a number of separately developing fields and movements, including the three prominent ones described in some detail before.

At one time, there was a clear distinction between prevention and enrichment in CRE, owing at least in part to their respective champions: Prevention efforts were primarily emanating from the professional and academic communities, whereas enrichment efforts were being promoted by lay secular and faith-based organizations.

However, the distinction between the prevention of distress and the promotion of healthy functioning has effectively disappeared in current CRE programs; both goals are embraced and articulated together in the common theme of “strengthening” relationships. Similarly, there has been a breakdown in the gulf between professionals (therapists, psychologists, counselors) and nonprofessional, lay, or paraprofessional helpers. Because no national, state, or organizational credentialing or licensing is required of CRE leaders, the field currently is open to professional and nonprofessionals alike. In the earlier phases of development, professionals were not providing much dissemination, whereas lay leaders were not relying on evidence-based approaches. Each group is now borrowing from the insights of the other, and pockets of convergence are evident. Government involvement lends further support for both of these objectives; recent government initiatives are consistent with the desire for widespread dissemination, and government funding generally requires solid and continuing empirical evaluation to establish effectiveness.

Importantly, the government’s role in supporting CRE has added to the new tide an emphasis on cost-effectiveness and a broadening of the reach to disadvantaged and traditionally underserved populations. Both the grassroots marriage enrichment movement and the academically based prevention effort have touched the lives of primarily White, urban, middle-class, educated couples. In contrast, government involvement, including extension services, has played the important role of stretching the reach of CRE to more disadvantaged and underserved populations. Recent federal initiatives have spurred the development of new curricula or adaptations of existing curricula that are more sensitive to the unique challenges of disadvantaged groups. In addition, the federal government has funded several large-scale CRE demonstration projects, which will provide evaluation data greater in scope than any previous research study. Both public and private funding for CRE programming and evaluation have increased significantly in the past decade.

The traditional distinctions between remediation and prevention, or therapy and education, have become increasingly blurred in this new landscape. This is a trend seen not only in the area of

CRE, but in the medical and mental health areas more generally. With pressure to achieve cost-effectiveness—and to reach more couples while spending less—and with the success of brief intervention and psychoeducational models in medical and mental health settings, individualized face-to-face therapeutic intervention models are being reserved for only the most serious or extreme cases. In the couples area, the move to educational models has been welcomed given that couples therapy generally shows only a moderate success rate, and few actually seek it out—the vast majority of those who divorce do not report having seen a therapist or counselor.

In further testimony to the merging of remedial and preventive approaches, many couple therapies now have a codified set of parallel strategies that can be delivered as CRE, rather than in a traditional face-to-face therapy session. Signs of a merger flowing in the opposite direction include the fact that insights from therapeutic processes are continuing to influence and shape CRE programs. Some of the most respected CRE programs are based on the clinical experiences of their therapist authors or the research of clinical psychologists.

This new tide brings greater attention to the “how tos” of relationships than perhaps ever before, and CRE programs are proliferating rapidly. CRE is beginning to become institutionalized and organized under an umbrella organization, the Coalition for Marriage, Family, and Couples Education, which sponsors an annual conference. However, with the new demand for relational education, significant commercialization of CRE products is taking place, and choosing an educational program can be daunting for both couples and practitioners. Unfortunately, many programs are based on personal observations rather than scientific or clinical wisdom (e.g., John Grey’s popular *Mars and Venus* books), and the vast majority of programs are unevaluated.

The Effects of Couple Relationship Education

With rapid proliferation of new programs, it is perhaps not surprising that few have been evaluated. Unfortunately, evidence of long-term effects from rigorous and replicated controlled outcome

studies is generally lacking even for well-established programs. As preventive interventions, these long-term gains are particularly important to document. It is generally only the skills-based programs that have been evaluated in controlled trials, and PREP is currently the only program that has been evaluated for long-term effects. Nonetheless, evaluation results are generally encouraging. Couples report high satisfaction with the programs, and a number of meta-analyses have confirmed an overall positive effect for CRE programs on short-term outcomes. Skills-based programs have been found to lead to increased marital satisfaction and improved communication skills, and, at least in the case of PREP, these gains hold up over years. Bernard Guerney’s Relationship Enhancement (RE) program is another established program with a strong evaluative base. Numerous studies of RE find that couples generally make significant improvements in the targeted areas: communication, empathy, self-disclosure, and relationship satisfaction.

Although the potential for CRE programs to prevent marital discord and divorce and improve relational harmony over time may be more promise than established reality at this point, the recent influx of funds, the systematic calls for additional and long-term outcome evaluations, and the large-scale federal evaluation and demonstration projects underway promise to provide important new insights on the efficacy of CRE in the coming decade.

Features of Typical CRE Programs

Although the content and delivery formats of CRE programs vary widely, most programs incorporate a similar set of educational messages and employ similar “teaching” strategies. The goals of a typical CRE program can be summarized as follows: motivate partners to nurture their relationship and take responsibility for their own behavior; teach effective communication skills; provide strategies for managing conflict, problem solving, and dyadic coping; prepare couples for common relationship issues; encourage empathy, intimacy, and responsive caregiving; and enhance fun and togetherness.

Consistent with the educational goals, programs are usually delivered in a group format or classroom setting, with anywhere from a handful of couples to 50 or more present. Some programs

have adapted a more individualized counseling or coaching format where couples meet individually with an instructor. This is more common in programs that use an inventory approach, and a personal session is used for feedback. Most group programs are taught by a single instructor, although married or unmarried partners often work together to allow modeling of the target behaviors. Programs use other formats as well. PREP, for example, although usually delivered in group sessions, has used a variety of alternative formats, including self-directed learning guides, telephone-based consultation, and eLearning via Internet delivery.

Programs vary in duration and intensity from a single, brief workshop to a day- or weekend-long event, to multiple 2-hour sessions provided over a period generally ranging from 5 to 12 weeks. Some programs are formal and structured, whereas others are informal and idiosyncratic. Evidenced-based programs are often formally structured, “trademarked,” and steps are taken to achieve fidelity and restrict delivery of the program to trained and certified facilitators. Teaching involves a mix of experiential exercises and didactic material, interspersed with audiovisual supports, including movie clips or illustrative clips from couple interaction studies. To achieve optimal benefits, there is growing appreciation of the importance of regular and sustained “practice” of the lessons delivered in a program, including “booster sessions” delivered at regular intervals following the initial session. Workbooks and homework assignments are often used to encourage activities outside of the classroom setting.

Conclusion

The potential for CRE programs to significantly improve the quality of couple relationships will depend on the extent to which the programs are effective in the long-term and the extent to which programs with documented efficacy can be disseminated widely within the population. Widespread dissemination of CRE programs requires surmounting what have been called in the clinical literature “barriers to treatment,” such as cost, inconvenience, and social stigma. Although CRE has distinct advantages over therapy in each of these areas, the barriers have not been eradicated. Most individuals feel they

need driver’s education before taking to the highway and are therefore willing to pay a fee for driver’s education, but a similar view has not generally taken hold among engaged couples with respect to navigating the new terrain of marriage. Even nominal fees for premarital education may drive couples to launch their marriage without training. Practical issues such as finding a time when both partners are free, finding child care, getting to the place where the program is offered, and so on can present formidable barriers. Without a prevailing assumption that relationship training is necessary, these relatively minor inconveniences are likely to keep partners at home. Further, couples may feel the need for training signals a deficiency. Despite positive labeling such as *premarital preparation* and *marital enrichment*, public exposure of participation in CRE activities may carry a “social stigma” for some couples.

Parents have accepted and relied on parent education for decades now—there is no assumption that parents are born with an accurate internal map for parenting. A similar attitude may slowly begin to take root for the navigation of close, romantic relationships. CRE proponents believe a map is essential—for most people, education is needed to become a good partner or spouse and a thriving couple. Although the development, evaluation, and dissemination of effective educational programs may be costly, ignoring the health of couple relationships may be more costly. The growth and popularity of CRE programs and the investment in large-scale evaluations are signs that the relational foundation of human life is being taken seriously.

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See also Communication Skills; Couple Therapy; Maintaining Relationships; Marriage, Transition to; Parenthood, Transition to; Predicting Success of Failure of Marital Relationships; Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Programs (PREP); Relationship Science, Disciplines Contributing to

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PREVENTION AND RELATIONSHIP ENHANCEMENT PROGRAMS (PREP)

PREP include several research-based and research-tested curricula that teach skills and principles for helping people increase chances for a happy and healthy relationship. A unique feature of PREP is that the information, skills, and strategies taught in PREP are based on research on how relationships work. Moreover, the content of the program is continually refined and updated based on new research findings and experiences in disseminating the program. This entry provides a brief historical overview of PREP, summarizes five versions of this program, presents findings from studies evaluating its effectiveness, and highlights directions for further research.

Historical Overview

Based on studies examining behaviors and perceptions of both distressed and nondistressed couples, as well as studies that identify factors associated with relationship success, PREP started in 1980 as a premarital intervention program designed to enhance relationship functioning and prevent divorce. Key research findings at the time were summarized by George Levinger, who noted that

the disagreements couples had did not matter as much as how they were handled. Therefore, early versions of PREP focused on teaching communication and conflict-resolution skills. In addition to being based on available research on marital success, PREP built on the work of Sherod Miller and associates' Couples Communication Program, Bernard Guerney's Relationship Enhancement Program, as well as Virginia Satir's and Salvador Minuchin's versions of family system theory.

The first use of PREP outside of a research context occurred in 1991, when the Navy decided to train Navy and Marine chaplains and social workers in PREP to help military couples. In 1995, the U.S. Army started using a version of PREP called Building Strong and Ready Families, which was geared toward the challenges faced by military couples. Today, nearly all Army chaplains are trained in PREP.

In 1999, the state of Oklahoma started the Oklahoma Marriage Initiative and chose PREP as the curriculum to use to improve marriages in the state. Spearheaded by these initial dissemination efforts, interventions founded in whole or in part on PREP are now being used in a variety of settings (e.g., U.S. Head Start programs, high schools, prisons, youth services diversion programs, Job Corps, religious organizations, and the military), leading to the provision of services to increasingly diverse and high-risk populations.

Evaluation Studies

Early studies of the effectiveness of PREP in university laboratories showed promise for teaching couples communication and conflict management skills, and it led to refinements of the program and large-scale tests of the model in community-based studies. Refinements over the years included focusing on protecting and preserving positive connections (e.g., fun, friendship, sensuality), as well as understanding the deeper meanings underlying successful relationships, such as commitment and forgiveness.

Larger scale outcome studies of PREP and other programs have also been promising. For example, reviews of the effectiveness of premarital intervention programs (including PREP) tend to find that couples receiving such training have significant

immediate gains in communication processes, conflict management skills, and overall relationship quality, and that these gains appear to hold for at least 6 months to 3 years. There is also evidence that premarital education of various types is generally effective for people of varying racial backgrounds and income levels, although such services are much less available to those with lower income levels. Recent efforts have focused on evaluating the extent to which PREP can be disseminated in community settings by training other providers (e.g., clergy) to deliver the program, and results of this service-delivery model have been promising.

In contrast to research on therapy approaches, prevention approaches like PREP have not typically provided data on the percentage of individuals showing significant improvement or deterioration over specific time periods, data on what predicts who does or does not benefit, nor data on relapse. One of the major reasons is that most participants in prevention programs are already happy with their relationship, and the overarching goal is to keep those couples happy. Nevertheless, future research needs to provide these data. There are preliminary data suggesting that there may be an attenuation of effects over time, highlighting the need for booster sessions for couples.

There are now five distinct curricula available based on PREP:

1. Classic PREP, a 12-hour program for couples;
2. Within Our Reach, a 30-hour program developed for couples with low income levels that includes more group activities, a strong experiential teaching style, and new information on stress and coping;
3. Within My Reach, a 16-hour program developed for individuals (rather than couples) that covers skills for relationship success, information on partner choices, and discussions of how relationships affect children;
4. PREP for Strong Bonds, a 16-hour program for Army couples; and
5. Airman to Airman, a program for men and women in the Air Force (see PREPinc.com for details about these programs)

There is also an Internet version of Classic PREP for foster and adoptive couples.

New Directions for PREP

Two challenges confront the prevention and education field: (1) getting partners to attend a class or program together, and (2) tailoring programs to serve the needs of diverse populations, such as those with low incomes or recent immigrants to the United States.

Services to Individuals

One of the biggest challenges for couple therapy or education is getting both members of the couple to attend. Preliminary data from a national evaluation of marriage education showed that more than 40 percent of couples did not attend even one session of a scheduled intervention. Although getting one member of a couple to attend seems easier, little research has been done on whether both members of the couple need to participate in a program for it to be beneficial. A related and equally important question is whether the gender of the participating member is important for transmission of skills and information to the nonattending partner. Research on PREP is now underway that addresses the question of how services delivered to individuals can generalize to couples and if there are differences in couple outcomes if services are delivered to males versus females.

Low-Income and Diverse Populations

Another major issue in the field is extending the research base of programs like PREP to low-income, ethnically diverse populations. With the exception of several recent studies, most evaluations of PREP and related programs have used samples that are predominantly White and middle class. Guided by findings that economic strain is linked to marital conflict via emotional distress, new versions of PREP include more activities and use culturally sensitive techniques designed to help couples cope with economic stressors to create safer, more stable environments for their relationship and their children.

Future directions for PREP and the relationship education field include conducting long-term research on prediction of marital distress and divorce and assessing long-term preventive effects

of interventions, particularly with diverse populations; developing and evaluating Internet-based delivery platforms; reaching younger people and higher risk populations; and training a wide range of service providers to deliver research-based interventions.

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See also Cognitive Behavioral Couple Therapy;
Communication Skills; Marriage, Transition to;
Prevention and Enrichment Programs for Couples;
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PRIVACY

Privacy is considered a cultural value, and legal scholars have grappled with the parameters setting the standard for privacy issues. However, in the context of human relationships, privacy is more dynamic and increasingly relevant as technological advances change the fabric of how people interact. In general, *privacy* in the United States is defined as information, territory, space, or possessions that people believe they have the right to own and over which they exercise control.

Broadly, privacy may be further conceptualized as instances when people restrict access to others and safeguard autonomy. However, within human

relationships, privacy refers not only to restricting access, but also to conditions under which others are granted access to private information, space, and possessions. An easy way to conceptualize this process is to consider all that people hold private as being housed within a boundary. When wishing to grant access, individuals open that boundary allowing others admittance to space, private possessions, or private information. When individuals opt to retain privacy, they close boundaries and keep others out. This entry discusses the conditions of privacy, privacy management apparatus, privacy invasions, and current privacy trends.

State and Conditions of Privacy

Several conditions represent the state of retaining privacy. For example, people may seek solitude achieving freedom from observation by others. Alternatively, people may strive for a privacy that affords liberty to act in public without concern for being identified, thus achieving a state of anonymity. Finally, privacy is attained through limiting disclosure to others. In addition to conditions of privacy, there are also privacy functions that represent reasons for limiting privacy access. Thus, privacy grants personal sovereignty by avoiding the possibility of being dominated by others. Privacy allows an emotional release from role demands. Privacy provides opportunities for evaluation by temporary separation from human relationships allowing time to process information. Privacy additionally offers protected communication to share personal information with trusted others. Finally, privacy protects potential vulnerabilities from exposure of information that might compromise reputations of individuals. Thus, people limit access to privacy boundaries to achieve one or more of these goals.

Privacy Management Apparatus

Human relationships require both privacy and granting access to others. Individuals cannot sustain relationships if they do not allow others to become privy to their personal moments, information, or space. At the same time, people need to preserve autonomy through managing privacy. To have an optimal relationship with others, people

require both privateness and publicness. Because these are concomitant needs, individuals develop strategies to manage them simultaneously. People control their privacy boundaries by regulating access through the development of privacy rules. People develop those rules by using decision criteria, such as motivations for access, cultural expectations, personality needs, and risk-benefit assessments that impact levels of access.

Privacy Invasion, Violations, and Dilemmas

When others encroach on an individual's space, misuse information, or treat possessions in unacceptable ways, that person feels violated. In U.S. society, some violations are considered to be legal matters. For example, although people typically trust medical professionals, with new health care technologies such as electronic medical records, patients have voiced uncertainties about the likelihood their privacy is protected throughout the health care system. Laws such as the U.S. Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 were crafted to protect patient privacy. Beyond legalities, people have emotional reactions to invasions of privacy because the act of invasion compromises an individual's sense of control.

People often find it difficult to rectify privacy violations that occur among individuals considered friends or with whom individuals have ongoing relationships. Relationship partners typically negotiate parameters for when and how privacy boundaries are drawn to include or exclude others. If people explicitly identify these boundaries and friends or intimates intentionally violate them, there is great potential for conflict because not only is privacy violated, but people also may feel that relational trust is breached.

More often than privacy violations or intrusions, individuals find themselves involved in privacy dilemmas with friends and families. Many times it is difficult to satisfactorily solve privacy dilemmas because sometimes the way people handle the problem complicates the issues. For example, suppose a teenage girl tells her older sister that she is pregnant, begging the sister not to tell their parents about the pregnancy. If the older sister keeps the secret, she may feel that she is betraying her parents. If she tells her parents, she betrays the younger sister's trust, likely creating emotional difficulties

with her sister that would need to be addressed. Thus, selecting an apparent solution to a privacy dilemma may necessitate complex strategies of managing relationship conflicts as a result.

There are two kinds of privacy dilemmas. First, accidental privacy dilemmas occur when people inadvertently discover something hidden, for example, where keeping the discovery concealed can cause problems, but acting on the discovery may also cause difficulties. Second, there are confidant privacy dilemmas where people are told volatile information that might be difficult or impossible to keep confidential. For example, a woman learns she has a genetic predisposition to contracting breast cancer. To cope with the information, she confides in her sister-in-law, but makes the sister-in-law promise not to tell her husband, the confidant's brother. The sister-in-law finds herself in a quandary because she has loyalties to her brother as much as she feels committed to the trust given by her sister-in-law. In all, invasions, violations, and privacy dilemmas may challenge the way people are able to sustain their privacy needs.

Current Privacy Trends

Privacy is at the forefront of many contemporary human relationship matters. Two such issues are the ways in which modern technology affects the privacy of human interactions and privacy within families and other personal relationships.

Impact of Modern Technology on Privacy

The Internet has exploded with multiple avenues by which people manage relationships and communicate with each other. New technologies that facilitate social networking on the Internet have positive aspects in that they allow people to form and sustain relationships, but there is also the possibility that relationships can be undermined or exploited through these technologies. One of the struggles in using these technologies to initiate and manage relationships is the issue of privacy. For example, it is problematic for users of a site such as *Facebook* to assume that information is protected. Although there is sufficient evidence to show that information on these Web sites is far from secure—for example, prospective employers,

family members, and others can access the information—some people act as if the information is secure and may post suggestive pictures from parties or highly disclosive information on their sites.

In addition to social networking through the Internet, the use and abuse of other technologies also challenge people's sense of privacy. For example, the handy supermarket or drugstore cards that give discounts also track buying habits. There has been talk of providing these records to physicians and insurance companies so that they can monitor purchases and determine whether dietary restrictions are being followed. Likewise, the U.S. REAL ID Act of 2005 imposes new security, authentication, and issuance standards for information on state driver's licenses and state ID cards. These cards carry significant personal information on a magnetic strip that some privacy advocates argue allow for tracking the individual. Personal choices and preferences weigh the costs of losing privacy against the benefits of the technology.

Privacy, Families, and Personal Relationships

Privacy is integral in many ways to family life and personal relationships. Families teach children how to manage privacy by providing implicit or explicit rules that help them navigate choices about disclosing family information both internally and to outsiders. For example, parents illustrate their expectations for privacy when they caution their children not to talk about family finances outside of the home. At times, families are so private that they may be considered secretive. Secrets represent information that has a thick boundary around it with limited or no access to others. However, privacy is a more general term that represents degrees of protection of or access to information people believe they own and have the right to control. Some families have developed privacy rules granting more or less open access for disclosing both internally among members and externally to people outside the family, whereas other families may be more secretive and deny access. Adolescents test what privacy means to them, how much privacy they need, conditions for trusting others, and how to regulate access with others, including parents and siblings. Adolescents tend to gain a sense of emotional autonomy when they are able to choose which information they tell their parents and

which they keep private. When parents allow their adolescents to have the choice of revealing or concealing, the parent-child relationship improves, adolescents are able to grow more confident in their sense of self, and they feel less desire to be secretive with their parents.

Likewise, marital relationships tend to grow stronger when partners afford each other more latitude to judge when they should disclose something, how much to tell or keep private, and when to be open about issues. Although deciding under what circumstances to reveal and conceal private information can be challenging for couples, privacy regulation grants partners opportunities to consider which issues they want to disclose, how much, when, and how to do so. For children and couples, balancing personal needs for privacy with the need to share information and thereby foster a sense of connectedness is likely to make a difference in the state of a relationship.

When families successfully strike a balance between connectedness and autonomy, they develop positive ways of managing privacy. However, there are also examples of unsuccessful privacy management in which the balance of connectedness and autonomy goes awry. For instance, privacy management may be problematic when a wife going through a divorce intentionally discloses detrimental information about her ex-spouse to his boss. In this case, the ex-wife intentionally violates a privacy rule the couple used during their marriage. This kind of imbalance further complicates family life if children are involved. For instance, divorcing parents may tell children negative information about the other parent that can damage that parent-child relationship.

In a more egregious case, there are times when family members act as if they have the right to operate in complete autonomy. They devise privacy rules without the consent of other family members, although their actions implicate those family members. The web of silence that surrounds child sexual abuse, in which children may be told not to reveal abuse because of problems that might be created, illustrates this condition of dysfunctional privacy management. This darker side of privacy management shows that privacy regulation has both positive and negative aspects for relationships. Privacy management has positive outcomes when people are able to negotiate a mutually agreeable set of

privacy rules for defining access to information that accounts for their needs, needs of others with whom they have relationships, and the desired level of autonomy and connectedness. Neglecting negotiation of privacy rules and leaving coordination about privacy issues to chance may result in mistakes, inappropriate judgments about privacy boundaries, or dysfunctional outcomes.

Thus, a main key to better understanding privacy in a social world is recognizing the necessity of communicating about privacy needs, considering those needs in relation to desired connections with others, determining the expectations that individuals have for their privacy, and accounting for the fact that people define private information as belonging to them and as a matter of personal control.

Sandra Petronio

See also Beliefs About Relationships; Child Abuse and Neglect; Communication Skills; Internet and Social Connectedness; Internet Dating; Openness and Honesty; Secrets; Self-Disclosure

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PROCESSES OF ADAPTATION IN INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS (PAIR) PROJECT

People who watch a man and a woman courting or learn about their marriage almost invariably

wonder about the fate that awaits them as a couple. The PAIR Project, a longitudinal study of couples that began when they were newlyweds, sought to provide a sophisticated analysis of the circumstances that influence how marriages work themselves out. The Project was initiated in 1981 by Ted Huston with data gathered from 336 newlyweds (168 couples) identified through marriage license records maintained in four county court-houses in central Pennsylvania. The initial premise of the study was that the psychological and social qualities that partners bring to their relationship shape their experiences together, both during courtship and in marriage. The Project also sought to delineate key features of couples' courtships and to link these features to how well the spouses got along and how they felt about each other as newlyweds and then at yearly intervals over the ensuing 2 years. This tidy short-term longitudinal study became embedded in a long-term longitudinal study when the PAIR Project team returned nearly 14 years after couples were wed to see how the marriages had fared.

The PAIR Project used social-psychological theory and developmental methods to track how couples progress through relationship stages and how what happens in one "stage" of a relationship foreshadows what happens later. The Project ultimately traced couples' relationships from courtship, to the early years of marriage, to parenthood (for most), and to divorce (for some).

The Project had several notable design features that in combination set it apart from other research seeking to understand the etiology of marital success and failure, including (a) the large and economically diverse makeup of the sample; (b) the success the research team had in gaining the cooperation of both spouses, affording the opportunity to examine compatibility, gender issues, and cross-partner effects; (c) the in-depth information gathered concerning both partners' social background and psychological makeup; (d) the extensive data obtained about the couples' courtships, gathered independently from the husbands and wives when they were newlyweds; (e) the fact that the initial data were gathered from the couples shortly after they were wed, prior to when marital disenchantment would have had a chance to develop; (f) the diary-based information gathered each year from both spouses about their day-to-day activities, making it possible

to portray the division of labor, marital companionship, social contact with kin and friends, and the interpersonal climate of each marriage; (g) the longitudinal nature of the original study, which allowed the team to study changes in couples' married life over time; (h) regular assessments of husbands' and wives' views of each other's qualities, their love, and satisfaction; and (i) the Project's success in tracking down the original sample, making it possible to identify the fate of 97 percent of the marriages at the long-term follow-up.

The PAIR Project has produced more than 40 book chapters and publications in scientific journals. Some of the more notable findings were:

- Men's investment in the relationship during courtship plays a stronger role than women's in accounting for how quickly and smoothly courtships progress toward marriage.
- Partners' personality qualities reveal themselves before marriage, creating courtships that differ in the mix of sweet and sour elements.
- Women who sense future problems while courting generally find out after they marry that their concerns were well founded.
- Newlyweds are not blissful lovers, on the whole. Some spouses enter marriage after a rocky, arduous courtship; others take a smooth, even pathway; and still others marry after a short, intense romance. These differences in courtship experiences carry over into marriage and are reflected in the intensity of spouses' feelings toward each other as newlyweds.
- Having a baby transforms couples' lifestyles, but it does not change the interpersonal climate of their marriages or undermine spouses' feelings of love or satisfaction.
- Whether a marriage will be happy or whether it is headed for divorce can be foretold by how it evolves during the first 2 years.
- Couples that stay married and are happy nearly 14 years after their wedding day are more affectionate and less antagonistic toward each other as newlyweds than couples that stay together in unhappy unions. Both groups evince modest declines in affection early in marriage, but antagonism does not increase for either group as the honeymoon period recedes into the past.
- Two personality qualities shape the emotional climate of marriages. Men and women who possess stereotypical feminine traits—warmth, concern for others, kindness—make better spouses, whereas spouses whose nature is to be moody and emotionally up and down make worse spouses.
- Whether a marriage is fated for divorce cannot be foretold from how spouses function together shortly after they marry. The newlywed marriages of to-be-divorced couples are a particularly diverse lot: Some are intensely in love and affectionate, whereas others appear to marry despite having lukewarm feelings for each other. The long-term fate of a marriage is predictable instead from how much the spouses' romance, whatever it was at the beginning, dissipates over the first 2 years of marriage. The timing of divorce, however, depends on the intensity of the couples' newlywed romance: Initially lovey-dovey couples whose marital bliss quickly goes amiss take longer to divorce than those less enamored with each other to begin with.
- Antagonism does not develop early in marriage among the couples that divorce. Further, divorcing couples are not less compatible than couples that stay married, but their feelings toward each other early in marriage are more strongly tied to their level of compatibility, suggesting that couples that divorce are more attuned to issues of compatibility.

PAIR Project papers also have examined such matters as the carryover of work-related stress into marriage, the division of household labor, role balance, marital companionship, types of marriage, sex in marriage, and the role friends and kin play in courtship and marriage.

Ted L. Huston

See also Compatibility; Disillusionment in Marriage; Idealization; Longitudinal Studies of Marital Satisfaction and Dissolution; Marital Satisfaction, Assessment of; Newlyweds; Parenthood, Transition to; Personality Traits, Effects on Relationships; Predicting Success or Failure of Marital Relationships

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PROXIMITY AND ATTRACTION

Many traits or factors can lead to liking, lust, or love between two people; these factors include physical attraction, similarity, and familiarity, among others. Another construct that can lead two people to become friends or lovers is *proximity*, which is typically defined as the physical space or distance between two people. Proximity can refer to the actual individuals or their homes, workspaces, seats in a classroom, and so on. Two people who both live in a small town will, for example, have a closer proximity than if one person lives in Los Angeles and the other lives in New York City. Decades of studies that have investigated causes of attraction have found that there is a positive correlation between physical proximity and attraction—in other words, the literally closer you are to someone, the more you will like him or her. Classic research has been completed on the association between proximity and interpersonal attraction and why this link exists. With modern technological advances, the future of this topic seems open to new discoveries.

Classic Research

The most classic (and now famous) study that first made the proximity effect well known was completed by Leon Festinger and two of his colleagues, Stanley Schachter and Kurt Back. These three

researchers investigated a small community named the Westgate Housing Project, which was part of the campus at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). They wanted to know what would happen when strangers (in this case, MIT students) were randomly thrown together in apartment buildings—in other words, the students would have a close proximity to each other. Each apartment housed a married couple, one of whom was a veteran. Each apartment building included 10 single-family units, with five apartments on each of two floors. The researchers pointed out that the residents of Westgate were similar to each other in terms of background, interests, and life goals. The real relevance of this study for proximity is that the researchers wanted to know how physical closeness would influence each resident's liking or attraction to the other residents in the complex.

Festinger pointed out that there were two kinds of proximity in this study: (1) *physical distance* from one apartment to another, and (2) *functional distance*. Functional distance refers to the idea that the buildings were constructed such that some apartments were more likely to be passed by. For example, if an apartment was at the bottom of a staircase leading to the second floor, all of the residents who lived on the second floor would have to pass that door. Thus, both physical and functional proximity were factors in this study and affected how often any given resident would be seen by the others. If two people see each other often, they are more likely to get to know each other and become friends. For example, consider neighborhoods. Individuals are more likely to know and like the residents living directly to each side of themselves, compared with residents who live three blocks away. Festinger found this pattern as well. When he asked people in Westgate to choose the three people in the entire complex whom they were most likely to see socially (in other words, their friends), they listed residents with closer physical and functional proximity to themselves. This general idea—that the physically closer we are to someone, the more likely we are to be attracted to him or her—is sometimes referred to as the *propinquity effect*. The propinquity effect was supported by Festinger's research, as well as several additional studies (some of which are described next).

Why Does Proximity Lead to Attraction?

Why does either proximity (physical or functional) lead to attraction? In some ways, this may seem obvious—if you have more chances to talk with someone because you see him or her more often, it is more likely that you will get to know each other, discover similarities, and become friends or start dating. A second explanation comes from a reward-cost perspective. Consider a couple that is involved in a long-distance relationship. The costs of that relationship are both tangible (e.g., the financial burden of driving or flying to see each other) and intangible (e.g., the extra time and sacrifices needed to maintain the relationship). The costs of dating someone with a close physical proximity are much less. Thus, when considering potential romantic partners, individuals with a closer proximity may have an advantage simply because they are close by.

In addition to these two explanations, a third perspective has been popular in research studying the proximity effect of attraction. It may be that simply being around something or someone more often leads to liking because we are comfortable with that object or person—we know what to expect. This would not require any communication or conversation with the other people—just looking at their pictures should make us more attracted to them. This phenomenon is called the *mere exposure effect* and is defined as the tendency to grow to like things over time merely because of repeated exposure.

The mere exposure effect has been shown to predict attraction. Infants are more likely to smile when they see photographs of people they have seen before, compared with strangers. Student liking of other people in a classroom goes up the more often those other people attend class over a given semester and how close their seats are to each other (even in a small room). The mere exposure effect can even work subliminally. People who view Chinese characters and geometrical shapes subliminally (too quickly to recognize) are more likely to report liking those same characters later, and the liking is stronger than their feelings toward never-viewed characters. The idea for proximity is that if one person has a close physical or functional distance to someone else, they'll be exposed to each other more and more, and over

time they will grow to like each other due to this exposure. Of course, if the person is unpleasant or rude, repeated exposure can lead to the opposite: growing dislike. One study showed that, although it is true that our friends are more likely to live close by, so too are enemies. At the least, overexposure can lead to boredom and the desire for something new.

Although these exceptions to the rule certainly exist, the heart of the matter is that, all else being equal, physical proximity can lead two people to become friends and eventually even fall in love. Proximity can thus help with initial attraction, and it can also maintain attraction. For example, findings show that long-distance partners are less satisfied with their relationships.

However, with advances in modern technology, people are meeting potential partners in different ways. Specifically, computer-based communication networks such as e-mail, Facebook, and MySpace are extremely popular for keeping in touch with people who are far away. Today, perhaps physical proximity is not as necessary because computers allow for a close functional proximity—a lover is only a double click away. Indeed, people are now able to have live video chats with each other from the other side of the world. Researchers are just beginning to explore how long-distance relationships may be helped by this form of functional proximity (sometimes called *communication proximity*). One finding is that people seem to feel high emotional intimacy with people they meet online relatively quickly. However, if people don't meet face to face, it may lead to problems ranging from inability to see nonverbal cues all the way to dishonesty about one's age or gender, as well as cyberstalking. Although technological proximity may help already formed relationships stay "close," some signs are pointing to possible dangers of attempting to form new relationships using only these methods.

In addition to the physical, functional, and communication forms of proximity, a fourth type has been suggested by Malcolm Parks. Parks adds that social proximity may also affect individuals; *social proximity* can be defined as the extent to which two individuals' social networks overlap. In other words, how many friends do they have in common? Social proximity can also lead to attraction. In one study done in The Netherlands,

for example, two thirds of individuals reported that, before they started dating their current partner, they knew at least one (if not more) of that person's friends or family members. Social proximity leading to attraction makes sense because the more social ties two people have in common, the more likely they are to meet and become acquainted.

Applications and Future Trends

Finally, proximity has applicability in almost any natural setting. For example, because of the findings on proximity and attraction, some architects are designing housing complexes and workplaces in patterns that will increase proximity. For example, cubicle walls in an office can be short enough that people can see over them to talk to each other. A water cooler can be placed in a central location to encourage social gatherings. The link between proximity and attraction is robust and can be applied to many different kinds of settings. It even seems likely that this phenomenon explains why young boys are so likely to have a crush on the girl next door.

Wind Goodfriend

See also Boredom in Relationships; Familiarity Principle of Attraction; Internet, Attraction on; Long-Distance Relationships; Mate Selection; Physical Environment and Relationships

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PSYCHODYNAMIC THEORIES OF RELATIONSHIPS

In many ways, contemporary psychodynamic theories can be thought of as theories of relationships. Although Sigmund Freud's original theory was primarily concerned with the "internal world" of the mind, psychodynamic theories have evolved to encompass a more complex understanding of the interplay between interpersonal and intrapsychic experiences. Psychodynamic theories ask how relationships shape people's internal world, specifically how interpersonal experiences come to be internalized as aspects of personality. Conversely, psychodynamic theories also ask how the internal world affects relationships—specifically, how these internalized relationships color people's understanding of their interpersonal experiences.

Although there is broad agreement about the centrality of these questions, there is enormous diversity regarding the answers to these questions among the many schools of psychodynamic thought. This entry does not attempt to represent the breadth of these ideas, but rather describes three central principles about which most psychodynamic theorists could agree. First, psychodynamic theorists understand the formation of personality as beginning in the context of the earliest relationships (i.e., between caregiver and child). Second, these early relationships are thought to become internalized as representations of "the self in relationship to others," which guide subsequent interpersonal experiences, and these representations are continually elaborated by subsequent interpersonal interactions. Third, changes in thoughts and feelings are often achieved in the context of relationships. Each of these central principles is elaborated in this entry.

Understanding Relationships in a Developmental Context

Psychodynamic theories are based on a developmental perspective; childhood relationships with caregivers are thought to play a central role in shaping later relationships. Although Freud originally understood the child's relational needs to be secondary to the mother's capacity to gratify drives, subsequent theorists have elaborated the role of attachment needs as an equally significant force in development. One of the most prominent psychoanalysts to contribute to this understanding of early relationships was John Bowlby, who described babies as innately predisposed to become attached to their caregivers. The child's motivation toward establishing an attachment bond with the caregiver is an evolutionarily advanced system of survival; attachment behavior functions to maintain proximity to the caregiver to ensure protection and to have his or her needs met. If the caregiver is able to provide protection and reliable care for the child, then that child will internalize a sense of felt security. Through repeated interactions with caregivers, the child develops what Bowlby called *internal working models*, also commonly referred to as *object representations*, which are mental representations of oneself in emotional relationships with important others.

However, not all children are able to internalize representations of secure relationships, which results from an interaction among many factors, including the child's temperament, early experiences that disrupt a feeling of safety for the child, and the stage of development in which the disruption occurs. Sidney Blatt, for example, has articulated the relationship between the internalization of early experiences and the point in development at which the experience was internalized. If a child is neglected prior to internalizing a representation of the parent as separate from him or herself, the child may develop a representation of self characterized by a need to be merged with another person in order to combat intolerable feelings of separation and satisfy a need to be cared for, loved, and protected. If, at a later stage in development, the child has internalized a representation of the parent, he or she will be able to experience separateness from the parent without feeling empty. However, if the child experiences the parent as having a hostile

disappointment in the child's actions, the child may internalize a representation of self characterized by feelings of guilt, worthlessness, and exceedingly high expectations that leave the child filled with self-hatred for failing to do better.

It is important to note that the child's internalized experience of early caregivers is not thought to be equivalent to actual caregiver behavior, but rather that a caregiver's actions are one of several significant contributors to the trajectory of psychological development. A common misperception of psychodynamic theories is that they fail to recognize the importance of biological contributions to development—although the development of self-regulation is understood to be mediated through the relationship with the caregiver, it is certainly recognized that there are biological and temperamental underpinnings that either facilitate or complicate the caregiver's ability to create a feeling of security for the child.

Implications of Object Representations for Relationships

Many aspects of one's sense of self, such as thoughts and feelings, can be understood in a relational context (i.e., the feeling of guilt implies the presence of another person who has been failed), although this operates largely outside of awareness. As a result of developmental experiences, internalized object representations become dynamic templates for understanding the self in relation to others. In interpersonal exchanges, these object representations are evoked, often outside of conscious awareness, and they color one's perception of the exchange. For example, a person often belittled by a parent might perceive others as belittling even when that was not the other person's intention. It is important to note that the influence of internalized representations is thought to be tied to actual data from interactions with others, as opposed to a purely internally generated phenomenon (in the example, others may have displayed some characteristics similar to the parents, although not the belittling behavior). However, these attributions may or may not be supported by the actual interaction and are better understood as originating in internalized object representations. There is a growing body of empirical evidence in clinical,

social, and personality psychology, such as research on transference by Susan Andersen, that support these assumptions.

In psychodynamic terms, attributions about others' behaviors that are derived primarily from internal representations are referred to as *transference*. Although transference is often thought to be a linear "transfer" of feelings about one person (i.e., an early parental figure) to another (i.e., a current relationship, especially the therapist), psychodynamic theorists describe a more complex process. Transference arises when some aspect of the interpersonal exchange unconsciously evokes representations of prior relationship experiences, leading the individual's perception of the current interaction to be influenced by the prior relationship. For example, when a man with a history of abandonment by caregivers is told by his girlfriend that she will be out of town for 2 days, the external reality of a brief loss of contact with her may unconsciously elicit an internal representation of a lonely, abandoned self who was hurt by a cruel, abandoning other. In this context, the man's subsequent thoughts and feelings of upset and loss can be best understood as an interaction between his internal processes related to abandonment and the external reality of her actual leaving.

One question often raised has to do with the similarities between a psychodynamic understanding of object representations and a cognitive understanding of schemas. To be sure, there are a number of parallels between these two concepts. The difference, however, is that in psychodynamic models there is greater attention to the emotional aspects of these representations. Further, object representations are seen as having implicit or unconscious as well as explicit or conscious aspects. The implicit parts can be either simply outside of awareness or kept out of awareness for defensive purposes. For example, someone who has internalized an experience of him or herself as "cruel" may defensively keep this representation out of awareness by overcompensating, such as by acting overly nice and accommodating to others (which in psychodynamic terms would be called a *reaction formation*). This is not to say that the cruel representation is the "real" internal self-state and the nice representation is a façade; each would be regarded as an aspect of the individual's multifaceted

object representations. Rather, psychodynamic models posit that individuals may use one set of object representations to defend against other intolerable representations.

Although these object representations are thought to endure over time, this by no means implies that they are static and unchanging. In fact, representations are continually elaborated by subsequent interpersonal interactions. New experiences lead the individual to develop more differentiated representations that must be integrated into one's internal model of relationships. Thus, the interaction between internal processes and external reality not only influences understanding of current relationships, but also leads to more elaborated and differentiated internal representations that may modify the experience of subsequent relationships.

Change in the Context of Relationships

Psychodynamic theorists have placed particular emphasis on growth that occurs in relationships, noting that changes in thoughts and feelings are often achieved in the context of interactions with others. Although change in how one thinks and feels can occur through a number of processes, such as internal reflection, behavioral change, and individual life experiences, many types of relationship experiences may alter representations. Representations may adapt to the changing nature of relationships across time. For example, redefining relationships with parents as one develops into adulthood may correspond with change in representations of those relationships.

Change in representations may also occur through an especially strong emotional experience that disconfirms earlier implicit models. For example, significant interpersonal relationships with a spouse or child may lead to reconsideration of strongly held patterns of thoughts and feelings. Further, change may occur through repeated experience in other important relationships (i.e., respected peers, secure romantic partners, or a long-term therapeutic relationship) that disconfirm earlier acquired models. In other words, powerful change often occurs when one expects others to behave in particular ways but they don't.

Psychodynamic theorists place significant emphasis on the relationship with a therapist as facilitating change in representations. With a therapist, the patient can develop, resolve, and make efforts to redefine relationships with others and have powerful emotional reactions that disconfirm implicit representations. Two aspects of the therapeutic relationship are often stressed: (1) the importance of the emergence of transference, and (2) the mutative aspects of being in a real relationship with a caring and empathic other. The psychodynamic therapist facilitates emergence of transference by generally maintaining what is called *technical neutrality*, which entails remaining equidistant from all sides of a patient's conflict. To take the earlier example of an individual who is invested in a representation of self that is "nice" and unconsciously keeps a representation of self as "cruel" outside of awareness, the therapist would take a stance of technical neutrality by not judging either the nice or cruel aspects of the patient as good or bad. If the therapist were to reinforce the patient's "niceness," it would signal to the patient that "cruelness" is as dangerous and undesirable as unconsciously feared, and therefore would encourage the patient to keep that part hidden.

In fact, the goal of psychodynamic therapy is to help people bring all aspects of their internal representations into the relationship with the therapist so they can be integrated (rather than defensively split off) and the patient can experience him or herself in relationships with others as a coherent whole. The therapist helps the patient to integrate these disparate representations by using the emergent transference as a vehicle for helping the patient to understand relational patterns outside of awareness. For example, the therapist may note subtle ways in which the patient is acting cruel under the guise of being nice. Further, the therapist provides an experience for the patient that disconfirms earlier acquired models of relationships, such as the experience that his or her cruelty was not as toxic to relationships as had been feared and therefore need not be hidden. Last, by taking a nonjudgmental stance toward all aspects of the patient's internal experience, regardless of how bad or undesirable the patient may feel parts of it to be, the patient experiences the therapist as a secure base from which to explore his or her mind.

Conclusion

Although psychodynamic theories have much to offer in understanding the relationship between interpersonal and intrapsychic functioning, sadly the prominence of psychodynamic thought has been in decline; a recent *New York Times* article noted that the teaching of psychoanalysis is waning in psychology departments. Although there are several reasons for this, one reason is that many of the golden nuggets of psychodynamic thinking have become integrated into mainstream psychology—such as the importance of early childhood relationships, implicit processes, defensive functioning, and underlying dynamics—and are therefore no longer recognized as psychodynamic concepts. However, these concepts are central to the psychodynamic conceptualization of relationships, and to the extent that other theories of relationships integrate these concepts, they can be thought of as having psychodynamic roots.

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See also Attachment Theory; Insight-Oriented Couple Therapy; Parent–Child Relationships; Psychotherapists, Relationship With; Transference

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PSYCHOPATHOLOGY, GENETIC TRANSMISSION OF

One of the strongest predictors of psychological problems in children and adolescents is the presence of psychological problems in one or both parents. Across the full range of diagnoses, parental psychopathology has been consistently associated with psychopathology in their offspring. For example, it has been widely documented that parental depression is associated not only with depression in their offspring, but also with behavioral problems and a variety of social, emotional, and cognitive deficits. Similarly, family studies have documented elevated rates of psychopathology in the children of parents with diagnoses of anxiety disorders, schizophrenia, antisocial behavior/conduct disorder, and alcohol/substance use disorders. Risk for psychopathology in offspring of parents with a psychological disorder is significant. Offspring of parents with schizophrenia are roughly 13 times more likely to have the disorder, compared with offspring of parents without the disorder, and offspring of depressed parents are two to three times more likely to suffer from major depressive disorder.

Given the risk for psychopathology in the offspring of parents with a psychological disorder, it has often been assumed that there is a direct environmental effect—the stress and environmental exposure to parents with psychological problems *causes* offspring to have more difficulties. Researchers cannot assume, however, that one phenomenon causes another simply because they are correlated, inasmuch correlation does not prove causation. This entry describes alternative hypotheses regarding the causes of intergenerational transmission of psychopathology, highlights relevant methods for teasing apart the causal processes underlying the intergenerational transmission, and briefly summarizes the current state of the empirical literature.

Complexity of Studying the Intergenerational Transmission of Psychopathology

Although it appears intuitive that parental depression may be associated with offspring psychopathology due to the environmental context, there

are other equally plausible alternative explanations for the association. One such explanation is selection factors, or third (confounding) variables, that influence both the parent and offspring generations *and* account for the association between the two. Historically, two main approaches have been used to investigate selection factors. First, studies have “matched” cases (samples of parents with and without psychological problems) on a number of variables thought to be possible selection factors, such as socioeconomic status, race, age, and other measured variables. Second, researchers have included as many measured selection factors as possible in their analyses of the effects of parental psychopathology to statistically “control for” selection factors. Regardless of the approach, it is difficult to know whether a study has included every salient selection factor.

Additionally, it is crucial to account for genetic factors in studies of intergenerational associations because biological parents provide the environmental context *and* transmit their genes to their offspring. Thus, parent–offspring associations may be due to environmental factors associated with parental psychopathology *and/or* genetic factors that contribute to the disorder in both generations. Thus, it is difficult to tease apart environmental factors from genetic factors that contribute to intergenerational associations. This is supported by many genetically informed studies that have documented that environmental and genetic factors are correlated. One type of genetic confound that can be problematic when studying the intergenerational transmission of psychopathology is passive gene–environmental correlation (rGE), which occurs when the same genetic factors underlying parental traits or behaviors (e.g., environmental risk factors) also influence child outcomes (e.g., depression). Although the presence of rGE renders most traditional family research uninterpretable, researchers have historically ignored the possible role of genetic factors when studying the effects of parental psychopathology.

Methods of Exploring the Processes Underlying the Intergenerational Associations

The classic twin study design has been used to understand the extent to which risk for psychological

problems are due to genetic and environmental factors. Twin studies provide a natural experiment, in that they allow researchers to compare children who share the same family environment but vary in their genetic relatedness. Identical twins share 100 percent of their genetic makeup, whereas fraternal twins share, on average, only 50 percent of their genetic makeup. Thus, if identical twins are more similar than fraternal twins on a given trait of interest, at least some genetic influence can be inferred given certain assumptions. Twin studies can provide broad estimates of genetic and environmental influences on a given trait; however, they cannot provide information about specific mechanisms contributing to the intergenerational transmission of that trait.

Other genetically informed approaches can provide insight into the underlying processes responsible for the intergenerational transmission of psychopathology. Adoption studies are useful in that they clearly separate the genetic risk that offspring receive (transmitted by the biological parents) from the environmental context (provided by the adoptive family). In adoption studies, several different comparisons highlight the importance of genetic and/or environmental factors. For example, the rate of disorder in adoptees can be compared to their biological and adoptive parents. If the adopted child is similar to his or her biological parent(s), genetic factors are implicated, whereas similarity to the adoptive parent(s) implicates the environmental context. Adoption studies are increasingly difficult to conduct, require that a number of methodological assumptions are met, and have several limitations, however.

An alternative genetically informative approach, the Children of Twins (CoT) design, circumvents some of the limitations of other research designs mentioned earlier. The CoT design is a quasi-experimental approach that affords the ability to examine the genetic and environmental processes responsible for the intergenerational transmission of psychopathology. The design is an extension of the classic twin approach, in which the genetic risk for psychopathology is essentially held constant while varying the environmental risk of being raised by a parent with a psychiatric diagnosis. This is accomplished by comparing the offspring of twin pairs who are discordant for the disorder—pairs in which one twin is affected (has the disorder) and the other is unaffected (does not have the

disorder). In the case of identical twins, offspring are genetically related to both twins (e.g., their mother and their aunt) to the same degree, but only the twin parent provides the environmental context. In other words, offspring of identical twins are genetically related as half-siblings (share 25 percent of their genes), but are raised in different households. Thus, researchers can determine whether the intergenerational association is explained by environmental processes related to exposure to a parent with a psychological problem and/or are the result of selection factors by comparing the offspring of discordant identical twins. Including the offspring of fraternal twins further allows for separation of selection factors into genetic and environmental confounds.

The CoT design also controls for unmeasured environmental factors that twins have in common (e.g., ethnicity, socioeconomic status, religious affiliation, educational attainment, shared child-rearing practices), which may be correlated with parental psychopathology. It is important to note that the CoT design does not provide complete control of genetic and environmental factors because it cannot control for environmental factors that are unique to each cotwin (e.g., characteristics of spouses). Some of these factors, however, can be identified, measured, and thus controlled statistically.

Empirical Evidence of the Processes Underlying Intergenerational Transmission

The following section reviews studies investigating whether intergenerational transmission of several common psychopathologies is accounted for by the environmental context of having a parent with psychopathology and/or genetic factors passed down from parent to offspring.

Schizophrenia

Several adoption studies have indicated that adopted children whose biological parent had schizophrenia are at substantially increased risk of having the disorder, suggesting that genetic factors help account for the intergenerational transmission. One of the most well-known CoT studies compared offspring of identical and fraternal twins

discordant for schizophrenia. The offspring of unaffected identical cotwins (i.e., the offspring were not exposed to a parent with schizophrenia) had the same risk of schizophrenia as the offspring of the affected cotwins. Because exposure to a schizophrenic parent did not increase the risk for the disorder in the offspring, the study provided strong evidence against a causal environmental theory of schizophrenia risk. Offspring of fraternal twins showed a different pattern because the offspring of the affected fraternal twin had higher rates of schizophrenia than the offspring of the unaffected twin. The overall pattern of results across study designs suggests that genetic factors account for the increased risk of schizophrenia among offspring of parents with the disorder.

Major Depression

Although there are numerous family studies of the consequences of parental depression, few studies have specifically explored whether genetic factors play a role. Three adoption studies have been conducted, with mixed results. However, the largest and most rigorous adoption study strongly suggested that genetic factors, and not environmental factors, were responsible for the increased risk of depression in the offspring of depressed parents. A recent CoT study suggests that the processes underlying the intergenerational transmission of depression may depend, in part, on the severity of the depression. For severe cases of depression, genetic risk shared by both generations appears to account for the transmission, whereas in less severe cases, environmental processes specific to exposure to a parent with major depressive disorder appears to account for the increased risk of depression in the offspring.

Substance Use Disorders: Alcohol

Adoption studies have yielded somewhat mixed results with regard to genetic versus environmental mechanisms of association between parental alcohol use disorders and substance abuse problems in their offspring. Nonetheless, findings seem to suggest that the intergenerational transmission of alcohol problems is *not* due to environmental factors specifically related to exposure to an alcoholic parent. Rather, other environmental factors that increase alcohol problems in both generations

(perhaps family attitudes toward alcohol) appear to be responsible for the intergenerational transmission. A recent CoT study of alcohol abuse and dependence similarly revealed that the direct environmental impact of being exposed to an alcoholic parent is modest at best. Consistent with the adoption studies, environmental factors (confounds) that influence both generations accounted for intergenerational transmission.

Conduct Disorder/Antisocial Behavior

Adoption studies of antisocial behavior suggest that there is a genetic component to the intergenerational transmission of antisocial behavior. This is suggested by a higher rate of antisocial behavior in the adopted-away offspring of biological parents with antisocial characteristics than in offspring of biological parents without these traits. It is important to note, however, that psychiatric diagnoses and family risk factors in the adoptive parents were also predictive of adoptee antisocial behavior. Adoption studies have also highlighted how genetic risks and environmental risks interact to confer substantially more risk for offspring conduct problems than just considering the risks independently. Adoptees who have genetic risk (indexed by biological parents with a history of antisocial behavior) *and* are exposed to environmental risks (indexed by family problems in the adopted family) were at substantially greater risk for conduct problems. Studies, therefore, must not only study how environmental and genetic factors act, but future research must also study their cumulative and/or interactive effects. A recent CoT study suggests that gender of the offspring may also play an important role: For male offspring, the intergenerational transmission of conduct problems is largely due to environmental factors, whereas for females, it is largely genetic in nature. This study suggests that additional variables (e.g., offspring gender) may influence the genetic and environmental processes contributing to the intergenerational transmission of psychopathology.

Summary

A growing body of research that explicitly tests the genetic and environmental processes underlying the intergenerational transmission of psychopathology

indicates that the intergenerational transmission of schizophrenia, depression, substance use disorders, and conduct disorder are all, at least partially, due to genetic factors passed down from parents to their offspring. All family studies that explore the intergenerational transmission of psychopathology are limited in their ability to account for potential selection factors. Because children cannot be randomly assigned to parents, it is impossible to definitely determine whether differences among children with affected and unaffected parents are due to direct environmental risk, genetic factors shared between generations, or environmental differences between families. Thus, converging evidence from designs that can disentangle co-occurring genetic and environmental processes is crucial. Certainly more research is necessary to study how genetic and environmental factors act and interact to increase the risk of problems in offspring of parents with psychopathology.

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See also Adoption; Alcoholism, Effects on Relationships; Depression and Relationships; Experimental Designs for Relationship Research; Intergenerational Family Relationships

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PSYCHOPATHOLOGY, INFLUENCE ON FAMILY MEMBERS

Psychopathology rates in the U.S. population are high. In a given year, about 22 percent of adults have a diagnosable severe mental disorder, 37 percent have a moderately severe disorder, and 40 percent have a mild disorder. Lifetime rates are even higher, with about half of adults meeting the criteria for a diagnosable disorder at some point in their lives. Studies using worldwide sampling produce slightly lower and yet still alarming rates of between 9 and 17 percent of the population experiencing an episode or more of mental illness in a given year. Thus, families face many challenges in adapting to life with and caring for significant others experiencing mental illness.

As care has shifted from institutions to the community and family, new challenges and opportunities exist in the care of those experiencing psychopathology. Indeed, an expanding literature documents the challenges and consequences for the family system when a member is diagnosed with a mental disorder. Although the form and severity of mental illness may vary, and the ill family member may vary (e.g., it could be a child, partner, sibling, parent), having a family member with a psychiatric problem presents a challenging circumstance for families. This entry discusses the effects of mental illness on the family, the ways in which families may cope with mental illness, and the manner in which families are involved in the treatment of mentally ill family members. In doing so, the entry focuses on factors that cut across type of mental illness and who the ill family member is. The entry deals primarily with severe mental illness. The impact on the family and the family's response may vary if the symptoms of psychopathology are less severe.

Effects on the Family

Recognizing that a loved one has a mental illness and is in need of care may be the first challenge for many families. Making this and subsequent aspects of the challenge more difficult may be the social stigma many families experience when a member is diagnosed with a psychological disorder. Indeed,

mental illness of a family member is most commonly viewed as a significant stressor that has emotional, behavioral, and psychological consequences for other members of the family. Although mental illness may be severe or mild, it is often persistent and thus presents family members with a unique and far-reaching challenge. Much in the lives of relatives is affected by the presence of mental illness in the family. Although the effects may vary based on the severity of the symptoms, after learning that a member has a mental illness, families may be called on to serve multiple roles with many demands. Such demands can push families into states of chaos. Family members may be called on to house the individual, provide direct care and/or supportive care, intervene in a crisis, manage medication and illness-related information, and navigate the mental health system. In addition to tangible demands, so-called “family burden” from mental illness often includes emotional challenges such as grieving (i.e., “loss” of who the individual was prior to the illness), the symbolic loss of hopes and wishes for the individual’s future that may be compromised, emotional ups and downs, and practical problems accompanying the illness, such as symptom-driven behavior, the challenges of caregiving, difficulty connecting or receiving services, and family disruption and stress.

Although families must navigate these new roles, families often feel ill-prepared and may experience inadequate assistance from hospitals, social workers, psychologists, and psychiatrists. Perhaps in response to this array of challenges, a plentiful literature has arisen in the form of articles in the media, self-help books, informational and support forum Web sites, and advocacy groups aimed at helping families (and service providers) cope with the variety of effects that mental illness in the family presents.

Mental illness can have a range of immediate and long-term negative effects on relationships. For instance, children raised in an environment influenced by mental illness often evidence behavioral problems, less appetite, less play, poor attention at school, and sleeplessness. Children whose parent suffers from psychopathology are also at risk for a number of negative outcomes, ranging from a less available parent to parental neglect. In these circumstances, although children may not

understand the illness, they may be forced to cope in an environment that is less than ideal for their own development. As such, children of parents with psychological difficulties are at greater risk for developing a mental illness than is the general population due to both increased genetic risk and their family experiences.

As children with a mentally ill parent suffer unique challenges, so do parents of children diagnosed with a mental illness. Parents may face substantial demands in caring for a child with psychological difficulties, including a disrupted household, financial strains, employment complications, extensive demands on their time, diminished personal or social life, and disruptions to relationships with romantic partners and among other children in the home. Parents of children with a mental illness may feel guilt or shame, and they may be confronted with a new reality for their child’s future, which often accompanies feelings of loss of hope for the future. If the illness is chronic, these stresses can compound, leading to a significant burden from which caregiver burnout is not uncommon.

Another relationship affected by the presence of psychopathology is the marital relationship or romantic partnership. Research has shown that relationship functioning and adjustment are particularly harmed. For instance, marital functioning and satisfaction often deteriorate, producing changes in the partnership and responsibilities, financial alterations, and a substantial sense of loss for one or both partners. Impairments in thinking and functioning of the partner with a mental illness also have implications for a changed lifestyle, altered roles, and uncertain future plans. Furthermore, a loss of companionship and intimacy, which may have been central to the relationship, often occurs. When one member of the romantic relationship experiences mental illness, the focus may shift from “us” to “him or her” as resources are directed toward the mentally ill partner. Although most research has examined mental illness as a consequence of divorce or breakup, some has looked at the effects of psychopathology on relationship longevity. These findings point to the higher rates of relationship dissolution among those who experience the onset of a mood, anxiety, substance, or conduct disorder during marriage, compared with those without psychopathology (in one study,

48.2 vs. 35.9 percent). Furthermore, many personality disorders are associated with an increased probability of marital disruption. Although no published research exists, some researchers have speculated that borderline personality disorder may be highly related to negative relationship outcomes. Finally, a new area of interest addresses the impact on marriage (and on the family) of veterans from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan who are returning with alarming rates of post-traumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injury.

Families Coping With Mental Illness

Less research has explored coping in families with a mentally ill member. As discussed earlier, relatives of individuals with severe mental illness commonly experience social, economic, psychological, and even health deterioration. These individuals are often burdened with significant caregiving responsibilities that can range from tangible care of daily living, emotional care and worrying, and active participation and encouragement to participate in therapeutic behaviors (e.g., medication adherence, therapy). Furthermore, additional factors such as stress, limited financial means, and poor community resources may exacerbate the deterioration that caretaking individuals experience. Families often cope with these challenges and new roles in different ways. Some may take behavioral action, for instance, by employing problem-solving behaviors, seeking support from others, seeking spiritual or religious support, or connecting with services for the family member and for themselves. Coping may also involve more internal strategies, such as positive reassessment or efforts to accept the situation. Alternatively, some may cope by trying to ignore the problem, engaging in distractions, or not seeking support and care from others. The extent to which these different strategies are adaptive is unknown, but it is likely that avoidance may be the least so. Further understanding adaptive coping strategies is an important area for research and will enable providers to more effectively assist families as they care for themselves and for the mentally ill family member.

By and large, research has not examined family and personal variables that might mitigate the effects of mental illness on the family or that may

produce resiliency in the family. For instance, do stress management styles or communication skills among family members improve the outcomes for family members and/or the mentally ill individual? Such information would allow providers to foster resilience through cognitive and psychoeducational approaches with the family.

Research has determined that it is not uncommon for families to cite greater strength, family bonds and commitment, knowledge, and skills as a result of coping with mental illness in the family. Families often describe themselves as more resilient after having dealt with psychopathology. Thus, it is important to acknowledge that, in addition to the burden that families face, having a family member with a mental illness may also present an opportunity for constructive change and personal growth.

Families and Interventions

The presence and expansion of family support and advocacy groups, family psychoeducation, and family therapy may aid individuals managing mental illness in their homes. There are also opportunities for families to act as allies in the treatment of the mentally ill family member. Systems theory and research on expressed emotion within families, for example, has offered new opportunities for families to aid in the treatment of those diagnosed with bipolar disorder. Another example of family involvement is in approaches to substance abuse treatment that merge drug treatment with family or couples therapy. Family involvement in the treatment of eating disorders has proved effective. For instance, family sessions have been shown to benefit those recovering from bulimia possibly because such family therapy addresses underlying problems that may contribute to the illness. Similarly, treatment for adolescents diagnosed with borderline personality disorder often includes parental involvement, as does treatment for childhood mood disorders, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, and oppositional defiant disorder.

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See also Depression and Relationships; Family Functioning; Family Therapy; Mental Health and Relationships; Mood and Relationships; Parent–Child Relationships; Systems Theories

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PSYCHOTHERAPISTS, RELATIONSHIPS WITH

The strength of the client–therapist relationship, often called the *alliance*, has been the most consistent predictor of treatment outcome across diverse types of psychotherapy. If the relationship is the major active ingredient, then any treatment approach can be effective provided the relationship is right. But what *is* the client–therapist relationship? Different theories of psychotherapy describe the relationship differently. This entry summarizes three prominent conceptual approaches to the client–therapist relationship: psychodynamic, person-centered, and psychometric. It concludes with some comments about recent research on the relationship.

Psychodynamic Concepts of the Relationship

Psychoanalytic and psychodynamic theorists, from Sigmund Freud onward, have focused on a distinction between the *real relationship* and the *transference*. As described by Charles Gelso and Jean Carter, the real relationship is characterized by genuineness and realistic perceptions. Genuineness involves being honest and open with the other. Realistic perceptions are understood as seeing the other clearly, in ways not distorted by transference or other psychological defenses.

Transference involves aspects of the therapist–client relationship that are transferred from earlier significant relationships, including inaccurate perceptions and expectations about the therapist. This may involve the repetition of past conflicts with parents or other significant people. Feelings and behaviors from these other relationships may be transferred into the relationship with the therapist. For example, a client who felt deprived by her mother may begin to feel deprived by her therapist. *Countertransference* refers to the therapist's reactions to the client's behavior in therapy, which may trigger the therapist's own past conflicts.

Both the real relationship and the transference contribute to the alliance, which is the basis for the work of psychotherapy. Primarily, the alliance is understood as the realistic joining of the client's reasonable self with the therapist's professional self for the purpose of therapeutic work. However, the working alliance may also incorporate positive elements from the transference, such as idealized expectations about the therapist's ability to help—the sorts of expectations children may have about their parents' ability to solve any problem.

Although all aspects of the relationship are important, psychodynamic interest has focused on the transference. The transference concept is a way of understanding how past hurts, including early relationships that interfered with or failed to support healthy development, can be manifested as problems in the present. Theoretically, the problematic relational patterns that brought the client into treatment are likely to be reexperienced and acted out within the therapeutic relationship. By understanding and correcting distorted feelings about the therapist, a client can resolve conflicts that have interfered with daily life outside of therapy.

Manifestations of the transference in treatment can be dramatic, and observations of transference phenomena have figured centrally in the psychoanalytic literature since Sigmund Freud's famous case studies of Anna O. and Dora. Psychoanalytic theorists have elaborated the concept of transference in many ways. For example, Heinz Kohut distinguished between *mirroring transferences*, in which the therapist is experienced as an extension of the self, as a twin, or as an appendage whose function is mainly to support the client's (unrealistically) grandiose views of the self, and *idealizing transferences*, in which the client draws strength or reassurance from being associated with an idealized therapist's exaggerated virtues. In this view, progress may come when the therapist fails to fulfill these unrealistic expectations. The client's resulting frustration brings the expectations into awareness, making it possible to examine and change them within the treatment.

Person-Centered Concepts of the Relationship

Person-centered theorists, starting with Carl Rogers, have tended to take a holistic, here-and-now perspective on the relationship. From a person-centered perspective, the therapist's job is to understand and accept client experiences—even those distorted by a history of problematic primary relationships—rather than seeking to judge or interpret them. Fully feeling, acknowledging, and communicating past experiences enables them to be considered and revalued in light of current reality. The value placed on any particular experience is up to the client, not the therapist or the theory. This conceptualization directs attention not to the history of the client's problems, but to the climate or conditions that the therapist provides within the therapy.

Carl Rogers proposed a series of therapist-provided *necessary and sufficient conditions* for therapeutic personality change. The three most often cited may be succinctly summarized as: (1) *be yourself*, (2) *trust the client*, and (3) *listen*. Collectively, they prescribe a quality of openness to experience—the therapist's own experience and the client's. They demand a tentative trust that the experience will not be overwhelmingly painful, and they underline the importance of creating a trustworthy environment.

These three facilitative conditions can be endlessly unpacked. As Rogers described them, the first condition (*be yourself*) involves genuineness, realness, or congruence. The idea is that the therapist is in the relationship, not putting up a professional front or façade. What the therapist feels, what is present in the therapist's awareness, and what is expressed to the client are all congruent with each other.

The second condition (*trust the client*) involves acceptance, caring, or prizing. In person-centered jargon, it is often called *unconditional positive regard*, meaning that the trust and caring come with no strings attached. The therapist is willing for the client to have whatever immediate feeling the client actually has—fear, anger, love, confusion, jealousy, pride, or whatever. The therapist prizes the client in a total rather than a conditional way.

The third condition (*listen*) is empathic understanding. This means that the therapist perceives and understands the feelings and personal meanings that the client experiences and communicates this understanding back to the client. Ideally, the therapist can accurately reflect experiences that the client is struggling to express even when the client can't quite find the words.

From a therapist's perspective, being genuine (and distinguishing this from switching the focus from the client to the therapist), accepting the client (who may hold beliefs or engages in practices contrary to the therapist's personal principles), and understanding empathically (when the client tells endless bland stories) can be difficult and taxing. Fortunately, person-centered theory suggests that perfect adherence to the conditions is not required. Approximations can be helpful, and beneficial effects of therapy can be expected to the degree that the conditions are fulfilled.

From the perspective of a therapist, the three conditions may seem distinct and even contradictory, but reviews of the research on the conditions have suggested that the conditions tend to blur together. From an observer's perspective, it can be difficult to distinguish the three conditions from each other or to distinguish them from a global positive evaluation. Nevertheless, a 2002 report of a task force on the psychotherapy relationship sponsored by the Psychotherapy Division of the American Psychological Association, listed genuineness, positive regard, and empathy among the

“demonstrably effective elements” or “promising and probably effective elements” of psychotherapy, based on accumulated research showing their association with positive outcomes.

Psychometric Concepts of the Alliance

In a seminal conceptualization, Edward Bordin characterized the alliance as encompassing three dimensions: (1) the emotional bond between client and therapist, (2) agreement on treatment goals, and (3) agreement on treatment tasks or means of achieving the goals. Subsequent researchers constructed scales to assess these and other dimensions, for example, using ratings on items like “I feel friendly toward my therapist” to measure bond or “I am clear as to what my therapist wants me to do in these sessions” to measure agreement on tasks. Results have typically confirmed that items with similar meaning tend to be rated similarly, so they can be grouped statistically on the same *factor*. The factors tend to be intercorrelated, however, rather than fully distinct.

The alliance has interested researchers because of its association with positive psychotherapy outcome. In the 2002 task force report on the psychotherapy relationship, the alliance was given pride of place among relationship aspects as the strongest and most consistent predictor of outcome. The research has not consistently supported the differentiation of the dimensions, however, and many researchers have used total or aggregate scores meant to assess the overall strength of the alliance.

Evaluations Versus Enactments

Researchers have often had difficulty distinguishing the subtle concepts that theorists have developed to understand the client–therapist relationship. The weak differentiation of Bordin’s three dimensions or Rogers’s three facilitative conditions is the tip of an iceberg. Theorists and clinicians use a far more complex repertoire of concepts than researchers measure. A distinction between *evaluation* and *enactment* of the therapeutic relationship can aid understanding of this research–practice gap. Whereas researchers tend to use terms like *alliance* and *relationship* to refer to evaluations (ratings on a scale), clinicians consider the client’s

relationship with the therapist as involving a variety of interpersonal activities (enactments).

Enactments of problems and solutions within the therapeutic relationship are far more complex than can be represented adequately on a small number of evaluative (positive–negative) scales. Each relationship involves specific content, specific behaviors, specific people, and specific events, and understanding of the particularities requires long-term observation of particular cases. For example, distinguishing between a mirroring and an idealizing transference is crucial in Kohut’s approach, but making this distinction in practice requires detailed contextual knowledge of the case.

Of course, global evaluation—the degree of positive or negative feeling—is part of the real relationship, the transference, empathy, congruence, trust, bond, and agreement on goals and tasks. Often the first thing people notice or want to know about a relationship is how good it is. But global evaluations gloss over the specifics of what makes relationships interesting, difficult, and, more important, therapeutic. Studying relationships in their contextual complexity will probably require theoretically guided case studies so that distinctions made by clinical theories can be compared with how the relationship is enacted in individual cases.

Developmental Concepts: The Rupture–Repair Hypothesis

Recent research has considered how client–therapist relationships fluctuate and change over time. For example, the alliance may fluctuate in connection with a therapist’s failures to understand something or a client’s resistance to facing painful memories. Or the therapy may go through stages as the relationship develops. An initially strong alliance may weaken as difficulties are encountered and later rise again in a more realistic reaction to the therapist.

One promising line of research focuses on *rupture–repair sequences*. Ruptures in the alliance may occur when previously hidden negative feelings emerge or when the therapist makes a mistake or fails to act as the client expects or wishes. Clients may then challenge the relationship by confronting the therapist or by withdrawing. Such ruptures may recapitulate the client’s relationship

difficulties outside of treatment. A rupture may offer an opportunity for valuable experiential learning in the here and now of the session, providing that the therapist recognizes the challenge and both parties work to repair the rupture. Researchers are developing methods for identifying rupture events using posttreatment interviews or by examining sequences of alliance ratings and session recordings. They then seek to describe steps in the task of repairing the ruptures.

Conclusion

The observation that evaluations of the relationship predict outcomes better than, for example, the therapist's use of particular techniques justifies the widespread conviction that the relationship is central to psychotherapy. Clinical concepts of the relationship are complex, subtle, and central to therapeutic practice.

William B. Stiles

See also Cognitive Behavioral Couple Therapy; Couple Therapy; Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy; Empathy; Insight-Oriented Couple Therapy; Interpersonal Psychotherapy; Psychodynamic Theories of Relationships; Unconditional Positive Regard

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PUBLIC POLICY AND RELATIONSHIPS

This entry describes the complex and intersecting connections between public policy and interpersonal relationships. The need for public policies that foster strong relationships, coupled with better capacity building in community settings, is stressed.

When leaders of social movements assert that “the personal is political,” they intend to underscore how individuals’ experiences of oppression in the workplace, at home, and elsewhere are rarely isolated events. Seemingly disparate experiences often stem from common systemic injustices, and collective opposition to those injustices can become a challenging force against them. This is no less true today than in earlier periods, as some of the most oppressed groups, such as immigrant families, children in poverty, and survivors of wars and natural disasters, struggle to find ways to organize a unified voice.

As a corollary to this rallying cry, it is also useful to consider the ways in which the political is personal. Indeed, public policies are often most acutely experienced at the personal level through their influence on relationships. Family relationships are affected by a range of policies, including those that impact the legal rights and economic well-being of families. For example, as tax incentives and related economic policies lead jobs and factories to relocate to less developed countries, unemployment in the abandoned communities can strain workplace relationships and family harmony and can leave taxpayers struggling to sustain basic municipal services. When schools, after-school programs, and youth service agencies are forced to “tighten their belts” as a result of local or national

economic decline, they find themselves stretching their limited resources in ways that diminish the fidelity of interventions and imperil the closeness and duration relationships. At the same time, “bottom line” federal school policies that reward a narrow range of performance goals often have the unintended consequence of reducing the quality and intensity of relationships in those settings.

Just as legislators need to recognize and take into account the implications of policies on supportive relationships, there is an onus on researchers to demonstrate the value of personal relationships and the ways in which they are affected by policies. There are countless issues (e.g., domestic violence, same-sex unions, classroom practices, foster care, incarceration, women’s reproductive rights, and divorce) that exemplify this connection, three of which are discussed next.

Domestic Violence

Feminists have long noted the ways in which public policies can influence women’s decisions to remain in violent relationships. For many years, domestic violence was considered a private family matter. This resulted in an anemic public response to the coercion, threats, isolation, and ultimately victimization that women were sustaining. Beginning in the 1970s, women’s advocacy groups engaged in activism and awareness campaigns that resulted in legal and social policy initiatives across multiple agencies (i.e., law enforcement, social service, corrections) and courts. At the same time, other policies have been enacted that have presented hurdles to leaving violent relationships. For example, immigration policies can interact with domestic violence or affect the economic resources of survivors (e.g., housing, benefits, Aid to Families with Dependent Children requirements) to effectively prevent women from leaving their violent partners.

Gay and Lesbian Couples

There is perhaps no more salient example of the intersection of policy and relationships than in the realm of same-sex relationships. Historic legislation governing the legality of same-sex marriage, civil partnerships, adoption, and access to fertility treatments has been adopted over the past decade and has affected the legal protections and benefits

that are afforded same-sex couples. In addition, in certain jurisdictions, same-sex couples’ right to become foster parents has been challenged while issues of their becoming adoptive parents have also come to the fore.

Vulnerable Youth at School

Although students’ connections with their teachers can make or break their school engagement and success, close and confiding student–teacher relationships tend to be more the exception than the rule. Given the way schools are structured, this is not surprising. Teachers have been increasingly saddled with additional obligations, and a growing emphasis on high-stakes testing has given rise to dense curricular demands, which have constrained teachers. There is unequivocal evidence that lowered student–teacher ratios are associated with improved student achievement and competence, and this is a straightforward means of improving teacher–student interactions. Similarly, educational policies that ensure more contact and continuity with teachers, such as multiyear teacher assignments, can provide students with the opportunity to forge close ties.

Scholars as Advocates for Human Relationships

Scholars have a key role to play in bridging knowledge on the vital importance of relationships in shaping developing outcomes. Several journals (e.g., *Future of Children*, *Research Into Practice*) and organizations (e.g., Child Trends, Child Welfare League, Public/Private Ventures) highlight this intersection. Yet in terms of solely advancing the importance of human relationships into the policy arena, there are fewer initiatives. Scholars sometimes unveil important and policy-relevant findings regarding human relationships (e.g., protective factors, role of informal social support), yet this information is rarely presented within a policy framework. A more concerted effort is needed to demonstrate this vital link, deploy policies that are more conducive to human relationships, and present opportunities, rather than impediments, to forging meaningful connections.

Jean Rhodes and Pat Dolan

See also Abortion; Abused Women Remaining in Relationships; Adoption; AIDS, Effects on Relationships; Child Abuse and Neglect; Divorce, Children and; Families, Public Policy Issues and; Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Relationships

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QUALITATIVE METHODS IN RELATIONSHIP RESEARCH

The term *qualitative methods* refers to a variety of open-ended and unstructured ways of collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data. Qualitative methods are used in relationship research when scholars want to gain an in-depth understanding of how participants perceive, make meaning of, and reflect on their own lived experiences. Qualitative methods are flexible and emergent. The researcher enters the data-collection process with some degree of focus. However, as unanticipated ideas and events occur in the field or during an interview, the emergent process gives permission to follow a new lead or create a new research objective. Some of the most common methods used to generate rich descriptions and deep insights include in-depth interviews, participant observation, case study, ethnography, participatory action research, document analysis, narrative analysis, discourse analysis, autoethnography, grounded theory, reflexivity, and focus groups. This entry identifies some of the unique assumptions, practices, and contributions of qualitative methods for relationship research.

Assumptions and Features of Qualitative Methods

Qualitative methods share certain features in common despite the wide variety across disciplines

and traditions. Common assumptions shared by the multiple kinds of qualitative methods include (a) triangulation, where several types of qualitative methods are employed to generate a storyline with multiple points of view; (b) thick description, where the researcher pays attention to every vivid detail and delves into a particular social world to richly describe relationship processes within broader cultural contexts; and (c) emergent theorizing, where a theoretical explanation of patterns in the data emerges from the process of gathering and making sense of the data.

The researcher is the primary instrument of qualitative data collection and interpretation because the researcher, to varying degrees, actively participates in and observes individual, couple, and family experiences in natural settings. Examples of naturally occurring settings include how private behaviors occur in public spaces, such as (a) conducting a participant observation study in a shopping mall to analyze how parents respond to a crying child; and (b) videotaping family dinnertime conversation to understand how beliefs about generational and gender privilege are demonstrated in verbal and nonverbal communication. Another primary mode of qualitative inquiry involves in-depth interviewing. Qualitative researchers ask open-ended interview questions such as “Tell me about a time when—” or “In what ways do you perceive—” when they want to understand how participants make sense of their lives. An example is an interview study in which a researcher asks newly divorced men how they feel about their ex-wives when they were married and now that they

are divorced. An in-depth interview, in which the researcher and the participant experience face-to-face interaction, can reveal more insight than a closed-ended survey, in which the response choices are predetermined and the participant is not engaged with the researcher.

Variability in Qualitative Traditions

There are many opinions about what is considered the best type of qualitative research practice. A key factor that contributes to this variability is the historical tradition of qualitative practice in particular academic disciplines. Sociologists and anthropologists have a long tradition of employing ethnographic strategies in which a social group is studied within their naturalistic setting. Ethnographers join the participants' world and try to understand their perspective from the inside out. An insider perspective is grounded in symbolic interactionist theory, which posits that meaning is co-constructed and shaped through social interaction. The goal of an interactionist account is to construct a compelling storyline. Interactionism and constructionism are theoretical frameworks used to guide researchers in the search for critical insights and new explanations about what has been seen as merely common sense or as yet invisible. When constructionist paradigms are used to guide research, typically only qualitative methods are employed.

In contrast, a qualitative researcher from a psychological tradition has traditionally been rooted in quantitative science, where concerns about validity, reliability, and generalizability are paramount. Much of the close relationships literature shares this tradition as well. Rather than using an emergent research design from the beginning, the qualitative component (e.g., open-ended questions or some participation in a natural setting) is adjunct to the major portion of the study, which is a quantitative research design. The dominant form of qualitative methods used in relationships research is more aptly known as a mixed-methods approach, which begins with a deductive statement about the relationships among variables. The qualitative (written) portion is used to supplement and give greater meaning to the quantitative (numeric) portion of the study. As more of the constructionist

and critical perspectives have made inroads into the relationship literature, more authentic examples of qualitative studies can be found.

Working With Qualitative Data

There are many ways to collect and analyze qualitative data. Researchers must consider whether to collect and analyze data in a linear fashion or simultaneously. Qualitative studies that follow the linear model have more in common with quantitative studies, in that they wait until one process is finished before they begin the analytic process.

The simultaneous process, where data collection and data analysis proceed at the same time, is most associated with the qualitative paradigm. Each new case is used to inform, refute, or refine the emerging data analysis. Simultaneous data collection and analysis are associated with grounded theory, the classic form of qualitative theory construction developed by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss. In recent descriptions, this style of theory generation involves three related processes. First, open coding is the initial step of breaking open segments in the raw data to begin to name them. Then the researcher searches for ways in which the codes can be grouped into more abstract categories. Second, axial coding is the stage of analysis in which an explanation is proposed of how the major categories and their subcodes work together. The goal of this process is to achieve theoretical saturation of categories so that no new information emerges that can further explain the category. Third, selective coding is the process of generating a theoretical storyline that explains the interconnections among all the categories.

Data analysis is a systematic process of data reduction. From a social constructionist perspective, the result is one of several possible and thus partial representations of the meanings that the analyst generates. The way that data are described in written reports reflects the researcher's approach to and beliefs about knowledge, that is, their epistemology. Although qualitative research is almost always coming from the interpretive and critical traditions, as noted earlier, some researchers may tend more toward a more scientific description, and others may tend more toward a constructionist description.

Regardless of the sequence of data collection and analysis, qualitative researchers must bring several acknowledged intellectual resources to the data analysis process. As a researcher sits down to read interview transcripts, field notes, journal entries, historical documents, and any other item that is included as “the data,” key ideas accompany this process. As Ralph LaRossa has said, there is no “immaculate perception” in qualitative data analysis. Codes are not embedded in the data just waiting to be discovered. Data analysis is a dialectical process where both induction and deduction are intertwined. To the data, the researcher brings key concepts from the theoretical frameworks that guided the study and a critical knowledge of the existing empirical literature on the particular topic under investigation. The research questions that have been used to shape the data-collection process are also present as the researcher begins the analysis process. Key to qualitative research, reflective awareness of how the researcher’s own hunches, passions, personal experiences, and insider’s knowledge about the topic is also integrated into the mix.

Reflexive Role of the Researcher

Reflexivity is one of the unique aspects of qualitative methods. In the qualitative paradigm, the researcher is an active participant in the research process. The researcher is not a silent partner, but is explicitly engaged in the entire research endeavor. Reflexivity refers to how the researcher critically and self-consciously reflects on the ways in which he or she is shaping the research process. Rather than ignore or deny the fact that a researcher will have an impact and a presence in the research setting, qualitative researchers are expected to openly acknowledge how their motives, beliefs, values, and commitments impact their work.

Research, then, is not an objective process, but one in which value judgments are made. These judgments need to be acknowledged, managed, and put to good use. Otherwise, they will unknowingly influence the research, often in harmful ways. For example, a researcher who is studying a population to which he or she does not belong (e.g., a middle-aged married man investigating unmarried teenaged mothers) should use a reflexive process to become aware of, and sensitive to, the ways in which his biases and privileges shape his perceptions of the

people he is “investigating.” Without this critical reflection, he will not be able to disentangle his own prejudices about “unwed teenage mothers” from what the young women are telling him about themselves. He will be more likely to treat his participants as objects or units of data, not as full human beings.

Reflexivity not only calls for theoretical and emotional sensitivity so that the people who are studied are treated in respectful and positive ways; reflexivity has many other advantages as well. Using a reflexive approach, a qualitative methodologist can build rapport with participants and ask deeper questions than would be possible on a closed-ended survey in which human beings are anonymous, voiceless, and invisible. A reflexive practitioner can use insider’s knowledge to gain access to research settings that might otherwise be closed to those considered outsiders. For example, a person interested in studying lesbian couples that are having their first child, either through insemination or adoption, may have more success recruiting a sample if they have insider’s knowledge of this population as well as credibility in terms of how to approach this group. Knowing where to advertise for sample recruitment is a key first step. Also, a reflexive methodologist is likely to work *with* and *for* groups who are marginalized, instead of just gathering data *about* them. The social action component of reflexivity is that researchers are not dispassionate about their work. Often the issues qualitative researchers study requires social change. Critical reflection on how and why to get involved in the change process is essential for examining motives and responsibilities. Reflexivity is a key strategy for researchers; they must ask themselves difficult questions so that they do not exploit those whose lives are under investigation.

Katherine R. Allen

See also Discourse Analyses; Life Review, Role of Relationships; Observational Methods; Quantitative Methods in Relationship Research; Symbolic Interaction Theories

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QUANTITATIVE METHODS IN RELATIONSHIP RESEARCH

Of the various ways that scholars study relationships, the most common involve quantitative methods. The quantitative approach uses statistical procedures to identify trends or regularities in data, which are then examined to yield insights about the subject matter under investigation. A fundamental underpinning of the quantitative approach is that systematic statistical methods, when applied according to conventional standards, provide unbiased tests of the phenomenon or hypothesis in question. Quantitative researchers believe, “When in doubt, count.” In this respect, relationship research is built on the same empirical foundation as other quantitative sciences, spanning nearly all of the biomedical, behavioral, and social sciences.

Relationship researchers use quantitative methods in two general ways. Some studies are primarily descriptive—that is, data are collected from a reasonably large and presumably representative group of individuals and then aggregated, yielding

summary statistics. For example, the statements that the divorce rate among Americans married in the 1970s was approximately 50 percent or that women tend to be more emotionally expressive than men are intended to concisely describe general trends within these groups. Other quantitative methods, called *inferential methods*, are used to test hypotheses. This means that the researchers specify in advance the predicted nature of the association between two (or more) variables and then collect and evaluate data to determine whether the predicted association is correct. Usually these hypotheses are based on theory so that these tests amount to tests of the validity and usefulness of the relevant theories. For example, sociometer theory predicts that when individuals are rejected by members of a valued social group, their self-esteem will suffer. This hypothesis might be tested by comparing the mean level of self-esteem among rejected individuals with that of individuals who had not been rejected. If this test results in a so-called *statistically significant* difference between groups, the theory is said to be supported. A non-significant result implies that the theory was not supported, at least in this particular instance.

Quantitative methods are typically used with data collected from experiments, surveys, or archives, although in principle any data that can be quantified can be analyzed with these methods. A large majority of relationship researchers favor quantitative methods over other methods, such as qualitative methods, because quantitative methods are believed to be more objective. This is because quantitative methods rely on standardized procedures that in principle prevent, or at least substantially minimize, the likelihood of the researcher biasing the findings of research. Another reason that researchers favor these methods is their precision and elegance. With the right method, massive data sets assessing many variables from thousands of research participants can be represented in a reasonably efficient, clear, and informative manner. Indeed, for many researchers, the most fulfilling moment in the entire research enterprise occurs when years of thought and effort culminate in a statistical result. The major disadvantage of quantitative methods is that they do not allow research participants to describe the phenomena in question in rich detail from their own perspective (something that qualitative methods do well).

Quantitative statistical methods began to be developed in the 1870s, with the pioneering work of Sir Francis Galton, who sought a mathematical way to represent the influence of heredity. Others who were highly influential during this early period were Galton's protégé, Karl Pearson, who introduced the correlation coefficient; W. S. Gosset (known then as "Student" to mask his job at the Guinness Brewery), who introduced the *t* test; and Ronald Fisher, who further developed analysis of variance techniques. Since then, statistical methods have become vastly more complex and sophisticated, so much so that virtually all graduate programs involve extensive training in quantitative methods. Even then, many research projects require consultation with statistical specialists. There is little doubt that the contemporary growth of statistical theory, along with advances in the computational hardware necessary to carry out these tests, will continue and likely escalate these trends.

The remainder of this entry first reviews some of the basic quantitative methods used by relationship researchers. The subsequent section describes more advanced tools specialized for studying relationships.

Basic Quantitative Methods Used by Relationship Researchers

Among the most common quantitative methods in relationship research are techniques for comparing the central tendency in groups of individuals, most commonly the mean (or arithmetic average). The analysis of variance (ANOVA), which includes the well-known *t* test, is a flexible method for conducting such analyses. Essentially, ANOVA involves determining whether the actual mean difference between two (or more) groups is greater than would be expected by chance, which is determined by calculating the expected degree of variability in a sample. ANOVA can be used to compare preexisting groups (e.g., Americans vs. Chinese) or groups to which individuals have been assigned by the researcher. When these assignments are truly random, differing only in an experimental manipulation, ANOVA can be used to make causal inferences. For example, one might compare marital interactions following the viewing of a happy film as opposed to the viewing of a

sad film. Random assignment and the ability to infer causality is a prized feature in research, although many questions do not lend themselves to random assignment (e.g., spouses cannot be randomly assigned to be distressed or joyously in love with each other). ANOVA also can be used to examine the behavior of the same individuals at different times or under different circumstances, commonly called *within-person comparisons*. For example, developmentally oriented researchers often compare the same variables, such as the nature of friendships, at different ages during the life span, to examine processes of development.

Another common set of quantitative methods is correlational. Correlation coefficients quantify the degree to which two variables covary, such that increases in one are accompanied by simultaneous increases (in the case of a positive correlation) or decreases (in the case of a negative correlation) in the other. Correlations are particularly useful because they indicate not only whether two variables are associated, but also the relative magnitude of this association. For example, most studies find a relatively strong positive correlation between the marital satisfaction of husbands and wives. A correlation coefficient of 1.00 (or -1.00) indicates perfect one-to-one correspondence, whereas a correlation of zero indicates no correspondence at all.

Typically, correlational methods involve more than two variables. *Multiple regression* uses a composite of several variables to predict another variable, the notion being that several predictors, as long as they are not redundant, are likely to convey more information than any single predictor. For example, one might predict the likelihood of a marriage ending from measures of personality, economic well-being of the family, and the nature of spouses' interactions with each other.

A somewhat different family of correlational procedures is called *factor analysis* (similar in certain respects to *principal component analysis*). In these procedures, there are no predictors or outcomes; rather, the goal is to take a set of three or more variables and determine the underlying structure that characterizes how each variable relates to all of the others. This entails identifying a smaller number of factors (or principal components), which simplifies the researcher's task in two ways: One, a smaller set of associations is invariably easier to understand; and two, fewer factors are

easier to use in subsequent analysis. One common use of factor-analytic procedures is to reduce the number of variables obtained from a questionnaire. For example, the 20-item UCLA Loneliness Scale usually yields two factors: one for Social Loneliness (lonely feelings about one's circle of friends) and one for Emotional Loneliness (lonely feelings about a primary, special, and often romantic relationship).

More Advanced Quantitative Methods Used in Relationship Research

In contemporary science, all research areas have specialized statistical techniques that address complexities inherent in their particular subject matter. For relationship research, the most fundamental of these complexities stems from the fact that partners' behaviors are not independent of each other (e.g., one sibling's family-life satisfaction is not independent of another sibling's family-life satisfaction inasmuch as each influences the other and, moreover, each one's satisfaction may be based on the same underlying causes). Traditional statistical methods commonly assume independence of individuals within a sample. As a result, for use with samples that include individuals who interact with each other, relationship researchers have adapted existing methods not only to control these dependencies, but, more informatively, to generate insights about the ways in which relationship partners influence one another. Most researchers agree that this kind of back-and-forth influence is the central substance of a relationship. Rather than merely controlling for statistically biasing effects, then, the goal is to identify and understand them.

One increasingly popular tool is called *multilevel modeling*. Multilevel models build on the nested structure of certain phenomena, which means that the behavior of so-called lower level units reflects their common membership in a larger or higher order entity. For example, the behavior of students (the lower level unit) within a classroom (the higher level entity) likely depends on the characteristics of that classroom. Similarly, each individual family member may be influenced by the family as a broader entity. Multilevel models have proved to be particularly well adapted to

studying relationship phenomena. For example, they can identify how one family member's work stress may influence the emotional well-being of others. Another popular use of multilevel models is to analyze data collected by daily diary methods. In this protocol, research participants keep detailed records of relevant thoughts, feelings, and activity repeatedly over a number of days, eventually producing a sufficiently diverse sampling of moments and experiences to permit identification of theoretically meaningful trends. Multilevel methods are critical tools for extracting the most (and most accurate) information from such records.

A related method, called *structural equation modeling*, is designed to examine patterns of covariation (a concept similar to correlation) among multiple variables in a data set, with the ultimate goal of representing all of them in a single, parsimonious model. This technique differs from more traditional correlational methods, in which associations among a series of variables are examined one pair at a time. Instead, structural equation models simultaneously examine all pairs, determining which variables go together and which do not. The result is usually depicted in a schematic diagram in which variables are grouped together into sets preferably on the basis of an a priori theory, illustrating how each set relates to each other set in the obtained results. An oft-cited but seldom-used benefit of structural equation modeling is its ability to test competing theories, which it does by comparing which of them provides a better fit to the patterns of association observed within a data set.

One final method is called the Social Relations Model (SOREMO). Developed by David Kenny, SOREMO was first created for studies of social perception, but has proved to be valuable as well for studies of social interaction. Suppose that John likes Peggy. This observation might mean that John likes everyone (called an actor effect), that Peggy is liked by everyone (called a target effect), or that John likes Peggy specially, over and above these two more general tendencies (called a relationship effect). The importance of this method lies in the fact that each of these components describes a conceptually different phenomenon. By distinguishing them statistically, relationship researchers are able to better understand how people's behavior with particular partners reflects their own general proclivities, their partner's ability to induce

certain tendencies, or ways in which their interaction with each other is unique. This last component is believed by many researchers to be the hallmark of a relationship.

Conclusion

In all sciences, researchers use quantitative methods to derive evermore accurate and insightful understandings. Inevitably, just as new quantitative methods lead to new findings and theories, so do new theoretical advances compel the development of new methods for testing them. Thus, in relationship research, theory and quantitative methods develop symbiotically.

Harry T. Reis

See also Daily Diary Methods; Developmental Designs; Dyadic Data Analysis; Qualitative Methods in Relationship Research; Social Relations Model

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QUESTIONNAIRES, DESIGN AND USE OF, IN RELATIONSHIP RESEARCH

Questionnaires have been developed to assess many aspects of relationships. These include (a) characteristics of the individual's social network

such as size (e.g., number of relationships), nature (e.g., types of relationships), and frequency of contact; (b) evaluation of relationships such as social support and loneliness; and (c) measures regarding a specific relationship (e.g., marital relationship, parent–child relationship). Some of these measures are quantitative (e.g., number of specific behaviors toward another person, frequency of contact), whereas other measures involve the evaluation of the relationship (e.g., marital satisfaction, feelings of trust or intimacy).

This entry describes development and use of relationship questionnaires. The first section discusses the rationale for use of relationship questionnaires, followed by a review of methods used to develop measures and evaluate reliability and validity. A third section addresses issues concerning use of questionnaires in research and clinical settings.

Why Use Relationship Questionnaires?

Relationship questionnaires involve self-reports by the person regarding connections to other people. Such measures are easy and inexpensive to administer, and they yield information concerning the person's feelings and perceptions of their relationships that cannot be obtained in other ways. One possible problem with such measures is bias in the person's responses. For example, some individuals may want to be seen positively by others (i.e., social desirability); as a result, their relationships may be rated as more numerous or of greater quality than is true. Alternatively, other individuals may be too negative in their reports of relationships due to "dispositional negativity"; such persons may indicate that their relationships are fewer and less satisfactory than is true.

Due to these problems with self-report measures, some researchers have argued against their use, advocating for behavioral measures of relationships (i.e., observational assessments of interactions between individuals) or assessments by other social network members (e.g., their spouse). The problem is that such assessments are unable to capture the perceptions of the individual. For example, measures of relationship quality or feelings of loneliness cannot be based on the behavioral observations or perceptions of others. Furthermore, how the person perceives his or her

relationships may be more valid in predicting such outcomes as physical or mental health.

Development of Relationship Questionnaires

Writing Questions

A first issue involves the source of questions. In some cases, the theoretical conceptualization of a construct may determine questionnaire content. For example, many measures of social support are designed to assess different types of support (e.g., emotional or instrumental support) based on theory. Items would be included to assess each of these hypothesized types of support. In other cases, the items are derived from discussions with individuals regarding the concept being assessed. For example, items for the original UCLA Loneliness Scale were based on how individuals described the loneliness experience.

A problem that can arise involves item wording. If all items are worded in one direction, then individuals who tend to respond the same way will receive high or low scores. For example, assume all items on a measure of marital satisfaction are worded in a positive or satisfied direction. Individuals who tend to agree with any statement will receive scores indicating they are satisfied with their marriage. As a consequence, scores will reflect both marital satisfaction and “response sets” (i.e., the tendency to agree). To address this problem, relationship questionnaires will include some items worded in the opposite direction. For example, a measure of marital satisfaction would include items reflecting being satisfied and dissatisfied with the marriage. Responses to the dissatisfaction items would be reversed prior to computing a marital satisfaction score.

Another step in developing relationship items is selecting the response format. This reflects how individuals answer questions included in the measure. For example, respondents may indicate how much they agree with statements on a 9-point Likert scale, where 1 indicates *strongly disagree*, 5 indicates *neither agree or disagree*, and 9 indicates *strongly agree*. Another possible response format involves how often the individual feels the way described, ranging from *never* (1) to *always* (4).

Reliability

Reliability reflects the consistency or replicability of scores on a measure. Psychometric theory proposes that responses to questions are a function of two components: (1) level of the characteristic being assessed, and (2) random error. For example, responses to items assessing social support would reflect the individual’s “true” level of support and random error. The smaller the error variance, the more reliable are scores in assessing the person’s level of social support.

Items are often selected for a questionnaire based on how they affect the reliability of the measure. Initially, a large pool of items is developed and administered to research participants. Reliability is greater if responses to items are more highly intercorrelated. Items are eliminated when responses to that item are not correlated with the remaining items. A final set of items is selected where responses are intercorrelated (i.e., they measure the same construct), resulting in high reliability.

Another factor that affects the reliability of the measure is the number of items. Imagine that a researcher is observing a couple to assess its warmth and hostility. Accuracy is greater if the couple’s behavior is observed in a number of situations. Similarly, a marital satisfaction measure will be more reliable if it consists of 10 questions, rather than a single question.

Reliability is computed once a final set of items is selected. Coefficient alpha (α) is the measure of reliability typically reported. Alpha reflects the proportion of the variation in total scores due to the construct being measured; $1 - \alpha$ reflects the proportion of error variance. For example, an α coefficient of .80 indicates that 80 percent of the variance in scores is reliable, and 20 percent represents random error. An adequate level of reliability is typically $\alpha > .70$. Other forms of reliability are often reported for relationship questionnaires. Test-retest reliability is the correlation between two assessments separated by time (e.g., 6 months). Assuming that there has been no change in one’s standing on the relationship variable in question, then differences from a correlation of 1.0 reflects unreliability. This form of reliability assumes the relationship variable does not change over time; this may not be true.

Validity

Validity concerns what a questionnaire assesses (i.e., does it measure the construct?). For example, a valid measure of social support assesses the assistance from members in the person's social network that is received by the individual. There are four types of validity: content, criterion, discriminant, and construct validity.

Content validity. This involves whether the measure represents different aspects of the construct. Consider a social support measure. A content-valid questionnaire would assess different facets of support. Theoretical conceptualizations of social support determine the construct definition and the questionnaire content. For example, the Social Provisions Scale was developed based on the conceptualization of social support developed by Robert Weiss. Content validity for that measure is based on whether the items adequately assess the provisions described by Weiss. Evaluations of content validity are based on expert judgment. Different conceptualizations of the construct lead to different item wording and different criteria for content validity. An important issue concerns whether scores on measures of the same construct developed based on different conceptual models are correlated, indicating that the measures are assessing the same underlying construct.

Criterion validity. Demonstrating that scores are correlated with alternative methods of assessing the construct is the basis of criterion validity. One form of criterion validity is a "known groups" analysis, where individuals who should differ on the construct are compared. For example, a study might compare the marital satisfaction scores for couples that are and are not in marital therapy; lower scores should be found for the group receiving therapy. Another method is to correlate scores on the measure with another measure of the same construct that employs a different assessment method. For example, a spouse rating partner warmth could be correlated with an observational measure of spousal warmth. Finally, measures can be used to predict important relationship outcomes, such as marital satisfaction scores predicting subsequent separation or divorce.

Discriminant validity. This involves demonstrating that a measure assesses a distinct construct. Relationship measures are affected by a number of factors, such as social desirability (a desire to appear in a positive light), dispositional negativity (a tendency to respond negatively), extraversion, and depression. Discriminant validity would be supported by analyses demonstrating that the relationship questionnaire assesses a construct that is different from these other constructs.

Construct validity. This is referred to as the ultimate form of validity, where results using a measure are consistent with theoretical models concerning the construct. For example, models of coping with stress predict that social support should "buffer" the effects of stress. Finding that high levels of social support lessen the negative effects of stress on outcomes such as physical and mental health would support the construct validity of the measure.

Use of Relationship Measures

Relationship questionnaires are primarily used in research studies. Developing measures that are reliable and valid improves the quality of research. One issue that arises involves shortening the length of questionnaires. For example, it may be impractical to employ a 20-item loneliness measure in a large survey. Information on item-total correlations (i.e., between individual items and a total loneliness score) can be employed to select a smaller number of items.

Another issue involves the type of sample. Many relationship questionnaires have been developed using college students. Using the measure with other populations (e.g., elderly, less educated) requires ensuring that questions are understood by these individuals. Simplifying item wording and testing the reliability and validity of the measures for that population may be necessary. Similarly, the measure may need to be translated into another language. It is important to back-translate the measure to ensure that item meaning has not been altered in the translation.

A final use involves interventions with individuals experiencing relationship problems. Marital satisfaction measures are often used, and criterion scores have been determined indicating

the couple is experiencing problems. Alternatively, individuals may be identified for interventions to address their relationship problems (e.g., loneliness). An issue concerns what score represents a high level of loneliness. One method for identifying such individuals is to set a criterion based on normative data. For example, individuals receiving a score of two standard deviations above the mean or higher would be in the upper 2.5 percent of individuals on loneliness and would therefore be selected for the intervention. Alternatively, a criterion might be based on the scale items and knowledge about how much loneliness is problematic.

Conclusion

Developing questionnaires that are reliable and valid can enhance research on relationship issues. This discussion of reliability and validity is based on "classic measurement theory." New methods are being used in developing relationship measures, such as Item Response Theory. These methods may serve to further enhance the quality of

relationship questionnaires and improve the use of these measures.

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See also Assessment of Couples; Assessment of Families; Conflict Measurement and Assessment; Marital Satisfaction, Assessment of; Quantitative Methods in Relationship Research

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R

RAPE

Although the definition of *rape* varies across jurisdictions, it can generally be defined as a specific type of sexual assault that involves penetration, force or threat of force, and lack of consent. A related term is *sexual assault*, which involves unwanted sexual contact that does not necessarily involve penetration. Although sexual assault is a broader term than rape, the two terms are often used interchangeably in research. Another related term is *sexual abuse*, which is a term often used to refer to unwanted sexual contact with a minor. This entry focuses on adult rape and sexual assault. It includes information on the prevalence of rape, factors associated with increased risk of rape, the effects of rape and treatments for rape trauma, characteristics of perpetrators, and rape prevention and avoidance. The entry also includes a section on acquaintance rape because most victims are raped by someone they know, often someone with whom they have a relationship.

Rape Prevalence

It is difficult to estimate the prevalence of rape because most rapes are not reported to the police. Therefore, relying on official statistics greatly underestimates rape prevalence. Studies that ask individuals if they have been raped also underestimate rape prevalence because many people who have experienced an event that meets the legal

definition do not define the event as a rape. The best evidence regarding the prevalence of rape comes from large-scale survey studies in which participants are asked behaviorally specific questions, such as “Have you ever had intercourse when you didn’t want to because someone threatened to use physical force if you didn’t cooperate?” Studies that use behaviorally specific questions indicate that 15 to 20 percent of women and approximately 2 percent of men in the United States will be raped in their lifetime. Not surprisingly, then, women fear rape much more than men do, and this fear significantly restricts women’s activities outside of the home. Despite the prevalence of rape, women underestimate their own risk and see themselves as at much less risk than other women.

Although much research on sexual assault has been conducted in the United States, violence against women, including rape, is a global problem. However, it is difficult to get accurate rape prevalence rates across cultures due to differences in research methods, definitions of violence, sampling techniques, and cultural differences that may affect respondents’ willingness to disclose such experiences.

Rape Risk

Several demographic factors are associated with greater risk of being raped. First, as mentioned, women are much more likely to be raped than are men. Age is a second risk factor: Most rapes occur

prior to age 25. For example, in one large study, of the women who reported being raped at some time in their lives, 54 percent were 17 years old or younger when they were first raped. A third demographic factor associated with rape risk is race. In a large national study in the United States, rape was most prevalent among American Indian/Alaska Native women and was least prevalent among Asian/Pacific Islander women.

Alcohol use also is a risk factor. Most rapes on college campuses involve alcohol use by the victim, the perpetrator, or both. In one large-scale study, women at most risk were those who frequently drink to get drunk. Studies of community samples of victims, especially those who seek help at an emergency department after the assault, also indicate that alcohol use is common among victims. Several factors contribute to this finding. For example, sexually aggressive men tend to target women who are drinking or intoxicated and also intentionally use alcohol (and occasionally other drugs) to impair a woman's ability to resist. In an effort to diminish their responsibility, perpetrators may also attribute their own behavior to the fact that they were drinking. Finally, alcohol use by men may make them more likely to misinterpret a woman's behavior as indicating sexual interest. In fact, some studies show a greater role for offender than victim drinking in sexual assaults.

A final factor that increases risk for sexual assault is prior victimization. For example, women who have experienced childhood sexual abuse are 2.5 to 3 times more likely to be sexually assaulted as adults. Many factors have been proposed to explain this relationship, but there is not clear support for any of them. One potential factor concerns deficits in risk recognition. For example, laboratory research suggests that women with multiple prior victimization experiences take longer to recognize risk when listening to a taped enactment of a sexual assault than women who have not been previously victimized.

Effects of Rape

The effects of rape are often referred to as *Rape Trauma Syndrome*. This term refers to a two-stage model of reactions to rape involving an acute phase and a reorganization phase. Although this

term continues to be used, particularly in legal decisions, subsequent research has conceptualized rape trauma in terms of specific diagnoses and symptoms, rather than stages of recovery.

For example, rape is an example of a traumatic event that can lead to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) as defined in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* of the American Psychiatric Association. Symptoms of PTSD include intrusive thoughts about the event, avoiding places or activities that remind one of the event, and hypervigilance to danger. The vast majority of rape victims meet the diagnostic criteria for PTSD immediately post-rape, and approximately 50 percent continue to meet the criteria at 1 year post-rape. Current PTSD prevalence rates among victims raped several years previously range from about 12 to 17 percent in the best-designed studies. Studies consistently show that rape victims report more symptoms of PTSD than do victims of other kinds of traumas.

Numerous studies have examined other negative psychological consequences of rape besides PTSD primarily among female victims. For example, compared with nonvictims, women who have been raped report more symptoms of depression, fear, and anxiety and higher rates of substance abuse, eating-disordered behavior, and risky sexual behavior. Women who have been sexually assaulted also are at greater risk of poorer health, chronic pain, and more physical symptoms (especially related to sexual health), compared with women who have not been assaulted. These differences can persist for years after the rape.

Factors that are associated with greater post-rape distress include having experienced a prior trauma (e.g., previous sexual victimization), self-blame, and greater use of avoidance coping (e.g., social withdrawal). Victims who receive more negative reactions from others following the rape (e.g., being blamed by others) and who experienced "secondary victimization" by medical or legal personnel (e.g., not being believed) also report more distress. Factors associated with less distress include greater use of cognitive restructuring as a coping strategy (e.g., trying to see the situation in a different light) and greater perceived control over the recovery process. Interestingly, male rape victims tend to report more distress than do female victims.

Other studies have moved beyond a focus on the emotional consequences of rape to investigating the social costs of rape. With regard to costs to victims, women who have experienced a sexual (or physical) assault are more likely to fall into poverty, become divorced, and become unemployed than those who have not experienced interpersonal violence. With regard to costs to society, one study estimated the cost of rape based on lost productivity, medical care/ambulance costs, mental health care services, police/fire services, social/victim services, property loss/damages, and effects on quality of life as approximately \$100,000 per incident for rapes/sexual assaults. Given the number of rapes in the United States, this amounted to an almost \$700 per year “rape tax” for every taxpayer.

Although there are clearly detrimental effects of rape on victims and on society, as is true of other traumatic events, a sexual assault can lead to positive changes in victims’ lives. These can include greater life appreciation, more concern for others in similar situations, better relationships with family members, reevaluating life and goals, becoming more assertive, increased involvement in social or political action, and increased spirituality. Factors associated with reporting growth post-rape include greater use of cognitive restructuring and less use of avoidant coping strategies, less self-blame, and more perceived control over the recovery process. Factors uniquely associated with growth (that are not also associated with less distress) include having more supportive friends and family and greater use of religious coping.

There are several effective treatments for PTSD. These include exposure therapy, cognitive behavior therapy, exposure plus cognitive therapy, and Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) therapy. Medications can also be effective, with the selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors showing the best results. Exposure therapy and cognitive behavior therapy have the most support in studies of rape victims. In exposure therapy, the victim repeatedly confronts traumatic memories or feared situations that have become associated with the trauma. Cognitive behavioral therapy focuses more on identifying dysfunctional thoughts (e.g., self-blame) and replacing them with new, more adaptive thoughts.

Characteristics of Perpetrators

A large body of research has identified characteristics of men who are more likely than others to commit rape. These characteristics include greater hostility toward women, greater acceptance of rape myths, growing up in a violent home or experiencing abuse as a child, having friends who are sexually aggressive and who tolerate or encourage sexual aggression, believing that men should be dominant, and engaging in more impersonal sex.

Rape Prevention and Avoidance

Because of the prevalence of rape, particularly on college campuses, numerous rape prevention programs have been developed. Most of these programs focus on reducing rape myths, identifying risky dating behaviors, and increasing empathy for rape survivors. Although these programs typically result in short-term changes in attitudes, they have not been shown to be effective in reducing the actual prevalence of rape.

Although victims are not responsible for rape because women (as the primary victims of rape) still are at risk, it is important for them to be knowledgeable about effective resistance strategies. Research suggests that several active resistance strategies are effective for avoiding rape without increasing risk of physical injury, including forceful (e.g., biting, hitting, using a weapon) and nonforceful (e.g., fleeing, struggling) physical resistance. Forceful verbal resistance (e.g., screaming, yelling) also can be effective. Although more research is needed, it appears that resistance should match the strategy used by the perpetrator. In other words, if the perpetrator uses verbal threats, screaming may be enough to avoid rape, whereas if the perpetrator is physically attacking the victim, she or he may need to fight back to avoid being raped. However, even if resistance can be effective, this does not mean that it is the victim’s fault if she or he was unable to stop the rape.

Acquaintance Rape

As stated previously, most victims are raped by someone they know, including family members, acquaintances, and dates. However, men are more

likely to be raped by strangers than by someone they know. Thus, acquaintance rape is more common than stranger rape overall because women are more likely to be raped and are more likely to be raped by someone they know than by a stranger. One reason that acquaintance rape is so common is that women tend to resist much less when attacked by acquaintances, and they are thus less likely to avoid being raped. However, college women were more likely to respond assertively to sexual aggression by acquaintances if they were not concerned about preserving the relationship, if they felt angry and confident, if they engaged in less self-blame, and if they had greater resentment. These findings need to be incorporated into rape prevention programs. Finally, although some critics argue that acquaintance rape is not a serious crime, acquaintance rape is no less traumatic to victims than is stranger rape.

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See also Abuse and Violence in Relationships; Alcohol and Sexual Assault; Incest; Sexual Aggression

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RAPPORT

Rapport is a fundamental characteristic of well-functioning human relationships. Relationships in

which individuals experience rapport are characterized by mutual liking, trust, empathy, comfort, responsiveness to the other's needs, and self-reported feelings of closeness and harmony. An individual experiencing rapport with another might also report that he or she feels "in sync" with that person or that the two have connected or "clicked."

Rapport can be experienced in any type of relationship. Long-term relationships, such as familial relationships or the relationship between an individual and his or her partner, are almost certainly characterized by some degree of rapport. However, rapport is not unique to relationships where there is a high degree of codependence over extended time periods; friends, acquaintances, colleagues, teammates, and coworkers can also experience rapport. Even strangers can develop rapport, assuming they have some time and a reason to interact (e.g., students unknown to one another who are assigned by their professor to work together for a course project).

Strategies for Developing Rapport

There are many strategies that people can use to develop rapport with others. Some of these strategies are deliberate, meaning that people use them intentionally and with awareness; for example, people could make a conscious effort to share personal information with others and invite them to do the same in an effort to find things shared in common, which would create feelings of interpersonal closeness and harmony. People might also engage in similar behaviors as a relationship partner or choose to use similar phrases or words. Nonverbal behaviors can also be used deliberately to create a feeling of intimacy with another person; individuals might intentionally smile frequently, make eye contact, or exhibit other engaging behaviors (e.g., looking attentive, leaning forward, using open body posture). All of these behaviors foster positive feelings between people, and they can be purposefully used to accomplish this objective.

More often than not, however, feelings of rapport are a result of behaviors enacted outside of awareness that create feelings of closeness with another. These unconscious behaviors are almost

always nonverbal, and they are called unconscious because they are effortless and occur without awareness, intention, or deliberate control. For example, research has indicated that when interacting with another person, people will often display similar facial expressions, emotions, intonations, and speech rates all without consciously realizing they are doing so. Another unconscious strategy for creating rapport is behavioral mimicry, which is sometimes called mirroring or the chameleon effect. Like a social chameleon, behavioral mimicry occurs when individuals “blend in” to their relationships and their surroundings by adopting the postures, gestures, and mannerisms of their interaction partners. This behavioral imitation usually happens unconsciously; in fact, most people believe (correctly) that if they are “caught” consciously imitating the behaviors of others, hostility or other negative consequences will follow. On the contrary, imitation without awareness or recognition is usually regarded as positive.

Regardless of whether strategies for developing rapport are used consciously or unconsciously, the experience of similarity that results from sharing emotions and behaviors in common with another person is a powerful contributor to feeling in sync or harmonious with that person, and therefore aids in the development of feelings of interpersonal closeness and rapport. In addition, similarity of any type is often a strong predictor of whether two people will develop a lasting relationship.

The Relationship Between Behavioral Mimicry and Rapport

There is a strong relationship between exhibiting similar behaviors as those of interaction partners and the development and maintenance of rapport. For example, parents imitate the behaviors of their children, and students tend to mimic the behaviors of their teachers. In both cases, the degree of observed behavioral mimicry is positively related to self-reported ratings of rapport and being in sync with the other person. Counselors who mimic the behaviors of their clients are also better liked than counselors who do not do so perhaps because of the empathy that is created from this shared experience.

Behavioral mimicry does not just occur in relationships that have already flourished; people also

mimic the behaviors of complete strangers. This is especially likely to occur in situations where people are trying to affiliate. Recent research has indicated that when people are pursuing affiliation goals, they mimic the behaviors of an interaction partner more than if they do not have an active affiliation goal. People also mimic the behavior of interaction partners more when they have recently been socially excluded or ostracized and are trying to recover from this negative experience.

The Importance of Rapport in Human Relationships

Rapport is not the only positive consequence of behavioral mimicry; mimicking others also leads to liking, trust, feelings of closeness, and helpfulness, all of which contribute to the experience of rapport with another person. Moreover, because mimicry is more likely to occur in situations where it is useful or beneficial to the person who engages in it (e.g., when people try to make a favorable impression on someone of higher status or when people interact with others who share group memberships), it is both functional and adaptive in a number of ways. Yet the importance of rapport in human relationships is demonstrated most by the fact that mimicking the behaviors of others often happens with intention or conscious awareness; if people had to think consciously about how to develop rapport with all the important people in their lives, they would have little time left in the day to accomplish other tasks that are crucial for survival. In other words, the fact that people have developed and engage in unconscious behaviors that help them to create rapport with others suggests that the development of rapport in human relationships is critical.

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See also Closeness; Communication, Nonverbal; Empathy; Liking; Self-Disclosure; Similarity Principle of Attraction; Trust

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REASSURANCE SEEKING

Reassurance seeking is the act of going to others to request assurance that one is lovable, worthy, or in other ways adequate. Unlike *support seeking*, which is a normative and often formative component of interpersonal relationships, reassurance seeking is generally construed as maladaptive, especially when exercised in excess.

The majority of research on reassuring seeking has focused on the related construct of *excessive reassurance seeking* or the tendency to repeatedly seek reassurance from others despite their previous attempts to provide it. This construct is best known in the context of James Coyne's Interactional Theory of Depression. According to this model, mildly depressed individuals request reassurance from others that they are worthy and lovable. Others initially provide reassurance, but the depressed person, noting the discrepancy between the reassurance and his or her own negative self-concept, feels it is not genuine or is motivated by pity and again seeks reassurance. Eventually, the other person grows tired of repeatedly providing reassurance and begins to act rejecting. The reassurance seeker notices the rejection and becomes more depressed, and the cycle continues.

Thomas Joiner and colleagues expanded on Coyne's model, identifying excessive reassurance seeking as the active agent in this process. They proposed that people with a tendency to excessively engage in reassurance seeking set in motion a process leaving them at risk for both depression and interpersonal rejection. Research has supported these ideas. A recent meta-analysis of 38 studies found that excessive reassurance seeking was positively related, concurrently, to both depressive symptoms and interpersonal rejection. Studies also show that people who engage in excessive reassurance

seeking tend to experience increases in rejection and depression over subsequent weeks and months, providing evidence that excessive reassurance seeking is not only concurrently associated with depression and rejection, but also might lead to the development of symptoms in the future.

Since Joiner and colleagues' initial work, numerous studies have examined different aspects of excessive reassurance seeking, including its association with related interpersonal constructs, clinical implications, and neurological underpinnings. Although most research has examined excessive reassurance seeking in college-age community samples, emerging research has replicated findings in children, adolescents, and adults, as well as in clinically depressed samples. In addition, the link among excessive reassurance seeking, depression, and rejection has been tracked across different relationship types (including romantic relationships, friendships, classmates, and college roommates).

The association between excessive reassurance seeking and psychopathology is relatively specific to depression; unique associations to other symptoms (e.g., anxiety, eating disorders) have generally not been found. Excessive reassurance seeking also is implicated in *depression contagion* or the tendency of people who spend a lot of time with a depressed person to become depressed. For example, one study showed that associations between depression scores of participants and their romantic partners were most strong among participants who were high on excessive reassurance seeking. Overall, research on the role of excessive reassurance seeking in depression has demonstrated the importance of interpersonal relationships in the development, maintenance, and exacerbation of depressive disorders. Further research is needed, however, to verify the more specific tenets of Coyne's model. In addition, given its role in maintaining and worsening depression, reducing excessive reassurance seeking may be an important goal of psychotherapy; as such, interventions designed to do so should be developed.

Although the majority of research on reassurance seeking has centered on Coyne's theory, the concept of reassurance seeking is relevant to other theoretical models. For example, Attachment Theory holds that children develop internal models of self and others based on experiences with caregivers. If the caregiver is consistent in providing

support and validation in childhood, the individual eventually learns to internalize this and can usually self-reassure, rather than having to seek reassurance from others. If the caregiver is inconsistent in providing validation, however, the individual develops a negative model of the self, fails to learn to self-reassure, and thus seeks reassurance from others. This relational style is known as anxious (or preoccupied) attachment. Supporting the link between anxious attachment and reassurance seeking, one study found a positive association between excessive reassurance seeking and measures of preoccupied attachment. Another study found that excessive reassurance seeking was related to depression only because of its relationship to anxious attachment. In addition, reassurance seeking is relevant to the construct of interpersonal dependency. Because they feel unable to care for themselves, people with a dependent personality have an excessive need for reassurance and often put themselves in unpleasant situations or act overly compliant to receive approval from others. Studies have shown that dependency and excessive reassurance seeking are positively correlated. Further research has suggested that excessive reassurance seeking may explain the link between depression and sociotropy (a personality trait associated with excessive dependency and the desire to please others) because sociotropic individuals excessively seek reassurance, which in turn leads to depressive symptoms.

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See also Adult Attachment, Individual Differences; Dependence; Depression and Relationships; Social Support, Nature of

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RECIPROCITY, NORM OF

Alvin Gouldner postulated that the *norm of reciprocity* (i.e., the implicit or explicit expectation that individuals will behave prosocially and refrain from behaving antisocially toward others who have behaved prosocially toward them) is universal across human societies. Gouldner reasoned that the norm of reciprocity is buttressed by societal moral codes and, in turn, helps buttress societal structures. This entry examines the evolutionary basis for the norm of reciprocity, as well as the norm of reciprocity across human relationships.

Evolutionary Basis for the Norm of Reciprocity

Robert Trivers ushered in a new era for evolutionary studies of cooperative partnerships with his classic paper entitled “The Evolution of Reciprocal Altruism.” Trivers put forth the simple hypothesis that altruism (helping others at a cost to oneself) evolves by means of natural selection provided that the fitness costs for behaving altruistically are returned to the altruist in the future (i.e., reciprocity). From an evolutionary point of view, if a donor’s fitness costs are low while the fitness benefits to the recipient are high, reciprocal altruism is more likely to evolve provided the low-cost favor is returned at a later date. Furthermore, specific conditions are required for reciprocity to spread throughout a population—namely, a long life span, memory of who was a reciprocator, and repeated interactions. Since Trivers’s classic paper, there have been hundreds of mathematical models and empirical studies on reciprocity from an evolutionary perspective.

The most novel and counterintuitive theoretical advancement on Trivers’s theory in recent years is David Haig’s proposal that intrapersonal reciprocity

exists between genes *within* the organism. Haig hypothesized that genes within an organism have conflicts of interest over their phenotypic expression and that such internal genetic conflicts could be resolved via reciprocal agreements between the conflicting genetic elements. Selection for reciprocal agreements between genes may have been particularly strong because such gene expression inequities within the organism can lead to major developmental disorders for the individual. According to Haig, reciprocity may evolve more easily within than between organisms.

Questions remain about whether reciprocity is common in nature, and some researchers may question whether reciprocity is a human universal (i.e., found in all cultures and social relationships). Evidence that reciprocity is not a human universal could lead one to erroneously conclude that it must not be an evolutionary adaptation. However, universality is not necessarily a hallmark of adaptation. It is also possible to have adaptive variation in a population (e.g., in some cases, not all individuals will share the same cognitive mechanisms because of differing ecological and life history contexts).

The Norm of Reciprocity Across Human Relationships

Elaine Walster, Ellen Berscheid, and G. William Walster drew on Gouldner's norm of reciprocity in formulating their version of Equity Theory. For example, Equity Theory proposes that, within every human society, it is expected that individuals will behave prosocially toward others who have behaved prosocially toward them. Within families, results of empirical studies suggest that not only do adults reciprocate emotional acceptance toward their spouses, but adults also reciprocate emotional acceptance with their offspring. Through words and deeds, adults directly and indirectly teach the norm of reciprocity to their offspring. In turn, as offspring make the transition from childhood to adulthood, offspring typically develop romantic relationships via reciprocity of self-disclosure and maintain romantic relationships via reciprocity of emotional acceptance.

By the same token, drawing on Walster, Berscheid, and Walster's Equity Theory, Margaret Clark and Judson Mills distinguished conceptually and

empirically between exchange orientations (whereby individuals are expected to give benefits in response to partners' giving of benefits) and communal orientations (whereby individuals are expected to give benefits in response to partners' need for benefits). Clark and Mills argued that nonintimate relationships tend to reflect exchange orientations, whereas intimate relationships tend to reflect communal orientations. However, Clark and Mills acknowledged that one might find exchange as well as communal orientations in intimate relationships.

The communal versus exchange orientation is not the only dimension on which intimate relationships may be distinguished from nonintimate relationships. For instance, nonintimate relationships tend to involve similar commodities or resources, whereas intimate relationships involve resources that are not necessarily similar. Moreover, nonintimate relationships frequently are limited to giving and receiving of resources over a relatively short period of time, whereas intimate relationships frequently involve giving and receiving of resources over a relatively long period of time.

At first glance, gift giving seems to violate the norm of reciprocity. After all, gift giving may occur in nonintimate as well as intimate relationships, and gift giving need not reflect a response to partners' giving of gifts or to partners' need of gifts. Nevertheless, at least in intimate relationships, gift giving may well involve reciprocity over the long-term. In fact, to the extent that gifts cannot be repaid, individuals may perceive their relationships as inequitable.

Conclusion

In the years since Gouldner published his classic paper on the norm of reciprocity, many evolutionary and social psychologists have incorporated the norm of reciprocity into their theories and research. Indeed, studies of personal relationship processes provide considerable support for the norm of reciprocity. Future researchers might find it useful to focus increasingly on the limits of the norm of reciprocity in explaining the dynamics of particular types of intimate relationships (e.g., platonic vs. romantic relationships, same-sex vs. opposite-sex relationships).

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See also Communal Relationships; Equity Theory; Evolutionary Psychology and Human Relationships; Exchange Orientation; Norms About Relationships; Self-Disclosure

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RECIPROCITY OF LIKING

Reciprocity is a central feature of human relationships. The ethic of reciprocity is espoused by nearly every major religion, and human culture would grind to a halt if people did not routinely exchange goods, services, and other benefits with one another. *Reciprocity of liking* (also called *reciprocity of attraction* or *reciprocal liking*) is a particular type of reciprocity that refers to the tendency for people to like others who express liking for them. Reciprocity of liking is a key principle of attraction; at times, it has even been called a cultural truism. This entry reviews research and theory about reciprocity of liking.

Theoretical Explanations

Many major social-psychological theories predict the emergence of reciprocity of liking. When our interaction partners like us, they treat us in ways that maximize our rewards and minimize our costs. Interdependence Theory predicts that we will like people with whom we have such gratifying interactions. Indeed, the simple fact that another person likes the self is rewarding because it validates that the self has likable qualities. In

addition, people who like us often want to continue interacting with us in the future. Therefore, they may reward us by providing costly support in times of need, assuming that we ourselves might later reciprocate the support. In this sense, liking and helping are linked, and social exchange theorists suggest that, because individuals tend to reciprocate helping behaviors, this tendency should extend to the reciprocation of other benefits such as liking.

Balance theory, which emphasizes people's desire to maintain a cognitively consistent state, also predicts the emergence of reciprocity, at least for people who like themselves. That is, cognitive consistency is achieved when self-likers like those who like them. Intriguingly, cognitive consistency is also achieved when self-dislikers like people who *dislike* them. Reciprocal liking should therefore be less pronounced for individuals with low self-esteem, and, in fact, some evidence for this prediction has been found among married couples.

Finally, when someone likes us, it signals his or her willingness to provide care and support; Attachment Theory predicts that we will like such supportive individuals and provide care and support for them in turn. There is no shortage of theoretical explanations for the existence of reciprocity of liking.

Experimental Evidence

Researchers have tackled two central empirical questions regarding reciprocity of liking. The first question is causal: If A expresses liking for B, does this cause B's liking for A to increase? Psychologists first derived support for this prediction almost half a century ago. In an initial study, participants were led to believe in advance of a group discussion that certain members of the group (chosen at random by the experimenter) would probably like them. After the discussion, participants expressed more liking for the group members who they believed liked them. Other research found evidence for this causal pathway using the *bogus stranger* paradigm, in which participants did not meet face to face, but instead viewed questionnaire responses from another "participant." Participants' liking for such an unknown stranger correlates positively with the amount of liking the

stranger expresses for the participant on the questionnaire. In addition, the more attractive the stranger is, the greater the impact that stranger's liking has on participants' reciprocated desire. That is, when we find out that an attractive person likes us, we are especially likely to reciprocate that liking. Finally, there is also evidence that likers (i.e., people who like others, in general) are themselves well liked by participants. In studies in which targets express liking for many other individuals (e.g., politicians, cafeteria workers), participants tend to like those targets more than targets who express liking for few other individuals. In general, the experimental data support the prediction that liking causes liking: We do indeed like people more when we learn or infer that they might like us.

In romantic contexts, the possibility of not being liked is often especially salient. People are loath to risk romantic rejection, and experimental research has found that people are reluctant to initiate romantic overtures without some indication that the desired other might like them in return. For example, some evidence suggests that a small proportion of men (3 percent) would be willing to ask a woman who they desired out on a date if she had not indicated any interest in him. In a classic study conducted by Ted Huston, men who did not know for sure that an attractive woman would say "yes" to a date with him were less willing to risk asking her out (compared with men who were assured acceptance). For many people, some evidence of reciprocal liking is a critical precursor to initiating any overt romantic gesture.

Reciprocal Liking in Natural Social Contexts

There is a second empirical question regarding reciprocity of liking: Do the people we like in the course of our everyday lives tend to like us as well? As it happens, many early studies found that such reciprocity correlations (A's liking for B correlated with B's liking for A) were surprisingly low, often near zero. Reciprocity correlations did appear to be larger for participants who had known each another for a longer (compared with a shorter) period of time, but even in these cases, the correlations were small to moderate in magnitude. Adding to the confusion was the abundant

evidence that participants overwhelmingly *assume* reciprocity. That is, people tend to believe on average that their liking for someone is reciprocated, and many studies that professed to offer evidence for reciprocal liking used designs that offered strong evidence for assumed reciprocity, but little evidence for actual reciprocity of liking.

David Kenny, in developing the social relations model in the early 1980s, offered an explanation for the low naturally occurring reciprocity correlations. He noted that a simple correlation between A's liking for B and B's liking for A actually confounds two different kinds of reciprocity. The first is called *generalized* reciprocity: If A tends to like everyone on average, is A well-liked in return? In other words, there are individual differences in the tendency to like and to be liked, and these individual differences could be correlated and would therefore influence a simple reciprocity correlation. The second is called *dyadic* reciprocity: If A uniquely likes B (above and beyond A's tendency to like everyone and B's tendency to be liked by everyone), does B uniquely like A? When these two types of reciprocity are examined separately, the data typically reveal rather weak generalized reciprocity correlations, but strong dyadic reciprocity correlations. That is, there is only a weak tendency for likers to be well-liked (which contrasts somewhat with the experimental evidence described earlier), but people's unique liking for each other is likely to be reciprocated. Furthermore, it is the dyadic reciprocity correlation in particular that increases with the length of the relationship. When researchers calculated the simple correlation between participants' liking for each other, this procedure inadvertently combined a strong dyadic correlation with a weak generalized correlation. Once individual differences in people's tendency to like and be liked are separated from the unique liking that people experience for one another, we do find evidence for a healthy amount of (dyadic) reciprocity in people's naturally occurring relationships.

To separate generalized from dyadic reciprocity using the Social Relations Model, researchers must employ an intensive design in which participants report their liking for many other participants and are reported on many times. Until recently, all such studies had examined platonic liking; there were no data on naturally occurring reciprocity of *romantic* liking. However, with the advent of

speed dating and its emergence as a research method, scholars could now use the Social Relations Model to examine romantic reciprocity. Speed dating employs a design in which romantically available individuals meet one another on brief dates and decide whom they would or would not be interested in meeting again. One recent speed-dating study found evidence for dyadic reciprocity: Even after a brief 4-minute date, speed daters' unique romantic liking for one another tended to be reciprocated. Curiously, generalized reciprocity in this study turned out to be negative, indicating that participants who experienced strong romantic liking for the other speed daters on average were not well-liked. These data suggest that, within the romantic domain, only selective liking is reciprocated, whereas unselective liking is actually not reciprocated.

Finally, there is also evidence that reciprocal liking stands out for participants in their memories of falling-in-love experiences. People often report that they learned that another person romantically desired them shortly before developing affectionate feelings in return. In fact, reciprocal liking plays a more prominent role in people's falling-in-love memories than any single other variable, including similarity and the presence of desired characteristics (e.g., good looks, appealing personality) in the partner. Reciprocal liking also plays a prominent role in participants' memories of falling in friendship, although it is typically more pronounced in falling-in-love experiences. Although romantic liking may only be reciprocated when it is selective, as discussed earlier, it still seems to be a critical ingredient in sparking many, if not most, romances.

Desire for Reciprocal Liking

Reciprocal liking is one of the central principles of attraction, along with similarity, familiarity, proximity, and physical attractiveness. (Of course, this is not to say that reciprocity is unimportant as relationships mature. As mentioned earlier, dyadic reciprocal liking becomes stronger as relationship length increases, and couples that reciprocate negative affect are more likely to experience relationship dissatisfaction and dissolution.) But in the domain of initial romantic attraction, reciprocal liking exhibits a curious feature: People's perceptions of

reciprocal liking can fluctuate dramatically, even from one moment to the next, especially during the early stages of a potential romantic relationship. In other words, just minutes after a desired romantic partner signals that he or she might like us (e.g., by returning a phone call), the same desired partner could then signal that he or she might not like us after all (e.g., by ending the conversation abruptly). The other principles of attraction, such as physical attractiveness or proximity, probably only rarely fluctuate to such a degree.

Perhaps for this reason, people often exhibit an intense desire for reciprocal liking in developing romances. In her research on *limerence* (a term roughly synonymous with high levels of passionate love or infatuation), Dorothy Tennov determined that a central part of the falling-in-love experience is the yearning for one's affections to be reciprocated. People who are infatuated with a desired partner frequently engage in fantasies where the partner professes his or her love in return. In fact, in many cases, sexual contact is not the ultimate object of infatuated individuals' desires; instead, they fantasize about the reciprocation of affection that will alleviate any concerns that their love is unrequited and lead to an emotional union with the love object. The desire for reciprocity can be a consuming experience for infatuated individuals because they may frequently spend time replaying interactions with the desired partner in their minds, sifting for evidence of reciprocation. After all, reciprocal liking brings great rewards in this context, but because it can also prove ephemeral, it is frequently a source of considerable rumination for infatuated individuals. For infatuated individuals' emotional euphoria to be achieved, the reciprocity needs to be exclusive; that is, the infatuated individual also must find evidence that he or she is *selectively* desired by the love object. As reviewed previously, selectivity is a central component of reciprocal liking within the first few minutes of romantic encounters; its role may well intensify as an initial encounter grows into a full-blown infatuation.

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See also Bogus Stranger Paradigm; Infatuation; Initiation of Relationships; Interpersonal Attraction; Love, Unreciprocated; Reciprocity, Norm of; Social Relations Model; Speed Dating

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REJECTION

Rejection refers to being dumped, left out, snubbed, or otherwise made to feel excluded. People feel rejected when they are made to feel that they do not belong in a relationship or to a group. Rejection tends to have negative effects on behaviors, thoughts, and emotions. When people who are rejected feel that they are able to connect with others, the negative effects of rejection usually are eliminated. This entry discusses how rejection thwarts a fundamental need for relationships, summarizes different types of rejection people experience inside and outside of the laboratory, and examines the effects of rejection—both positive and negative—on behavior, thoughts, and emotions.

Rejection Thwarts a Fundamental Need

Most psychologists agree that people are motivated to have positive and durable relationships with other people. Roy Baumeister and Mark Leary refer to this motivation as a “need to belong” and suggest that it is among the strongest and most basic of all human needs. From this perspective, people naturally try to think, feel, and

act in ways that will earn them social acceptance and avoid rejection. Rejection thwarts the need to belong. As such, the consequences of rejection are consistent, strong, and mostly negative.

Rejection Inside and Outside of the Laboratory

Rejection is a common experience. People experience divorce, romantic breakups, or show romantic interest in another person only to have their romantic advances rebuffed. Some people seek membership in college fraternities and sororities, only to be told that they are not wanted. Children are left out of games on the playground, or they are told that they cannot sit by a person on the school bus. Rejection is a common theme in television and movies. Most reality television shows involve some sort of rejection. Some reality television shows involve contestants being voted off an island, whereas others involve contestants experiencing eviction from an apartment or house for various reasons. These examples provide at least some suggestion that rejection is a familiar experience for most people.

Psychologists use a variety of methods to study the effects of rejection. The methods psychologists use to understand rejection involve exposing people to situations that are considerably milder than the types of rejection people experience outside the laboratory (e.g., divorce, breakups), mostly because it would be unethical to expose people to those types of events for the purpose of research. Although laboratory manipulations often involve vague or impersonal experiences of rejection, the effects of these manipulations are quite strong. Listed next are the five most common methods psychologists use to study rejection. In each method, some people experience a type of rejection, and their responses are compared with those of people who do not experience rejection.

The first method (“group rejection”) involves some participants being told that no one in a group wanted to work with them, whereas others are told everyone wanted to work with them. In a second method (“lonely future”), some participants receive false feedback that they have a personality type in which they can expect to end up alone later in life, whereas others are told they can expect a future filled with social acceptance or negative events unrelated to their social relationships. A third

method (“personal vs. impersonal rejection”) involves participants expecting to meet with a partner. Some participants are told that their partner refused to work with them, whereas other participants are told that they will not be able to meet their partner because the partner had to leave for a forgotten appointment. The fourth method (“rejection in a virtual environment”) involves participants completing an online ball-tossing game with two or three other players (whose actions are actually programmed by the researcher) and having some participants receive almost no tosses from the other players, whereas other participants receive a high number of tosses from the other players. In the fifth method (“think of a time when you were rejected”), some participants write an essay about a time in their life when they felt rejected, whereas other participants write about a time they experienced social acceptance.

What Are the Negative Effects of Rejection?

As noted earlier, the effects of rejection are usually negative. This section discusses the negative effects of rejection on behaviors, thoughts, and emotions.

Behavior

One of the most common—and potentially disastrous—consequences of rejection is that it can cause aggression. Case studies suggest that the majority of school shooters have experienced chronic rejection. In the laboratory, manipulations of social rejection cause people to behave aggressively. Rejection increases aggression not only toward the people who rejected the person, but also toward people who were not involved in the rejection experience.

Another negative behavioral result of rejection is that it makes people less helpful. Compared with people who have not been rejected, rejected people tend to behave in less helpful ways when the recipient of help does not represent a potential source of social connection. This includes donating less money to charities, cooperating less on activities with others, and volunteering less. Even when helping will allow them to earn money, rejected people help others who do not represent a source of reconnection less than do people who have not experienced rejection.

Rejected people are also less willing than non-rejected people to control their impulses. People usually control their impulses because doing so increases their chances of being accepted by another person or a group. When people are rejected, they are unwilling to exercise impulse control because they do not believe that controlling their impulses will earn them acceptance. Compared with nonrejected people, rejected people eat larger amounts of fatty and smaller amounts of healthful foods, quit working sooner on frustrating activities, and refuse to control their attention. The relationship between rejection and impaired impulse control tends to wear off quickly (less than 45 minutes) among most people. Among people with high levels of social anxiety (i.e., people who are constantly concerned about being rejected), rejection impairs impulse control up to an hour after the rejection experience.

Following rejection, people also tend to behave in ways that allow them to avoid thinking about themselves. In one study, rejected people sat in a chair that was not facing a mirror (thus avoiding their own reflection) more so than did nonrejected people. Apparently rejected people are motivated to behave in ways that do not remind them of the flaws and other defects that caused them to be rejected.

Thoughts

One of the ways that rejection affects the thoughts people have is by reducing their intelligence. Rejected people perform worse on intelligence tests than do people who have not experienced rejection. This includes lower scores on IQ tests, lower levels of reading comprehension, and impaired logical reasoning performance. Rejected people do quite well on activities that do not require much effort (i.e., easy memorization), but they perform poorly on tasks that require them to use a lot of mental energy.

Rejection also causes people to perceive the actions of others as aggressive. When given vague information about a person, rejected people are more likely than nonrejected people to think that the information is aggressive in nature. In one study, rejected people, compared with those who had not been rejected, were more likely to rate the actions of another person as aggressive. This tendency to

perceive vague information as aggressive helps to explain why rejected people behave aggressively.

Rejection impairs people's ability to use their thoughts to make good decisions. Compared with people who have not been rejected, rejected people are more likely to take risks that result in them losing money. When given time to study for an upcoming math test, rejected people are more likely than nonrejected people to choose pleasurable activities not related to the math test (playing games and reading magazines). These findings suggest that rejection interferes with the ability to make wise decisions.

Emotion

Most people believe that rejection causes high levels of emotional distress. Some studies have shown that rejection causes people to feel negative emotions like sadness, anger, and anxiety. When describing rejection experiences, people frequently use words that are used to describe physical injury. For example, people who have been rejected might say that their heart was "broken," that they were in serious "pain," or that they felt "crushed." Describing rejection as painful is not merely a metaphor. In one study using brain-imaging technology, Naomi Eisenberger, Matthew Lieberman, and Kipling Williams showed that the brain responded to rejection in the same way that it does to physical injury.

Other work has shown that rejection causes temporary physical and emotional numbness. Just as the body goes numb after a serious physical injury, people become numb to physical pain after they have been rejected. Rejected people also show signs of emotional numbness, such as expressing low levels of empathy toward another person in distress and predicting an unemotional response to their favorite football team winning or losing to a rival opponent. The physical numbing response to rejection is strongly related to the emotional numbing response, suggesting that there is overlap in how the brain responds to physical pain and socially painful events like rejection.

Are There Positive Effects of Rejection?

Up to this point, this entry has focused mainly on how rejection negatively influences behaviors,

thoughts, and feelings. There is some evidence, however, that rejection can increase some positive responses. Most of the positive effects of rejection are due to rejected people wanting to connect with possible sources of social acceptance. Just as people seek food when they are hungry, people seek out potential friends when they have experienced rejection. This section discusses how rejection can have a positive effect on behaviors, thoughts, and emotions.

Behavior

There is some evidence that rejected people are helpful to others who seem like they could be potential friends. For example, rejected people are more likely than others to give money to a stranger when they expect to meet the stranger. When no interaction is anticipated, however, rejected people give less money to the stranger.

Rejected people tend to behave in ways that will impress others, possibly as a way of showing others that they are worthy of social acceptance. Women who feel rejected, for example, are more likely than nonrejected women to work hard on behalf of their group. Rejection also increases the tendency for people to behave in agreement with others, which could be interpreted as an effort to impress the group by behaving similarly to others.

Thoughts

Although rejection can cause people to think that vague information is aggressive, there is also evidence that rejection influences thoughts in ways that make rejected people feel accepted. People who are rejected perceive neutral facial expressions as friendly more so than do people who have not experienced rejection. Experiencing rejection also increases memory for events related to acceptance and rejection. People who are chronically lonely (i.e., feeling rejected most of the time) are better than nonlonely people at accurately identifying facial expressions and vocal tones.

The desire to connect with new friends following rejection influences thoughts at the level of responses that require only a few milliseconds. For example, rejected people are faster than nonrejected people at identifying a smiling face (a sign of social acceptance) in the middle of many other nonsmiling faces. When presented with a picture

of many faces displaying various facial expressions (sadness, anger, disgust, smiling), rejected people have their attention captured by smiling faces more than people who have not experienced rejection. The implication is that rejection motivates people to connect with possible new friends, causing their attention to be captured by signs of social acceptance.

Emotion

Rejection thwarts a basic and fundamental human need, making it likely that there would be a deeply ingrained emotional coping response to rejection. Consistent with this idea, there is some evidence that rejection sets in motion a coping response in which people seek out positive emotional information in others and their environment. For example, rejected people are more likely than nonrejected people to complete word fragments (“J O _”) with positive emotion words (“JOY”) as opposed to neutral words (“JOT”). Rejected people are unaware of this coping response, suggesting that this way of managing one’s emotions in response to rejection operates at the level of the unconscious (i.e., outside of people’s awareness).

C. Nathan DeWall

See also Affiliation; Belonging, Need for; Bullying; Hurt Feelings; Ostracism

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REJECTION SENSITIVITY

Because rejection is painful, it can sensitize people to expect and be concerned about its recurrence. Geraldine Downey and colleagues have studied how people become sensitized to expect and fear rejection and how this sensitization shapes their relationships and well-being. *Rejection sensitivity* is defined as the disposition to anxiously expect, readily perceive, and intensely react to rejection. People who are high in rejection sensitivity (RS) are motivated to avoid rejection and make considerable efforts to prevent it when they perceive its prevention to be possible. When people perceive rejection to have occurred, they often react in hostile ways that elicit the rejection they fear. This entry traces the development and operation of the RS system and its personal and interpersonal implications.

The RS Measure

RS has a long history in psychodynamic psychiatry. Downey and colleagues describe rejection sensitivity in social-cognitive terms (i.e., in terms of the thoughts and emotions experienced in situations whether acceptance or rejection from someone important is possible). The Rejection Sensitivity Questionnaire (RSQ) measures individual differences in the level of threat that people experience in such situations. The RSQ presents a series of hypothetical situations in which people make a request of someone important to them (e.g., “You ask a friend to do a big favor”). Respondents then indicate their level of both (a) expectations of rejection (e.g., “I would [not] expect that he/she would want to do the favor”), and (b) concern or anxiety about the outcome (e.g., “How concerned or anxious would you be over whether or not your friend would want to do the favor?”). RS scores are calculated by multiplying the level of expectation of rejection by the level of anxiety/concern about it and then averaging those multiplied values across

the situations. Someone deemed high in RS consistently expects rejection and feels anxious about the possibility of its occurrence. In contrast, someone deemed low in RS calmly expects acceptance. Because the particular situations that elicit rejection concerns vary by developmental stage, appropriate RSQs have been developed and validated for children, college-age students, and adults.

A Defensive Motivational System

There is considerable evidence that RS is a defensively motivated system that prepares the individual to respond rapidly and intensely to learned cues of social danger. High- and low-RS individuals react differentially to rejection cues (i.e., angry faces, not being chosen for the team, or even rejection words) and acceptance cues (i.e., a smile, flattery, or even pictures of a positive social interaction). First, the attention of people high in RS is disrupted by rejection cues but not acceptance cues. Second, people high in RS show a lower threshold for detecting anger in static faces and for detecting rejection in video clips of individuals who are supposedly evaluating them. Third, people high in RS interpret negative or ambiguous social cues, such as cool and distant behavior, as intentionally and personally threatening. Fourth, RS is associated with extreme behavioral reactions to perceived rejection, such as hostile behavior, depression, and social withdrawal. When these take the form of hostility, they create the potential for a self-fulfilling prophecy.

At the physiological level, people high in RS react with a heightened startle response when viewing images conveying rejection, indicating the activation of defensive systems that detect and defend against threat. A functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging (fMRI) study (which assesses intensity and location of brain activation) found that, when viewing rejection images, individuals high in RS show reduced activation, relative to those low in RS, in prefrontal brain areas implicated in effective threat regulation.

Negative Consequences of RS

Accommodating Social Behavior

During interactions where acceptance is possible, people high in RS both subtly and overtly

accommodate their behavior and self-presentation toward that of the potential rejecter. For example, women high in RS subtly mimic the speech of conversation partners. When in danger of rejection, men high in RS change their self-presentation to seem more like their potential rejecter and are willing to ingratiate with money or favors. Although accommodation can be benign and even effective in eliciting acceptance, it can also be harmful. To preserve relationships, high-RS people tend to self-silence their opinions and values in ways that may compromise their safety. For example, high-RS women at risk for HIV reported acceding to their partner's decisions about both sexual behavior and inconsistent use of contraception.

Hostile Reactions

High-RS individuals show intense hostility following rejection. A study of dating couples found that women high in RS were more likely to get into hostile conflicts with their partners when they felt rejected. Also, high-RS men who are invested in romantic relationships behave more violently toward their romantic partners, whereas high-RS women are vulnerable to involvement in violent relationships.

Social Anxiety

RS is linked to social anxiety and social avoidance. For example, students who entered college high in RS took longer to enter romantic relationships, had fewer of them over the college years, and felt socially anxious.

Psychopathology

RS is a core symptom in two chronic, debilitating psychiatric disorders: borderline personality disorder (BPD) and avoidant personality disorder (APD). BPD is characterized by volatile relationships involving both desperate efforts to connect to others and intense reactions to the threat of rejection, including inappropriate anger, impulsive and self-injurious behavior, and extreme fluctuations in mood and sense of self. APD is characterized by pervasive social inhibition and reluctance to assume roles that entail risk of exposure to rejection or criticism. Individuals with either disorder typically show RS levels above the 95th percentile of the normal range.

Protective Factors

Self-regulatory competency, including the ability to delay gratification and to regulate one's attentional focus, protects high-RS individuals from negative outcomes. For example, RS predicted drug use, educational underachievement, and borderline symptoms in adulthood, but only among people with difficulty delaying gratification at age 4. Supportive relationships are also protective. Acceptance by peers reduces RS in middle-school children, and supportive romantic relationships reduce RS in college students.

Lauren J. Aguilar and Geraldine Downey

See also Adult Attachment, Individual Differences; Attachment Theory; Belonging, Need for; Borderline Psychopathology in Relationships; Interpersonal Sensitivity; Ostracism; Rejection; Social Anxiety

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RELATIONAL AGGRESSION

Relational aggression involves behaviors intended to hurt or harm others through damage to interpersonal relationships and includes gossip, social exclusion, or threatening to end a friendship. This entry defines *relational aggression* and discusses sex differences in relational aggression, developmental changes in relational aggression, correlates and contributors to relational aggression, and the implications of relational aggression for functioning within relationships.

Defining Relational Aggression

Although all forms of aggression include intentionally harmful behaviors, relational aggression is unique in its focus on interpersonal manipulation and harm. Many studies of relational aggression contrast it with commonly studied forms of aggression, such as *physical aggression*. Physical aggression includes behaviors where damage to one's physical well-being serves as the vehicle of harm (e.g., hitting, kicking, or punching); in contrast, relational aggression involves behaviors where damage to relationships serves as the vehicle of harm. Threatening to end a friendship ("I won't be your friend any more unless you give me a bite of your ice cream cone"), giving someone the "silent treatment," intentionally excluding someone ("I am inviting the whole class to my birthday party, and you can't come!"), and spreading nasty rumors about a peer are all examples of relational aggression.

Conceptually similar forms of aggression, such as *indirect aggression* (i.e., covert behaviors in which the perpetrator does not confront the target) and *social aggression* (i.e., behaviors that damage self-esteem or social status), do include some behaviors that overlap with relational aggression. For example, covertly starting a malicious rumor about a peer is an example of both indirect and relational aggression. However, many examples of indirect and social aggression do not specifically involve damage to relationships (e.g., indirect aggressive behaviors such as sending a nasty, anonymous e-mail) and thus are not relationally aggressive. Despite the conceptual distinctions among relational, indirect, and social aggression, some researchers have argued that these terms are interchangeable, and many studies adopt measures that do not correspond to the terminology employed. These differences in definitions and measurement across studies have created confusion in the literature, and there have been recent calls for more precision in terminology in studies of relational aggression.

Sex Differences

A number of researchers have proposed that females are at greater risk for involvement in relational

aggression. This proposal is based on two related arguments. First, gender socialization research suggests that females are more likely than males to focus on and invest in interpersonal relationships. Given the high value placed on relationships, females may be especially likely to target relationships when attempting to harm others. In addition, because relational aggression is more consistent with the female gender role than other forms of aggression (e.g., physically aggressive behaviors such as hitting), females may not receive as many sanctions against engaging in these behaviors. As a result, relational aggression may provide females with a relatively effective and socially acceptable means of aggression. In contrast, males may engage in physical forms of aggression because they are consistent with the male gender role of instrumentality, physical dominance, and competition.

Studies examining sex differences in relational aggression have been mixed. A number of studies have reported that females are more relationally aggressive than males. However, other studies have found no sex differences or have reported that males are more relationally aggressive than females. These findings may reflect the widely different measures used to assess relational aggression. For example, compared with research employing peer, teacher, or self-reports, studies using observational methods to measure relational aggression are more likely to find that females are more relationally aggressive than males. In addition, gender differences in relational aggression may differ depending on the age group examined. For example, some evidence suggests that gender differences in relational aggression increase over the elementary school years. In contrast, sex differences in relational aggression are less frequently reported in studies of adolescents and adults. However, age is also associated with measurement of relational aggression (e.g., self-reports are more common in adolescence and adulthood); thus, these age differences might reflect different measurement techniques.

A recent meta-analysis reported that females were significantly more relationally aggressive than males; however, the effect size was trivial in magnitude. These findings suggest that both males and females employ relationally aggressive behaviors. However, when girls are aggressive, they are more likely to use relational rather than physical forms of aggression. As a result, the inclusion of

relational aggression is important in understanding the aggressive behavior problems in girls.

Developmental and Relational Aggression

Relational aggression emerges quite early and has been documented in children as young as 2½ years of age. Children of this age have been observed to ignore peers by covering their ears, to tell other children that they can't play with their group of friends, and to threaten to terminate a friendship ("Do what I say or I won't be your friend"). Relational aggression in early childhood tends to be direct and becomes more covert and sophisticated across early and middle childhood. For example, as children get older, they are more likely to involve third parties in their relational aggression and to aggress behind their target's back. During adolescence and young adulthood, romantic relationships serve as a salient context for relational aggression. Once romantic relationships emerge, relational aggression can be used against romantic partners (termed *romantic relational aggression*; e.g., threatening to break up with a partner) and to target others' romantic relationships (e.g., stealing a friend's boyfriend).

Relational aggression appears to become more common across early and middle childhood. As children's verbal and cognitive capacities mature, they may be better able to understand how relational aggression can be used to harm others, and they may have the skills necessary to employ these behaviors. As a result, children may increasingly engage in more subtle forms of aggressive behavior such as gossip, rather than direct or physical forms of aggression. Consistent with this hypothesis, aggressive behaviors such as gossip and exclusion become increasingly common across early and middle childhood, whereas physically aggressive behaviors decline. Preliminary evidence, however, suggests that relationally aggressive behaviors begin to decline in frequency in adolescence.

Causes and Correlates of Relational Aggression

A number of studies have identified cognitive, social, and physiological factors as potential contributors to relational aggression, although these

studies tend to be correlational in nature. First, relationally aggressive children and adults appear to attribute hostile intentions to others in situations where their motives are ambiguous. For example, not being invited to a party by a peer may reflect intentional exclusion (a hostile attribution) or an accident (a benign attribution). The tendency to assume malicious intentions in such situations is termed the *hostile attribution bias* and has been demonstrated in both physically and relationally aggressive individuals. However, relational aggression is associated with the hostile attribution bias in situations involving relational slights (e.g., being left out or excluded), whereas physical aggression is associated with the hostile attribution bias in situations involving instrumental provocation (e.g., a peer breaks a prized possession). The hostile attribution bias is thought to contribute to aggressive behavior because aggressive strategies may be used to respond to perceived threats or provocations by peers. Relational aggression is also associated with the belief that relationally aggressive conduct is acceptable and will result in positive outcomes.

A variety of environmental and social factors may also contribute to involvement in relational aggression. For example, the home environment appears to play an important role in the development of children's relationally aggressive behaviors. Parents' use of relational aggression against each other and psychological control techniques against their children (control attempts that exploit the parent-child bond; e.g., threatening love withdrawal and using guilt induction to control the child) are both associated with children's relational aggression in the peer group. Relational aggression is also common in the context of sibling relationships, and the use of relational aggression by older siblings predicts the younger sibling's relational aggression against peers. This suggests that children may learn to aggress based on modeling by parents and siblings. In addition, child maltreatment, particularly sexual abuse, is associated with relational aggression among girls. Social experiences in the peer group may also increase children's risk for relationally aggressive conduct. For instance, children who are frequently picked on by other children and who have a number of relationships characterized by mutual dislike in the classroom appear to be at heightened risk for involvement

in relational aggression. These children may use relational aggression to aggress against or retaliate against their disliked peers.

Relationally aggressive individuals also appear to have unique physiological responses to stress. Recent research suggests that relationally aggressive girls exhibit greater physiological reactivity (e.g., increases in systolic blood pressure) to relational stressors than their nonaggressive peers. Girls who experience especially high levels of reactivity to relational stressors (e.g., being excluded) may retaliate against peers with relationally aggressive behaviors. Other studies have documented associations between relational aggression and levels of the stress hormone cortisol.

A number of studies have demonstrated the damaging nature of relationally aggressive behaviors. Perpetrators of relational aggression are at increased risk for a variety of concurrent and future adjustment problems, including depression, borderline personality symptoms, disordered eating, poor school engagement and achievement, drug and alcohol use, and aggressive behavior problems. Moreover, many of these risks remain even when controlling for co-occurring physical aggression. Children who are the frequent targets of relational aggression are also at risk for a variety of adjustment problems, including depression, anxiety, loneliness, and impulsivity. Although few in number, emerging longitudinal studies suggest that relational aggression leads to increases in adjustment problems over time, suggesting that involvement in these behaviors contributes to adjustment problems. Despite the risk associated with involvement in relational aggression, school professionals report that relational aggression is less serious and less often warrants intervention than physical aggression.

Implications for Relationships

Relational aggression has several consequences for interpersonal relationships. Relational aggression appears to be related to social status in groups; for example, relationally aggressive individuals tend to be disliked by many peers (i.e., *rejected* by peers) and liked by few peers (i.e., low on measures of *peer acceptance*). Interestingly, relational aggression is also associated with heightened levels

of popularity, particularly in adolescence. These findings suggest that popular individuals may use relationally aggressive behaviors to maintain their status and power. Alternatively, popularity may have a “corrosive” influence, leading individuals to engage in harmful behaviors.

Relationally aggressive children are also more likely than their peers to be central members of prominent *cliques* (i.e., friendship-based peer networks) in their classroom. Children and adolescents may establish and maintain their centrality in cliques through aggressive behaviors; moreover, central clique members may be especially effective when using relational aggression given their high level of interpersonal power and control. Recently, researchers have proposed that relational aggression will be associated with positive social outcomes for individuals who also engage in prosocial behaviors. In contrast, relational aggression may be most strongly associated with negative outcomes (such as rejection and psychological maladjustment) among individuals who predominantly engage in coercive and aggressive behaviors. Overall, this pattern of findings highlights the fact that, although relational aggression may confer some social benefits for some individuals (e.g., popularity in the peer group and being prominent members of cliques), it also frequently has social costs (e.g., being disliked by peers).

Relationally aggressive children are as likely as their peers to have close friendships. However, the qualities of relationally aggressive children’s friendships differ from those of their peers, with their friendships being characterized by relatively high levels of conflict, intimacy (e.g., sharing secrets), exclusivity (e.g., feeling jealous if a friend wants close ties with another peer), and relational aggression within the friendship. These findings suggest that relationally aggressive children may frequently use aggressive tactics against their close friends. Moreover, although intimacy is generally conceptualized as a positive quality in close relationships, it can also confer risk in certain contexts. For example, secrets provided through intimate exchange in the friendship context may serve as ammunition for relationally aggressive children’s manipulative behaviors (e.g., threatening to share a close friend’s secret unless the friend complies with a request).

Finally, relational aggression has implications for functioning in romantic relationships. Studies

with college students and adult samples suggest that the use of relational aggression against romantic partners (i.e., *romantic relational aggression*) is fairly common in both males and females. In one study, college students frequently identified relationally aggressive behaviors when asked open-ended questions about what behaviors individuals use to hurt others. In another study, only 4 percent of young adults reported that they “never” used relational aggression against their romantic partner; however, frequent romantic relational aggression was relatively uncommon. Moreover, romantic relational aggression is associated with poor romantic relationship qualities, such as high levels of frustration and jealousy and low levels of trust.

Dianna Murray-Close

See also Aggressive Communication; Bullying; Children’s Peer Groups; Dark Side of Relationships; Gender Stereotypes; Gossip; Ostracism; Popularity; Rejection

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RELATIONAL MESSAGES

Paul Watzlawick, Janet Beavin Bavelas, and Don Jackson, prominent researchers of the Mental Research Institute in Palo Alto, CA (the Palo Alto Group), were among the first researchers to formulate two fundamental dimensions of all communication: Apart from their *content* or *report* level (what is said), all messages also carry a *relational* or *command* level (how it is said). This definition makes two important points that are the focus of this entry: (1) All messages contain information about the relationship, and (2) all relationships exist through and are defined by message exchange.

Relational Messages Provide Information About the Relationship

Relational messages provide interactants with information about the nature of the relationship, the interactants' status in the relationship, and the social context within which the interaction occurs. Relational messages play a particularly important role in those interpersonal relationships that have the potential of becoming increasingly more interdependent (one partner responds to the behavior of the other partner). Because they provide information above and beyond the concrete content of a message, relational messages are considered *metacommunication* (*meta-* means "about"; thus, these messages are about messages). Consider a father asking his daughter: "Is that actually your new boyfriend?" Depending on the quality of their relationship (e.g., both father and daughter have a more or less loving relationship), as well as the relative status of each person (e.g., the father may be more or less authoritative), as well as the specific context within which the statement is made (e.g., the family may sit at the dinner table), the father may ask this question teasingly, angrily, or admiringly.

Enormous research efforts have been expended to identify the kind of information that people send and receive during social interactions. Virtually every one of these research efforts owes a conceptual debt to Gregory Bateson, an anthropologist who studied the New Guinea Latmul tribe in the 1930s and who later contributed significantly to the Palo Alto Group. He proposed that relational messages provide information about relational control: the extent to which one person possesses the power to influence the other person. An interaction can be either complementary (one person is dominant, whereas the other person is submissive; e.g., one person decides where to go for dinner, whereas the other person acquiesces) or symmetrical (both people are equally submissive or equally dominant; e.g., both partners either assert their views or submit to one another). William Schutz added two additional kinds of information that people communicate through relational messages—namely, *inclusion*, which is the need to establish and maintain satisfactory relationships, and *affection*, which involves the perception that one is liked, loved, and held in regard by another.

In an exhaustive review of the dimensions that inform relational messages, Judee Burgoon and Jerold Hale deduced seven types of information referred to as *fundamental relational themes*: (1) dominance/submission (similar to relational control), (2) level of intimacy (similar to affection or affiliation), (3) degree of similarity (the extent to which people coordinate their nonverbal and verbal behaviors), (4) task/social orientation (the extent to which people are engaged in work-related or leisurely interactions), (5) degree of formality (the extent to which communication is distanced and serious), (6) degree of social composure (the extent to which people present themselves as confident and competent in a conversation), and (7) level of emotional arousal (the extent to which an interaction is pleasant and active). Of these, relational control and the level of intimacy are the two primary dimensions that are metacommunicated in all message exchanges.

Relational Messages Define Interpersonal Relationships

Relational messages have been examined from functional-strategic and consequential-cultural perspectives. The first perspective captures all

those relational strategies and tactics people use to pursue a concrete relational goal (e.g., raising one's voice to win an argument). The second perspective is based on the idea that we tend to frequently reify our relationships (i.e., we often say that we "have a relationship," much like we have cars or clothes). Yet relationships are not tangible; rather, they are instantiated through everyday talk that is often mundane and trivial. It is this kind of day-to-day talk that often becomes patterned and idiosyncratic, particularly in long-term relationships. The consequential approach to relational messages suggests that these messages make up the lion's share of all relational communication and consequently fabricate a relational culture. Much like any other culture, relationships thus possess a unique language complete with routines and norms. Consider a couple that has been married for 40 years; it is likely that this couple has a richly developed relational culture with its own rituals and habits.

Relational Messages Are Communicated Nonverbally

Relational messages are commonly exchanged via nonverbal cues (e.g., eye gaze, vocal cues). Consequently, relational messages are richest in face-to-face interactions, where people can use a maximum of nonverbal channels, such as the voice, the face, the eyes, or the body. It is important to note that no one nonverbal cue carries the entire relational message. Rather, nonverbal cues are processed together with other nonverbal cues. However, some nonverbal cues tend to do a better job at communicating the aforementioned relational themes. These nonverbal cues are referred to as *nonverbal immediacy cues* and send relational messages of physical and psychological closeness as well as interpersonal warmth. Part of a larger construct called *nonverbal involvement*, these immediacy cues consist concretely of touch, close proxemic distancing, direct body orientation, forward lean, eye gaze, and positive affect cues (smiling, vocal warmth). Indeed, perceptions of dominance and affiliation are differentiated primarily on the basis of the presence (or absence) of positive affect cues.

Susanne Jones

See also Affiliation; Communication, Nonverbal; Complementarity; Equivocation; Metacommunication; Need Fulfillment in Relationships; Nonverbal Involvement; Warmth, Interpersonal

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RELATIONSHIP DISTRESS AND DEPRESSION

To better understand the role of interpersonal processes in depression, researchers have focused specifically on the quality of depressed individuals' romantic relationships. This focus is warranted in light of evidence suggesting that the interpersonal difficulties of depressed individuals are most likely to manifest in the context of their long-term, committed relationships, such as marriage. Furthermore, there is consistent and robust evidence to suggest that marital distress and depression tend to co-occur. This finding has been replicated using different methods of assessment and across different samples (e.g., samples recruited from the community, treatment-seeking samples). The purpose of this entry is to describe how marital distress and depression relate to each other causally and to describe some mechanisms that explain *why* these phenomena are related.

The robust cross-sectional association between depression and marital distress has prompted researchers to examine whether these variables are

causally related using longitudinal designs. Most of the early studies focused on testing two contrasting causal models: Does marital distress lead to depression or, conversely, does depression lead to marital distress? The findings from these studies were discrepant, with some evidence suggesting that initial marital distress predicts the development of depression symptoms in depressed wives, whereas initial symptoms of depression predict later marital distress in depressed husbands. More recent theoretical developments have shifted away from determining the causal primacy of either variable and have conceptualized the longitudinal association between these variables as bidirectional and reciprocal. Subsequent research has supported a dynamic and bidirectional association between these variables. However, these findings are limited by the use of samples characterized by subclinical symptoms of depression.

Research with clinical samples has tended to focus on the role of interpersonal processes in influencing the course of depressive illness. These studies suggest that marital difficulties predict a more severe and chronic form of the illness and can increase the risk of relapse for both men and women. Some researchers have noted that, in light of epidemiological data suggesting that the age of onset of depression is continuing to decrease while age of first marriage is continuing to increase, longitudinal studies that examine the link between depression and marital dysfunction are most likely investigating cases of recurrent or chronic depression, rather than cases of first onset. However, depression is a recurrent and progressive condition: Most individuals diagnosed with major depressive disorder will experience multiple episodes, and the risk of recurrence increases with each successive episode. Thus, examining the factors that influence the course of recurrent/chronic depression is an important public health priority.

To understand *how* interpersonal factors affect the course of depressive illness, researchers have focused on the mechanisms of this prospective association. According to Steven Beach and his colleagues, marital distress may decrease available social support, thus increasing an individual's vulnerability to external stressors and increasing his or her risk for developing depression. Consistent with this, researchers have found that a perceived lack of spousal support is a prospective predictor of

depressive symptomatology. However, it has yet to be established whether the prospective association between marital dysfunction and depression operates, in part, through perceptions of diminished spousal support. It is important to note here that the evidence suggests that *perceived* rather than *observed* social support is more strongly related to depression, and it may be particularly fruitful to examine perceptions of spousal support in models of depression and relationship dysfunction.

The mechanisms that underlie the causal link from initial depressive symptoms to later marital dysfunction have also received theoretical and empirical attention. Relevant theories were developed as broader interpersonal models of depression, but they inform the field's understanding of how depressive symptoms can lead to marital dysfunction. Constance Hammen's stress-generation model of depression posits that depressed individuals may inadvertently create interpersonal stress in their lives, and the increased interpersonal stress may, in turn, lead to the maintenance or exacerbation of their symptoms. In a similar vein, James Coyne has argued that depressed individuals seek repeated reassurance and support from others in their interpersonal environment, but when the reassurance is provided, they doubt its veracity and continue to seek feedback, leading others to become frustrated and ultimately to reject them. Support for these theoretical models comes from several lines of research. Investigations of the quality of marital interactions of depressed individuals have found that relationships with a depressed partner are characterized by higher levels of negativity and lower levels of positivity than are relationships of couples where neither partner is depressed. However, given the high comorbidity of depression and marital distress, it remains unclear whether the observed patterns of communication are due to a distressed marital relationship, depression, or both. More direct support for the theoretical perspectives outlined earlier has come from studies investigating theoretically derived, depression-related interpersonal behaviors. For example, consistent with Coyne's model, evidence suggests that excessive reassurance seeking is a specific vulnerability factor for depression. Evidence also suggests that depressed individuals selectively attend to, process, and retain negative information about themselves. Research by Constance Hammen and

colleagues demonstrates that, compared with non-depressed women, depressed women are much more likely to engage in interpersonal conflict.

Depression is a complex, heterogeneous disorder with multiple causal factors at different levels of analysis (intrapersonal, interpersonal, and cultural) that affect its onset and course. No single theoretical perspective or level of analysis can fully explain the variance in depressive phenomena. Increasingly, researchers are developing and testing integrative models that combine interpersonal and intrapersonal perspectives and have greater explanatory power than when either perspective is considered alone. In particular, models that integrate key elements of the cognitive perspective on depression, which emphasizes the role of negative thinking patterns in causing and maintaining depression, with interpersonal processes are promising avenues for future research.

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See also Depression and Relationships; Longitudinal Studies of Marital Satisfaction and Dissolution; Marital Satisfaction and Quality; Mood and Relationships; Stress and Relationships

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RELATIONSHIP SCIENCE, DISCIPLINES CONTRIBUTING TO

A simple way of thinking about a scientific discipline is as a field of study. A key component of a discipline is a corpus of knowledge including the

body of concepts, methods, and findings of the field. Disciplines, however, include more than just a body of knowledge. They rest on a communal approach that entails norms and a perspective on the phenomena being studied. Disciplines set boundaries on what scholars do and don't study, and they typically involve organizational structures. This entry asks: Is the study of personal relationships a disciplinary, multidisciplinary, or interdisciplinary endeavor? What are the pros and cons of multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches? Which disciplines have historically contributed to the study of personal relationships? Which disciplines are the major contributors today, and how, briefly, can they be characterized? This entry does not cover depictions and insights about relationships that can be gleaned from the arts (e.g., drama, art, music, literature), although they can be powerful and vivid.

The Study of Relationships: Disciplinary, Multidisciplinary, or Interdisciplinary Endeavor?

In the late 1970s and the early 1980s, eminent relationship scholars including Robert Hinde, Ellen Berscheid, and L. Anne Peplau called for a science of relationships. They envisioned a science of relationships that would be descriptive in the sense of identifying the various forms that relationships can take and predictive in the sense of identifying the factors that shape and are shaped by personal relationships. Although there had been work on relationships in several fields, their calls were aspirational, implying that they wanted a relationship science that was something more than what Philip Blumstein depicted as “the neglected stepchild of the social sciences.” Almost 30 years later, is there now a separate discipline uniquely and cohesively devoted to the study of relationships?

To determine whether a discipline exists, one can look for institutional markers and the communal aspects of scientific endeavors. The institutional markers include such things as professional societies, journals, university departments, students obtaining their degrees in the field, being labeled as a discipline, and the like. The study of relationships has some of these

markers, including a professional association, the International Association for Relationship Research, and journals (e.g., *Personal Relationships* and the *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*). Some individuals call themselves relationship scholars, but relationship science is not a commonly used department name in universities. There are degrees from family studies departments, the University of Minnesota has a doctoral minor in Interpersonal Relationships Research, UCLA has an Interdisciplinary Relationship Science Program, and students in some more traditional social science departments can concentrate within their discipline on the study of relationships. Relationship science doctoral degrees per se, however, are rare, if they exist at all. Thus, the study of relationships lacks some of the organizational properties of more senior, larger academic disciplines. Equally important, relationship researchers lack the communal component that classically marks a discipline: They do not all share the same intellectual heritage and tradition.

At present, scholars from several disciplines—sometimes each largely in their own solos, sometimes together—engage in the study of personal relationships. Some (e.g., Harry Reis, the coeditor of this encyclopedia) have labeled the field *multidisciplinary*, whereas others (e.g., textbook author Dale Wright) have treated it as *interdisciplinary*. At issue here is the degree of integration. Multidisciplinary research is additive and complementary, but less integrative. The multidisciplinary type of science exists if scholars in different disciplines are each working on relationship issues from their own perspectives, but have some awareness of one another, perhaps making some comparisons between approaches. Interdisciplinary research requires more integration: It is characterized by such attributes as significant citation of work from other fields, coinvestigators from different disciplines formulating problems and working together, having variables associated with different disciplines together in the same study, blending conceptual frameworks from different disciplines in the interpretative framework for discussing the results, and the like. Much of the work published in personal relationship journals at this time qualifies as multidisciplinary; a smaller—but hopefully growing—proportion of it is interdisciplinary.

Pros and Cons of Interdisciplinary Research

There are various challenges to interdisciplinary work. For example, interdisciplinary work may be judged stringently by disciplinary-oriented reviewers, presenting barriers to getting interdisciplinary work funded or published. Departmental administrators may dislike interdisciplinary projects if the money that departments often receive from hosting grants is split with or siphoned off to other units. In promotion and tenure decisions, committee members may not fully appreciate signs and symbols of excellence outside their own domain. Thus, junior researchers may worry that being substantially engaged in interdisciplinary research will decrease their chances of gaining tenure. The challenges of interdisciplinary research can be synthesized by saying they exist along two interrelated lines: the discipline-based structure of universities and the difficulties researchers face when working together across disciplines.

Nonetheless, interdisciplinary research is flourishing. Agencies such as the National Institutes of Health (<http://nihroadmap.nih.gov/interdisciplinary>) are promoting it. Clearly, the case for its benefits can be made. For example:

- In everyday life, many factors typically operate simultaneously—any given variable likely accounts for only a modest proportion of the variability in what happens. Having different levels of variables helps more fully predict outcomes and may illuminate moderating factors limiting the conditions under which scientific principles operate that would go undetected in purely discipline-based studies.
- By providing a more rounded understanding of phenomena, multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary research can enhance scientists' capacity to contribute to the solution of social and technological problems.
- In bringing together scholars with different perspectives, interdisciplinary projects can lead to spotting previously unrecognized issues worthy of investigation, the spreading of useful techniques, fresh and unexpected insights, and so on.
- There can be personal benefits for scholars to engage in interdisciplinary work. Moti Nissani cheers that interdisciplinarians “are forever treating themselves to the intellectual equivalent

of exploring exotic foreign lands.” For some, crossing disciplinary boundaries can lead to career flexibility and opportunities.

- Although not necessarily interdisciplinary in nature, Stefan Wuchty, Benjamin Jones, and Brian Uzzi document the recent raise and scientific benefits of teams, as opposed to individual investigator projects. In the social sciences (circa 2000), articles by two, four, and six or more authors had 2.50, 5.04, and 13.01 times more citations than the average sole-authored article. Interdisciplinary projects encourage a team approach.

Disciplines That Historically Contributed to the Development of Relationship Science

Given that the study of relationships is a multi- or interdisciplinary endeavor, which disciplines are involved? Historically, interest in relationships can be traced back at least as far as the writing of several Greek philosophers. Aristotle’s analysis of friendship in his *Nicomachean Ethics* and his treatise on *Rhetoric* are especially noteworthy, but several other Greeks—as well as later philosophers, theologians, and essayists—addressed various aspects of relationships. Their analysis of relationships was based on informal observation and reasoning. In the second half of the 1800s and early 1900s, major intellectual contributors of the day laid the foundation for modern scientific disciplines, including biology, psychology, and sociology. Their ideas had implications for the field’s understanding of relationships. For example, in 1859, naturalist Charles Darwin published his *On the Origin of Species*, which would come to be a key underpinning for contemporary evolutionary views of close relationships. Psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud wrote on the role of parent–child relationships in personality development, giving rise to the idea that people may seek marital partners similar to their opposite-sex parent. Sociologist Émile Durkheim, who was concerned about social organization, saw social relations as a key force in holding societies together. Another sociologist, Georg Simmel, examined the unique properties of dyads as opposed to individuals by themselves or larger groups.

As industrialized nations entered the 20th century, a major revolution occurred in social analysis: The use of empirical investigations began gaining importance. By the mid-1920s, there was a sufficient body of

research for Ernest Burgess to publish a survey of the literature on the family. In addition to the disciplines already mentioned, he noted the contributions of anthropologists studying family life in preliterate societies, social workers in analyzing family disorganization, and home economists in illuminating family economics. After surveying the literature at that time, Burgess was dissatisfied with the ways others were investigating the family. He went on to outline the conceptual elements he considered essential to analyzing the family as a behavioral and social phenomenon. He has been credited with inaugurating the modern field of family studies.

Moving toward the mid-20th century, subareas within psychology began emerging in significance (e.g., developmental and personality psychology). In the third quarter of the century, social psychologists did especially noteworthy research on interpersonal attraction (i.e., the question of why people like some individuals more than others). By the early 1960s, gerontologists were reporting that seniors’ social activities declined as they aged and were debating reasons for this. From the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s, communications scholars published both theoretical pieces and analyses critical of the attraction work that had demonstrated that similarity fosters liking. The classic epidemiological study by Lisa Berkman and S. Leonard Syme showing the key role that social networks play in people’s living longer was published in 1979. As the century progressed though its last two decades, research on health and relationships continued to accumulate and gain in importance.

Disciplines Contributing to Relationship Science in the 21st Century

Analysis of membership data provides a vantage point for viewing the current mix of scholars engaged in relationship science. The International Association for Relationship Research (IARR) is the organization most closely aligned with relationship science. Its membership directory asks with which discipline members are associated. As of July 2008, one member listed “close relationships.” The main disciplinary identities of IARR members were as follows: psychology 55 percent, communication studies 23 percent, family studies

12 percent, sociology 4 percent, and developmental science (child development, gerontology, and life-span development) 3 percent. Another 3 percent was from a potpourri of other disciplines (e.g., anthropology, computer science, counseling, ethology, management, marriage and family therapy, psychiatry, and, last, social work). Thus, psychologists are the numerically dominant group, and one analysis of citations done by Linda Acitelli suggests influence patterns are intransitive with psychologists being dominant: References to the work of psychologists were more likely to be cited by communication scholars than vice versa.

Given the largely multidisciplinary nature of relationship research, the issue of how to characterize various disciplinary lines of research becomes crucial. This is a challenge because disciplines change over time and, even at any given time, encompass considerable within-discipline heterogeneity and may have similarities to other disciplines. Nonetheless, at least some loose generalizations can be made about disciplinary characteristics along such dimensions as the prototypical factors investigated, units of analysis, dominant theories, methods used, approaches to fostering change (if any), and the like.

Psychology

Psychology is often described as the study of the human mind and behavior. There is an emphasis on individuals. Consistent with these attributes, psychologists have been leaders in studying the individual difference, cognitive, and emotional aspects of relationships. They use both experimental and correlational methods, but many psychologists especially value experimentation and often do extensive psychometric work in developing their scales. Psychological studies frequently rely on college students as participants. During the past 25 or so years, psychologists have advanced three major theoretical approaches to understanding relationships: interdependence (or social exchange) views, the evolutionary perspective, and Attachment Theory. In simple terms, these theories suggest, respectively, that humans form and continue relationships on the basis of the outcomes they receive (rewards minus costs); that they are driven by a genetic imperative to perpetuate their genes; or

that they seek the security of being attached to a responsive, caring parental or romantic figure. Clinical and counseling psychologists, like marriage and family therapists, have an interest in repairing relationships.

Communication

Communication scholars focus on verbal and nonverbal interactions between partners. Such interactions are the units of analysis. For communication scholars, both the content and structure of communication are important. Communication is seen as defining the type of relationship that partners have, affecting the course of relationships (development, maintenance, and dissolution), and contributing to the success—in terms of partner satisfaction—of relationships. Communication scholars contend that it is through communication that partners establish family roles, maintain rules, socialize children, perform functions such as providing emotional support, and sustain behavioral pattern. Changes in relationships are seen as associated with changes in communication. Communications scholars frequently use questionnaires or observational methodologies and university students as participants. The dialectical and uncertainty reduction theoretical traditions stem largely from the communications tradition. The central notion of dialectical theory is that of contradiction, which is an interplay between opposing forces in relationships (e.g., a need for interdependence vs. a need for independence). Uncertainty theorists postulate that a desire to reduce uncertainty is a driving force behind people's communication behavior that assists individuals in their effort to establish relationships and maximize the rewards of social interaction.

Family Studies

Family scientists have traditionally been concerned with marriage and the family, including courtship, the dynamics of members' relations within the family, and the family's interactions with broader social institutions. Parent-child relations as well as postmarital relationships are of concern. Thus, dyads and larger family constellations are the optimal unit of analysis. The focal interests of family scientists foster research with

broader populations than college students. Family scholars draw on several theoretical perspectives used in other disciplines; perspectives such as Family Developmental Theory and Family Stress Theory are relatively unique to family studies. Classically, Family Developmental Theory postulated that families go through a series of normative stages (the honeymoon, childbearing, etc.). Today there is more concern with how the timing of various marital and other life events influences individual and marital outcomes. Family Stress Theory is concerned with the stressors that families face and how they cope with them. Many human development and family studies programs espouse a desire to foster the well-being of individuals and families in their everyday lives. Family life educators do this via psychoeducational methods. For example, there are marital preparation and marital enrichment programs that share information with participants, get them to engage in activities on their own, and so on. Family life education typically involves neither professional diagnosis of problems nor feedback on performance.

Sociology

Sociologists see relationships as part of larger social systems. For them, positions in the social system, norms (i.e., social expectations), and roles (i.e., the norms associated with a position) are important. For example, in considering family roles, sociologists have been concerned with the relations among various family roles, how personal qualities fit with roles, and how family roles go together with nonfamily roles. Sociologists also examine networks of relationships, as well as how macroforces such as race, socioeconomic status, urbanization, religion, and so on, influence relationships. Sociologists are concerned about the representativeness of the samples so they often prefer large-scale surveys even if it means using brief measures of variables. Symbolic interactionism and network theory are two theoretical perspectives that sociologists have contributed. Symbolic interactionists are concerned with how people construct and present the self (or “identity”). They believe that human actions are based on the meaning assigned to things and that this meaning arises out of interactions with others and society. Network theorists are concerned with the

properties of personal networks and how networks play a role in information flow, decision making, social contacts and activities, and social support.

Developmental Science

Developmental scientists, be they considered their own discipline or included with psychology or family studies, focus on how relationships change over the life course, as well as how life events, relational histories, and the like influence relationships. Thus, longitudinal research is key for them. Of necessity, they study individuals at all stages in the life cycle. There are theories of how children’s understanding of relationships changes as they mature, as well as how the needs that relationships serve shift. Attachment Theory has relevance in both childhood and adulthood. In research on relationships in mid- and later life, Robert Kahn and Toni Antonucci’s Social Convoy Theory and Laura Carstensen’s Socioemotional Selectivity Theories have been influential. Kahn and Antonucci see social convoys as a set of three concentric circles of relationships that vary in their closeness. Their theory addresses not only the structure and function of our networks at a given point in time, but also how networks change over time (e.g., inner circle relationships are more likely to persist). Carstensen’s Socioemotional Selectivity Model is concerned with how time influences people’s goals, suggesting that with a shortened time frame people concentrate on those partners who will best satisfy their emotional needs (e.g., friends and family members).

Conclusion

In summary, the science of relationships at the present time can best be described as a multidisciplinary area of research. Although there are challenges to multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary work, they are exciting and have substantial benefits. Several disciplines have made some contribution to understanding relationships (e.g., philosophy, anthropology, biology, epidemiology, history, home economics, medical sciences, social gerontology, and social work). Currently, the main clusters of scholars studying relationships have backgrounds in psychology, communication studies,

family studies, sociology, and developmental science. Their approaches can be distinguished, at least on a broad basis, in terms of the aspects of relationships they study, their methods, and the theories they employ.

Daniel Perlman

See also Aristotle and Plato on Relationships; Attachment Theory; Convoy Model of Social Relations; Evolutionary Psychology and Human Relationships; Health and Relationships; Interdependence Theory; Interpersonal Attraction; Personal Relationship Journals; Socioemotional Selectivity Theory; Symbolic Interaction Theories; Uncertainty Reduction Theory

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RELATIONSHIP TYPES AND TAXONOMIES

Most scientific fields depend on classification systems. Chemistry has its periodic table of elements, biology has its classification of species, and personality psychology has a model of fundamental traits. Each of these classifications is a scientific taxonomy: a systematic way of describing a field of knowledge. Taxonomies serve several important functions. First, they enumerate the varied phenomena that exist in a particular field. By comprehensively describing these variations (e.g., stating how many types of elementary particle exist), a taxonomy provides a map of its scientific territory. Second, taxonomies enable communication, supplying people with a shared terminology for exchanging information. Third, taxonomies often go beyond simply listing and naming things, and they say something about how those things relate to one another. A classification of mental disorders, for example, tells us which psychiatric conditions are closely associated with which other conditions, and how different conditions can be distinguished. This entry describes taxonomies that have been developed to describe, name, and organize the diversity of human relationships.

Taxonomies serve these descriptive, communicative, and organizing functions in varying ways. For instance, some propose a set of categories, whereas others propose a set of dimensions. A categorical taxonomy, such as the classification of chemical elements or biological species, includes a number of discrete types. Anything it classifies either falls into a particular type or it does not: An organism either is a dog or it is not, and a molecule

either does or does not contain hydrogen. A dimensional taxonomy, in contrast, does not sort things into types, but provides a set of continuous dimensions on which they can be located, just as we can find a location on a map using its coordinates. The most widely accepted personality taxonomy, for example, proposes that there are five factors along which people differ by degree.

Another important difference between taxonomies relates to categorical classifications. Some of these, like the taxonomy of biological species, classify each entity into a single type. A particular bird may be either a spotted owl or a barn owl, but cannot be both at the same time. Other taxonomies allow entities to be classified into multiple types. The periodic table, for example, allows us to determine the different elements that constitute a particular molecule (e.g., hydrogen, oxygen, and carbon). Categorical taxonomies can therefore either tell scholars the mutually exclusive types that things belong to or the building blocks that compose those things. We can refer to these types of taxonomy as “exclusive” and “elementary.” All of these distinctions between taxonomies may seem rather abstract at this point, but this entry shows how they help researchers understand attempts to classify relationships.

Relationship Taxonomies

Taxonomies are needed in the study of human relationships as much as in any other scientific domain. Relationships take a bewildering variety of forms, and the field needs a principled way to classify them. At first blush, this might seem to be a simple matter because everyday language offers many ways to describe relationships. There are nouns like *acquaintance*, *spouse*, *lover*, *boss*, and *parent*, as well as adjectives like *warm*, *romantic*, *casual*, *close*, and *long-term*. Unfortunately, everyday language will not take one far. First, there are far too many terms to give us a usable classification. For example, an enormous number of adjectives can be used to describe relationships, and there is no obvious way to decide which ones are especially important or how they should be organized. Second, many of the nouns refer not to particular kinds of relationships between people, but to particular social roles that one person in a

relationship may occupy. Indeed, language provides us with few terms to describe relationship types (e.g., *friendship*). Because it is difficult to develop taxonomies of relationships out of everyday terminology and intuition, relationship scholars have tried to develop scientific taxonomies that rely on empirical research and theoretical insight.

One of the basic problems in developing a relationship taxonomy is that it is not obvious what type of taxonomy it should be. Should relationships be classified into a set of discrete types or should they be described along a set of continuous dimensions? Do they differ in kind (qualitatively) or only by degree (quantitatively)? If a categorical taxonomy is preferred, should it be one that classifies each relationship into a single, mutually exclusive type, or should it propose relational building blocks out of which that relationship is composed? Many laypeople seem to subscribe to an exclusive categorical approach, believing that romantic and work relationships, for example, are quite distinct. Different theorists have taken different approaches to these basic questions, and we review some of their taxonomies here.

Dimensional Taxonomies

One way to classify relationships is in terms of a few basic dimensions. This has often been done by empirically determining the dimensions that underlie people's perceptions of relationships. Although the actual or objective dimensions along which relationships vary may not be identical to those that people perceive, this way of developing a relationship taxonomy has the benefit of being psychologically real. It starts with people's judgments of similarities and differences between particular relationships. These perceived similarities and differences are then analyzed using complex statistical procedures such as multidimensional scaling, which extract the smallest number of dimensions that underlie them. When this is done, two or three relationship dimensions usually emerge.

The first dimension is usually labeled *intimacy*, *solidarity*, or *affiliation*. Relationships that are high on this dimension are warm and friendly, whereas those that are low on it are cold, competitive, and hostile. In short, this is a highly evaluative

dimension that corresponds roughly to pleasant versus unpleasant relating. The second dimension is often labeled *power, inequality, control*, or something similar. Relationships that are high on this dimension are marked by dominance and submission, inequality, and asymmetrical control over resources, whereas those that are low on it are egalitarian, with the relational partners having relative autonomy. Occasionally, a third dimension emerges, contrasting formal, task-oriented relationships with those that are more informal and expressive or emotional.

Several points are worth noting about the two-dimensional structure that usually emerges from this sort of work. First, it implies that the great diversity of relationships can be distilled in a simple and economical way. Second, the two relational dimensions are independent of each other, indicating that the degree to which relationships are warm and friendly is unrelated to their degree of equality or asymmetrical power. This may seem contradictory, but parent-child relationships, for example, are generally warm, but contain a difference in status or power. Third, similar dimensions emerge from taxonomies of other social phenomena, such as social roles and linguistic forms of address (i.e., ways of addressing to people of different closeness and status). It would seem that there is something about the dimensions that is quite fundamental to social life.

A related dimensional taxonomy of relationships links the structure of dyadic relationships to the structure of the interpersonal behavior of individuals in those relationships. There is considerable evidence that interpersonal behavior can be described by two dimensions that are closely related to the two main relationship dimensions. Interpersonal behaviors vary on independent dimensions of warm versus cold and dominant versus submissive, with every blend of these dimensions being possible (e.g., warm dominance and cold submissiveness). This two-dimensional model, first proposed by Timothy Leary, is called the *interpersonal circle* (or *circumplex*) because these blends can be represented as falling in a continuous ring around the two dimensions.

In principle, a dyadic relationship can be described in terms of the typical kinds of interpersonal behavior that each individual enacts, and thus by two circles. Some interpersonal researchers

have argued that relationships vary in how the two partners' behavior is linked. A relationship is symmetrical to the extent that the two individuals' behaviors occupy the same position on the interpersonal circle (e.g., the extent to which both are warm, both dominant, both cold, etc.). Alternatively, a relationship is complementary to the extent that the two individuals are the same on the warm versus cold dimension and different on the dominant versus submission dimension. For example, a complementary relationship would be one in which person A's level of dominance is matched by person B's level of submissiveness regardless of whether their relationship tends to be warm, cold, or neutral. Symmetry and complementarity are therefore ways of describing relationships that are based on a dimensional taxonomy of interpersonal behavior. Interestingly they are not identical to the dimensions (e.g., warmth and inequality) that emerge from studies of perceived similarities and differences among relationships. For example, neither complementarity nor symmetry is the same as warmth, and both kinds of relationships may be friendly or hostile.

Categorical Taxonomies: Exclusive

Categorical taxonomies propose that relationships take a few discrete forms or types, and the difference between them is qualitative rather than quantitative. Several theorists have proposed taxonomies of relationship types. Some of these taxonomies are exclusive in the sense described earlier, so that any particular relationship belongs to only one type. Others are elementary in the sense that a particular relationship may represent a combination of several relational building blocks or elements.

Perhaps the best-known relationship taxonomy, developed by Margaret Clark and Judson Mills, proposes that there are two distinct relationship types: communal and exchange. Communal relationships are those in which people feel a mutual responsibility and obligation to one another. These relationships tend to be relatively long lasting and involve feelings of warmth and caring. More important, people in communal relationships do things for one another without expecting anything in return, and they do not keep track of who has done what for the other person (e.g., who owes

whom). People in communal relationships help out because they are able to, and they receive help because they need it. Typical examples might be relationships between close friends, family members, or romantic partners.

Exchange relationships are quite different. People in these relationships do not feel a lasting bond to one another and do not feel strong responsibilities or obligations. Instead, they engage in the relationship in order to get something out of it. The relationship is more of a transaction, where each person aims to get something in return for what they put in, so they keep track of what each has given and received. Rather than giving and receiving out of ability and need, as in communal relationships, people in exchange relationships expect their contributions to be reciprocated, and they expect that the other person's contributions will be equitable, matching their own in value. Typical examples are relationships between acquaintances or coworkers and between clients and service providers.

Although simple, the communal versus exchange distinction has been fruitful in relationship research. The two relationship types appear to operate according to different dynamics and norms. When people violate these rules and expectations—keeping track of obligations in a communal relationship or expecting uncompensated help from the other person in an exchange relationship—people become upset.

Other binary distinctions of this nature are also common in relationship research, although they are rarely presented as exhaustive taxonomies. For example, research on social networks often classifies “ties” (i.e., dyadic relations between network members) as positive or negative, strong or weak, or expressive or instrumental. One question that arises here and with other categorical taxonomies is whether these sorts of distinctions reflect true relationship types or merely shorthand ways of describing what are, in fact, continuous dimensions. We may call some people “tall” or “short” without meaning that there are distinct tall and short types of person and while recognizing that height falls on a continuum. At present, there is little evidence that the relationship types proposed in most categorical taxonomies really represent distinct categories. However, even if they are not true types in that sense, they may still be useful ways to describe the diversity of relationships.

Categorical Taxonomies: Elementary

A final way to develop relationship taxonomies is to propose elementary building blocks from which relationships are composed or constructed. Theorists who take this approach generally do not claim that their categories represent relationship types because they are attempting to classify aspects or components of relationships, rather than whole relationships. In addition, these theorists tend to focus on people's cognitions about relationships, rather than on how relationships are actually conducted. In short, these theories refer to the mental models that people use when they think about relationships.

One early and prominent theory of this sort is Resource-Exchange Theory, proposed by Uriel and Edna Foa. The idea that some relationships are based on exchange is familiar from the communal versus exchange distinction, but proponents of Resource-Exchange Theory argue instead that *all* relationships have an exchange basis. Where relationships differ is in the particular resources that the participants are exchanging. The resource-exchange framework proposes six distinct resources to which people attend: Love, Status, Information, Money, Goods, and Services. The first two of these resources are more abstract and social, whereas the last four are more concrete and economic. These resource types are mental categories that people employ in making sense of their interpersonal relations, and people tend to exchange resources of the same kind. For example, when someone seeks information, people have a tendency to seek information from them in return and may be uncomfortable trading that information for the other person's respect (status), payment (money), or undying gratitude (love). This is an elementary rather than an exclusive taxonomy because relationships need not be based on a single resource. In a marriage, for instance, although particular interactions may tend to focus on a single resource, many different resources may be exchanged at different times. Partners may give and receive love, status, information, and services, for example.

Another taxonomy that refers to cognitive structures as relational building blocks is Relational Models Theory, developed by Alan Fiske. This theory, based on anthropological fieldwork and an integration of other theories of social relations,

proposes that there are four fundamental and cross-culturally universal ways to think about, evaluate, and conduct relationships. In the Communal Sharing (CS) model, relational partners see themselves as fundamentally equivalent to one another, nurture one another, contribute what they can and take what they need, and seek consensus. Relationships based on the Authority Ranking (AR) model are hierarchical: People differ in rank or status, and one person takes precedence and dominates while the other follows and obeys. The Equality Matching (EM) model is based on strict egalitarianism: Everyone contributes the same amount, receives equal resources, takes turns, reciprocates favors, and keeps track of the balance or imbalance in the relationship. According to the Relational Models Theory, equality (EM) is not simply the absence of inequality (AR), but is a distinct form of relationship in its own right. In the Market Pricing (MP) model, finally, people base their relationship on the principle of equity, striving to receive benefits from the relationship that are proportional to the time, money, or effort that they have invested in it.

In theory, the four relational models are qualitatively different from one another, so they can be combined in particular relationships, but not blended. That is, research has shown that people commonly employ more than one model in any particular relationship, but typically do so in different relationship domains. For example, a couple might employ strict equality (EM) when doing a domestic chore, expect one partner to make all decisions regarding child care (AR), share a common bank account (CS), and pay for home renovations in proportion to their salaries (MP).

General Comments

We have briefly reviewed several of the better known relationship taxonomies, but many others have been proposed. One thing that is clear is that many of the existing taxonomies cover similar ground in different ways. Even if the entities that they propose have different names and represent different structures (dimensions and exclusive or elementary categories), they can often be mapped onto one another. For example, the intimacy, affiliation, or solidarity dimension obtained in multidimensional scaling analyses has close links

to the communal relationship type, expressive ties in the Social Network Theory, love in the Resource-Exchange Theory, and CS in the Relational Models Theory. The power and control dimension is linked to status in the Resource-Exchange Theory, AR in the Relation Models Theory, and in some respects to the complementarity principle. The other end of that dimension, often labeled *equality*, is related to the EM model and the symmetry principle. The formal/task-oriented dimension appears to overlap with the exchange relationship type, instrumental ties in network theory, the more economic resource-exchange categories (e.g., money, goods, services), and the MP model.

Existing taxonomies may diverge conceptually from one another, but they plainly converge on a few basic ways of characterizing the diversity of relationships. Each taxonomy has its own strengths and limitations, and there are few grounds for claiming that any one has general superiority. There has been remarkably little research that directly examines associations among the different taxonomies or that compares their capacity to illuminate relationship processes, the ultimate goal of any taxonomy. Similarly, there is almost no research examining whether relationships are best described using dimensions or categories, a basic taxonomic question. Nevertheless, these and other relationship taxonomies provide a solid foundation for the empirical study of human relationships.

Nick Haslam

See also Communal Relationships; Complementarity; Personal Relationships, Defining Characteristics; Social Exchange Theory; Warmth, Interpersonal

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RELIGION, SPIRITUALITY, AND RELATIONSHIPS

Social scientists have conducted many studies on the individual's perceived relationship with the sacred (i.e., God, the divine or transcendent reality), especially during times of stress. Findings indicate that positive perceptions of the sacred promote physical and psychological well-being, whereas spiritual struggles carry potentially high psychic and health costs if left unresolved. However, much less research has been conducted on the roles that religion and spirituality play within human relationships. This entry describes this growing body of research, which suggests that religion and spirituality hold important implications for family relationships.

Abstract Definitions Versus Concrete Data

There is controversy among social scientists about the best ways to define *religion* and *spirituality*. Increasingly, these broad, abstract concepts have become polarized. For example, *being religious* tends to be portrayed as involving membership in a given religious community; adherence to institutional dogma, worship, or rituals; and external pressure. In contrast, *being spiritual* tends to be defined as a personal connection to the sacred; a private search for enlightenment, purpose, meaning, or virtues; and internal motivation. Kenneth Pargament's popular definition of *religion* as a "search for significance in ways related to the sacred" reconciles these divergent views. This definition recognizes that religion serves a variety of significant psychological and social purposes, but first and foremost, religion is designed to facilitate the individual's spirituality; that is, the search for the sacred. Ironically, when it comes to family relationships, debates over abstract definitions of religion or spirituality are largely irrelevant because researchers have overwhelmingly relied on simple,

concrete items to assess this realm. Most indicators focus on whether individuals from the United States endorse a religious affiliation (e.g., 70–75 percent say Catholic or Protestant/Christian, 10–15 percent say none), attend religious services or pray, and the degree of similarity between two family members on these factors. Few studies have delved deeper into the interface of faith and family relationships.

Religion/Spirituality and Marriage

General Religiousness

Based on general indicators, like religious affiliation or frequency of prayer or worship attendance, religion continues to shape Americans' decisions about who to date and marry and whether to have premarital sex, cohabit outside of marriage, or get married if pregnant. Among the married, religious involvement by, and similarity between, spouses is tied to better marital functioning. For example, those who are more religiously engaged report being somewhat more satisfied and committed to their marriages. Such people also seem to enjoy better marital communication patterns and are less likely to experience affairs or divorce. Likewise, similarity in spouses' religious affiliation correlates slightly with greater marital satisfaction while similarity in church attendance is tied to greater marital commitment and happiness. In contrast, those rare U.S. couples that have major disagreements about the Bible also have more conflict about housework and money. But, contrary to fears that religion fuels domestic violence, frequent churchgoers are less likely to engage in physical violence than those who rarely attend services. Taken together, the evidence suggests that higher general religiousness may play a protective factor in sustaining marriage.

Religiously Based Beliefs and Practices About Marriage

The previous findings raise intriguing questions as to what exactly it is about religion that matters for marriage. One empirical approach to these questions has focused on what happens when couples perceive marriage as a spiritual experience. For instance, one study found that most husbands

and wives view their marriage as being infused with sacred qualities (e.g., holy, blessed) and connected to God. Such religiously based perceptions about marriage were tied much more strongly to better marital functioning than general religiousness perhaps because viewing marriage as a sacred union may heighten both cognitive expectations and behavioral efforts to protect the bond. Other evidence suggests that couples that engage in religious activities together (e.g., praying together) may possess unique resources to build intimacy and resolve conflicts (e.g., perceived support from God). Further, religious communities may offer couples valuable social support in forming and sustaining marriages (e.g., provide adaptive guidelines for marital conduct). However, religion also seems to raise the stakes for marriage. Both divorced and young adults whose parents divorced report feeling more traumatized when a marriage that was once viewed as sacred is lost or violated, and they often experience painful spiritual struggles about the divorce (e.g., doubts and anger toward God).

Religion/Spirituality and Parenting

Parenting With Children

More frequent church attendance is associated with having more children, but little is known about specific religious beliefs or practices that facilitate the transition into parenthood. Most research on religion and parenting deals with spanking and Christian conservatism. Greater endorsement of fundamentalist views of the Bible has been repeatedly correlated with a stronger belief in and greater use of spanking young children. However, conservative Christian membership or beliefs have not been linked to child physical abuse. In fact, in one rigorous study that tracked parents over 17 years, those who regularly attended church were half as likely to be physically abusive than parents who rarely attended church. Other desirable parenting outcomes repeatedly tied to general religiousness and Christian conservatism include greater involvement, affection, and warmth, especially by fathers. Interviews of parents of young children with developmental disabilities or serious medical illness also suggest that religion often offers parents unique resources to

cope with these circumstances, although it can also trigger spiritual struggles. Finally, one large-scale, longitudinal study indicates that greater parental religiousness translates into better adjustment for children, although questions remain as to why this is the case.

Parenting With Adolescents

Intentionally or unintentionally, parents shape the kind of religious affiliation and religious beliefs their adolescents adopt, as well as their involvement in religious social networks. In turn, greater general religiousness of adolescents has been consistently tied to less delinquency, substance use, and premarital sexuality, as well as to higher volunteer work and civic engagement. Surprisingly little is known about whether and how parental or adolescent religiousness influences the quality of their relationships. However, available studies imply that more religiously engaged parents and adolescents are closer and have better lines of communication.

Annette Mahoney and Kenneth Pargament

See also Marital Satisfaction and Quality; Parent-Adolescent Communication; Parenting; Social Support, Nature of; Values and Relationships

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REMARRIAGE

Remarriage is a common occurrence in modern society due to high divorce rates. Many adults and children experience multiple divorces and remarriages during their lifetimes because the divorce rate for subsequent remarriages increases with each succeeding divorce. Prior to the divorce revolution

of the 1960s, most remarriages were formed after the death of the spouse. This is no longer the case.

From a demographic perspective, remarriage refers to couples in which one or both members have been previously married. The causes for the remarriage may be due to a divorce or death of one or both spouses. Remarried couples may or may not have children from previous relationships or marriages. If the remarried couple has one or more children, then they are referred to as a remarried or stepfamily. Marriages in stepfamilies are strongly influenced by the presence of children. This entry describes common issues and relationship patterns in remarried families.

Stepfamilies

Where did the term *stepfamily* begin? It originated in England, and its history is informative about the current meaning. The prefix *step* is from the Anglo-Saxon word *steop*, meaning *to bereave or to make orphan*. This name was applied to children whose parents had died. Prior to the divorce revolution, steprelations were primarily established because of loss through death. Today, a stepfamily is usually created after divorce.

The most common type of stepfamily is the divorce-engendered stepfather family. The man, who may or may not have been previously married, marries a woman who has children from a previous marriage or relationship. Other types of stepfamilies include stepmother and blended families. Blended families have both parents who have custody of children from a previous marriage. Most stepfamilies are created after a remarriage, but with the increase in cohabitation, many *repartnered* families are formed without the legal sanction of matrimony. This entry uses the term *remarried family*, which encompasses families that have custody of the children and those that do not, married and unmarried couples, opposite-gender and same-gender couples, families with one or two biological parents, and divorced, widowed, and previously unmarried families.

Remarriages

Although the divorce rate is high, it appears that Americans are in love with the institution of

marriage, but with a series of partners. The divorce rate for second and subsequent marriages is higher than for first marriages. Remarried people are also likely to divorce and remarry for a third time; thus, a common pattern for many adults is *serial monogamy*. It is estimated that between 70 and 75 percent of women and 80 and 85 percent of men previously married will eventually remarry. The percentages vary because younger adults are more likely to remarry, whereas older adults are less likely to remarry. Most adults remarry quickly, within 5 years of their divorce. White and Hispanic adults are more likely to remarry than Black adults.

Most research and clinical writings are based on remarried couples involving White, middle-class individuals. Further research is needed to examine ethnic and economic diversity in response to marital and nonmarital transitions because of the different patterns of marriage, divorce, and remarriage rates among ethnic groups. For example, for many low-income African-American families, children are more likely to come from nonmarital unions, and the role of the nonresidential parent and his family may vary in relationship quality and access. In these families, grandparents and nonbiological kin (often called *Aunties*) play an important role in childrearing. It is unclear how these multigenerational and nonkin relationships affect remarried couples and what role they play in successful couple relationships. Given the increasing diversity of the population, these potential differences warrant further exploration as well as the development of cultural specific marital interventions.

There is some evidence that remarried partners "select downward" for their new mate. This means that they look for a younger partner (both males and females) or someone with less education than their first mate. In addition, people frequently look for a partner different from their first partner. However, this selection process often results in selecting someone who appears different than the previous spouse, but has similar traits, but at the other end of the same dimension. For example, control may have been an issue in the first marriage; that is, the divorced person had a spouse who was perceived to be overly controlling. In the second marriage, he or she might look for someone different (i.e., not controlling), ending up with a spouse who is neglectful or controlling through less obvious, passive-aggressive means.

Marital relationships in stepfamilies differ from those in first-marriage families. Spouses in the former see their relationship in more pragmatic and less romantic terms. Remarried partners tend to share both household and childrearing responsibilities more than in first-marriage families. The quality of a marital relationship between remarried adults is often negatively affected by the presence of stepchildren, although the influence is not always large. After the marriage, newlywed couples normally spend time alone and create a marital bond. In remarried families, this is compromised by the demands of caring for children from the beginning of the relationship. The quality of the marital relationship tends to be poorer when both parents have children from previous relationships than when only one adult is a stepparent probably because of increased complexity and more opportunities for conflict. This is more difficult when people remarry and have young adolescent children. In general, it is easier to form a remarried family with young children than with older adolescents.

In addition to forming a new marriage, remarriages have the added stress of bringing unresolved and old patterns from previous marriages into the current one. These are referred to as the “ghosts at the table” because they often operate in unseen ways and pop up to create problems in the relationship. For example, in the previous marriage, a husband may have overspent their money and run up large debts that a wife was saddled with after the divorce. Early in her remarriage, she had conflict with her spouse about his spending, although he remained within their budget, because of her fear that this pattern would repeat in this marriage. Helping couples identify these old ghosts and how they operate in the current relationship is an important step in ridding themselves of ghosts or at least changing them to friendly ghosts.

Forming Relationships in Remarriages

In the first few years of remarriage, couples need to form a strong marital bond. This is particularly challenging for stepfamily couples with residential stepchildren. The couple with children faces challenges in time and energy to nurture and attend to their marital and adult needs. However, it is critical that couples form a well-functioning marriage because it is difficult to handle other family issues,

especially parenting, if the marriage is rocky. Helping couples develop a common ground and understanding in their marriage, taking time to meet their adult needs, and having fun and enjoyment in the marriage is essential. Household chores and responsibilities need to be more equally shared in order for the woman to feel that she has the time and energy to attend to the marriage. It is often important that couples actually schedule their time together because other issues and demands often get in the way.

Family relationships in remarried families, and particularly the stepparent–child relationship, tend to be more distant and have more conflict than those in first-marriage families. In addition, these relationships have more coalitions and triangles than do first-marriage families. Thus, there is higher risk for step– and parent–child relationship problems in remarried families, especially with adolescents.

However, it is important to note that, although these relationships are more negative in remarriages than in first-marriage families, they are not necessarily pathological or problematic. There are differences between family structure groups on various measures and ratings of family relations, but they generally are relatively small and represent differences within a “normal range.” Although there are often more negative and conflictual relationships in remarriages, compared with first marriages, the mean ratings for *both* groups are in the positive range. Thus, it is not accurate to characterize remarriages as “negative, conflictual, and distant.” This can lead both scholars and social policy analysts to misinterpret the data.

The marital subsystem appears to affect other family subsystems differently in remarriages than in first-marriage families. Sources of conflict experienced by remarried couples include boundary ambiguity, conflicting loyalties, stepparent–stepchild relationships, and stepparents’ disciplinary role. There seems to be more disruption and conflict in parent–child relationships during the early stages of remarriage than in first-marriage families. Disagreements between couples usually focus on stepchildren issues, such as discipline, rules for children, and the distribution of resources to children.

During early remarriage, marital adjustment and satisfaction are not related to children’s behavior problems. This contrasts with first-marriage

families, in which marital problems are usually predictive of adjustment difficulties for children. After several years in a stepfamily, marital relationships have more impact on children's adjustment and marriage, and parent-child interactions are similar to those in first-marriage families.

Conflict

First-marriage family conflict includes marital conflict, interparental conflict, parent-child conflict, sibling conflict, parent-grandparent conflict, and other general forms of family disharmony. Remarried families can also experience conflict like first-marriage families, and there is also the possibility for stepparent-parent conflict, stepparent-child conflict, and conflict between former spouses. Family and interparental conflict involving the children are key predictors of children's adjustment, especially in divorced or remarried families. Overall, conflict within the family is more predictive of children's adjustment in remarried families than in first-marriage families.

Nonresidential Parents in Remarriages

Unlike first marriages, adults in remarriages usually have an ex-spouse who may have an ongoing influence on their marriage. This is especially the case when there are children from the prior relationship or marriage. With remarried families, the ex-spouse/nonresidential parent may continue to influence the marriage through ongoing contact with the children. This comes in two forms: direct contact because of visitation/childrearing issues with the children and the children's influence because of the ongoing contact with their nonresidential parent. Old patterns of conflict can continue after the remarriage, and these issues can reverberate in the new marriage with destructive force. In addition, children may react differently to a parent or stepparent after visiting their nonresidential parent. The stepparent may react negatively to this change, and this reaction may negatively affect the couple's marriage.

Conclusions

Remarriages and remarried families are an established feature of contemporary culture in the

United States. Remarriage entails a number of risk factors for family members, such as increased stress, disrupted family roles, and increased conflict. Warm, supportive relationships between children and adult parents and cooperative, understanding relationships between residential and nonresidential parents are all important factors that contribute to better relationships after remarriage. Overall, research has found similar family processes among remarriages and first-marriage families, and a large proportion of stable, long-term remarriages seem to function in similar ways to first-marriage families. Over time, remarriages tend to function similarly to first-marriage families. The field needs a closer examination of the factors that contribute to the success of remarriages and how they can contribute to the development of healthy and happy family members.

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See also Divorce, Effects on Adults; Family Life Cycle; Marriage, Benefits of; Marriage, Historical and Cross-Cultural Trends; Stepfamilies

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REPAIRING RELATIONSHIPS

Sooner or later, all relationships have problems. Some problems are minor irritations, whereas others are major threats to the future of the relationship. Some problems develop slowly, whereas others occur instantaneously. Some erode relationships over relatively long durations, whereas others are short-lived. Regardless of the nature of the problem, unless partners elect to ignore it or to end their relationship, some sort of repair strategy will be needed. This entry describes four general approaches to relationship repair, what is known about the operation of each, and their consequences. Although this entry emphasizes romantic relationships because repair strategies have been studied most often in these relationships, most researchers believe that these processes also apply to other types of close relationships, such as between siblings, family members, and close friends.

Naturally Occurring and Informal Approaches to Relationship Repair

Most of the time, partners attempt to resolve their problems by themselves. Resolving differences is a normal part of interdependent relationships. Problems arise and, to restore harmony, partners must put the problem behind them in some way. Among the most influential of the various models for describing these maintenance strategies is Caryl Rusbult's model of accommodation. Rusbult proposes four behavioral strategies: voice (active, constructive attempts to discuss and improve the situation), loyalty (optimistically but passively waiting for the situation to improve), neglect (avoiding the partner and the problem), and exit (behaving in an actively destructive manner, such as threatening to end the relationship). Much research has shown that relationships benefit from the use of voice, whereas they are harmed by neglect and exit. Evidence about the impact of loyalty is more equivocal, sometimes showing

relationship benefits, whereas other times showing little or no effect.

When a relationship problem is ongoing—for example, a habitual pattern of damaging conflict, substantial disagreements about core issues (e.g., money, parenting practices), or an extramarital affair—a more focused attempt to resolve the problem and repair damage to the relationship is needed. Although outside professional help is sometimes sought for such problems, it seems probable that all couples first try to resolve their issues on their own, and many do so repeatedly and successfully. One study showed that about two thirds of couples whose difficulties were sufficient to warrant professional intervention did not seek such help, and another study showed that couples may delay seeking outside help for as long as 5 years after a problem surfaces. Some, of course, end their relationships without trying professional help.

Unfortunately, there is little systematic, methodologically solid evidence as to whether couples' efforts at self-repair are likely to be successful, particularly once problems are entrenched. Marital researchers commonly assume that spontaneous remission of serious marital problems is rare, but this assumption has not been adequately tested nor does it take into account the nature of the coping strategies that couples use to attempt to solve their problems. One of the more optimistic accounts comes from the multiwave longitudinal National Survey of Families and Households, which showed that 62 percent of unhappily married couples who stayed together reported being happily married 5 years later. This figure implies that 38 percent remained unhappily married, and it remains to be discovered what processes can distinguish these two groups. As for spontaneous remission in nonmarital couples (e.g., cohabitators), little is known. Presumably because the institutional and psychological barriers to separation and divorce tend to be weaker in nonmarital couples, enduring problems would be more likely to result in termination.

The fact that unhappiness is frequently not a permanent state in relationships indicates that couples can find within themselves (and perhaps their social network) strategies and resources for repairing relationship problems. Indeed, the ability to engage in repair strategies in the face of disagreements, hurt feelings, and relational transgressions may be the

hallmark of a healthy relationship. Existing research points to many potentially effective strategies, whose benefits will depend on the partners' motivation and ability to put them into action (e.g., forgiveness, apologies, sacrifice, accommodation, accepting influence, commitment, shared play, humor, affection, sexual pleasure, and finding higher meaning or a sense of purpose in a relationship). Relationship repair may also be facilitated by the alleviation of external factors that create stress in relationships (e.g., lessening of job-related or parenting stress or successful treatment for substance abuse).

Popular Media and "Self-Help" Approaches

Relationship repair is an enormously popular topic for self-help books, advice columns, the Internet, and television talk shows. Bookstores typically have multiple shelves of books dedicated to helping readers find solutions to relationship problems, and, increasingly, the Internet provides not only information and advice, but interactive quizzes and courses designed to improve relationship functioning. Unfortunately, a large proportion of widely disseminated relationship-relevant messages are written or produced by individuals with little training in relationship science or couples therapy, who are not conversant with existing literature or empirically validated interventions, and whose work is not bound by the professional ethics of researchers and clinicians. Not surprisingly, then, there is no existing evidence that the advice offered in these media is effective in helping partners repair problematic relationships. In fact, there are numerous examples in which self-help books offer advice that has already been documented to be ineffective (e.g., simplistic exhortations to "think positive thoughts about a partner," which fail to consider the reasons that such thoughts are not happening) or worse.

Of course, sometimes popular media deliver reasonable suggestions that a couple may find helpful. Moreover, self-help and popular media approaches are increasingly becoming a conduit for dissemination of empirically informed advice by scholars and practitioners with legitimate credentials in the field. Popular media provide an important channel for bringing insights from relationship science to the public. However, navigating the

dizzying array of often contradictory suggestions for relationship repair and distinguishing expert advice from personal anecdote is a formidable challenge for the potential consumer.

Relationship Education Programs

Relationship education programs are formal, often highly structured interventions designed to strengthen and improve relationship functioning. Couple or marital relationships have been the primary target, with programs originally embracing one of two goals: problem prevention, on the assumption that "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure," and enrichment, on the assumption that even a good relationship could be better. In modern programs, whatever distinctions may have existed have largely disappeared. Furthermore, although these programs are predicated on the idea of preventing as opposed to redressing problems, couples often decide to try them when problems, perhaps of a minor or ambiguous sort, have already appeared. Regardless of whether the goal is prevention, enrichment, or problem resolution, relationship education programs are intended not only to teach partners ways of avoiding problems, but also ways of minimizing their impact when they do inevitably occur.

Although in principle, relationship education is designed to forestall, as opposed to fix, problems, some amount of repair focus is central to all such programs. Avoidance of problems is discouraged; these programs teach partners ways of addressing disagreements and conflicts, small and large, when they do occur so that "molehills do not become mountains." Furthermore, these programs also aim to provide partners with strategies for restoring harmony and enjoyment of each other's company when relationship problems or external stress (e.g., jobs, children) have engendered tension or distance. Research increasingly suggests that these positive processes, in sufficient dosage, may neutralize the erosion caused by negative interactional processes. Enhancing the positive aspects of a relationship provides fertile ground and the goodwill needed to engage in regular repair strategies when disagreements or misunderstandings occur.

Many relationship education programs exist, although few are based directly on empirically

supported principles, and fewer still have been shown by evaluation research to have demonstrable short- or long-term benefits. Two of the better-grounded programs are Howard Markman's Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program (PREP) and Bernard Guerney's Relationship Enhancement (RE) program. Both are based at least in significant part on principles that have received consistent support in the relationship science literature. Also important is the fact that both have been shown in evaluation studies to benefit participants, compared with control groups, in areas such as communication, problem resolution, and relationship satisfaction. Just how long such benefits endure is largely unknown at this point. One study showed that PREP had benefits lasting as long as 4 years after participation. Some programs now offer "booster sessions" and other resources (e.g., Internet-based activities) in an attempt to reinforce program-based gains over time, although the incremental value of such additions has not been established.

Relationship education programs vary widely in their features. Some are brief (e.g., a single day), whereas others are more like a college course, with weekly sessions over a number of weeks (e.g., 5–12 weeks). Some are formal and highly organized, whereas others are informal and mostly unstructured. Some are delivered to individuals, whereas some require participation of both partners. Some, particularly those that are evidence-based, tend to follow a prespecified format (thus achieving fidelity with the program features that have been empirically demonstrated to be beneficial), whereas others play out in more idiosyncratic fashion, often based on the participants' goals and predilections. Program activities typically involve varying amounts of didactic instruction, experiential exercises, and discussion, along with supporting material such as movie clips, videotaped examples of desirable and undesirable interactions, and homework assignments.

Although programs differ in their specific goals, most programs share certain elements: to teach effective communication skills; to develop partners' capacities for resolving problems and managing conflicts in constructive ways; to foster openness, empathy, support, and responsive caregiving; to encourage partners to make the relationship a continuing priority in their lives; to enhance fun,

affection, and a sense of togetherness in everyday life; and to motivate partners to take responsibility for their own actions and feelings. Most programs also try to raise awareness about the sorts of issues and problems likely to arise in the relationship's future, thus priming partners for the need to engage in relationship repair processes.

Relationship and Couple Therapy

Relationship issues are one of the most common reasons for seeking help from a professional therapist or counselor. Although one partner may seek help alone, it is difficult to effectively address dyadic or relationship issues without involvement by both members of the dyad. When married or romantic partners are unable to resolve problems by themselves, they may seek assistance from a couple therapist who typically will meet with both partners simultaneously in conjoint sessions. In general, various approaches to couple therapy share the following common goals: (a) providing a safe environment in which relationship difficulties can be communicated and negotiated, (b) increasing mutual acceptance, (c) ameliorating individual and relationship crises, (d) improving communication—including decision-making skills as well as emotional expressiveness and responsiveness, (e) building partners' friendship and emotional bonds, and (f) improving sexual and other physical intimacy.

Although the literature describes numerous approaches to couple therapy, only six have been demonstrated to be effective in clinical trials that compare couple therapy to an appropriate control group. Traditional Behavioral Couple Therapy (TBCT) has been studied far more extensively than any other single approach to couple therapy, with the average individual receiving TBCT is better off at the end of treatment than 72 percent of individuals not receiving treatment. TBCT teaches partners to communicate more effectively around hurt feelings and resolving disagreements, as well as to negotiate more positive ways of interacting. Cognitive-Behavioral Couple Therapy (CBCT) builds on TBCT by targeting partners' relationship assumptions and standards, expectancies, and attributions that contribute to distorted emotions or maladaptive behaviors underlying couple

distress. Various adaptations of CBCT have been shown to be effective for treating couple distress related to a variety of physical health and emotional or behavioral disorders. Integrative Behavioral Couple Therapy (IBCT) goes beyond CBCT in promoting tolerance and encouraging partners to appreciate differences and to use these to enhance their relationship. A large randomized clinical trial comparing IBCT with TBCT showed that both treatments produced clinically significant improvement by the end of treatment and comparable separation/divorce rates (about 25 percent) at 5-year follow-up.

Three approaches to couple therapy from non-behavioral perspectives have also been shown to be effective. Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy (EFCT) combines an experiential, intrapsychic focus on inner emotional experience with an emphasis on cyclical, self-reinforcing interactions. In four randomized trials, EFCT was superior to a control condition (remaining on a waiting list for couple therapy) in reducing relationship distress, yielding recovery rates of 70 to 73 percent. Another approach, Integrated Systemic Couple Therapy (ISCT), seeks to disrupt repetitive, self-perpetuating negative interactional cycles by changing the meaning attributed to these cycles. In a clinical trial comparing ISCT with EFCT, both were found to be superior to a control condition and to be equally effective in alleviating couple distress. Finally, Insight-Oriented Couple Therapy (IOCT) emphasizes the interpretation and resolution of long-standing maladaptive relationship patterns (e.g., recurring struggles around issues of intimacy, control, or fears of abandonment) that were acquired in previous problematic or traumatic relationships (e.g., in the family of origin). In a clinical trial comparing IOCT with TBCT, couples in both treatment conditions showed significant gains in relationship satisfaction compared with a wait-list control group. However, at a 4-year follow-up, 38 percent of the behavioral couples had experienced divorce, in contrast to only 3 percent of couples in the insight-oriented condition.

Despite the overall effectiveness of couple therapy, a substantial percentage of individuals fail to show improvement from these treatments; moreover, among those individuals who initially respond favorably, approximately 30 to 60 percent deteriorate significantly over time. Such findings have led

to the development of integrative models of couple therapy incorporating the most effective elements of diverse treatment approaches. A “depth-behavioral” approach to integrative couple therapy incorporates both behavioral therapy and object relations therapy (an approach based on object relations theory, a psychodynamic theory that views relationships as a fundamental motivating factor in life). An alternative pluralistic, hierarchical approach to couple therapy incorporates behavioral and cognitive techniques earlier in therapy and insight-oriented techniques later in treatment if the couple distress is resistant to change earlier in therapy. The insight-oriented component of this pluralistic approach, labeled *affective reconstruction*, examines each partner’s previous relationships to identify maladaptive patterns and ways in which coping styles established in earlier relationships may obstruct emotional intimacy in the current relationship.

Although couple therapy is most commonly used for reducing relationship distress and promoting couple well-being, the co-occurrence between couple distress and specific individual or relationship problems has led to couple-based interventions for addressing these comorbid difficulties. For example, couple-based treatment for sexual difficulties helps partners to discuss and resolve specific challenges in their sexual interactions. Couple-based interventions have improved sexual functioning for women with orgasmic disorders at rates ranging from 65 to 90 percent. Couple-based interventions emphasizing anger management and communication skills have been effective in treating mild to moderate levels of physical aggression; however, most clinicians agree that couple therapy is inappropriate for severe physical aggression.

A recent integrative approach for treating couples in which one or both partners has had an affair emphasizes three phases that target: (1) coping with initial emotional and behavioral disruption of individual and relationship functioning following discovery or disclosure of the affair; (2) exploring individual, relationship, and outside contextual factors contributing to the initial onset or maintenance of the affair; and (3) reaching an informed decision about how to move on, either individually or as a couple. A preliminary investigation of this treatment indicated that, at termination, the

majority of participants reported less emotional and relationship distress, and individuals whose partner had participated in the affair reported greater forgiveness toward their partners.

Couple-based treatment for both alcoholism and drug abuse produces more abstinence and fewer substance-related problems, happier relationships, fewer couple separations, and lower risk for divorce than does individual-based treatment. Behavioral Couple Therapy has also been shown to be effective in relieving depression when provided to distressed couples with a depressed partner. Finally, recent findings have supported the effectiveness of couple therapy in treating patients suffering from anxiety disorders, chronic pain, cancer, terminal illnesses in general, obesity, coronary artery disease, and post-traumatic stress disorder. Although research shows that paraprofessionals (e.g., clergy) can effectively implement structured relationship education programs (e.g., PREP), there has been little empirical study of this issue as applied to couple therapy for serious relationship problems.

Conclusion

One of the more idealistic (and unhelpful) beliefs that people sometimes voice about long-term committed relationships is that conflict should occur rarely or not at all, problems should be inconsequential, and that the trajectory over time should proceed more or less smoothly and effortlessly. The need for repair, under this belief, is seen as a sign of fundamental flaws in the relationship, in the individuals involved, or in both, rather than as part of the natural life cycle of relationships. Such stigmatizing beliefs, aside from the fact that they are not grounded in reality, may contribute to the worsening of problems by postponing the engagement of potentially helpful repair processes until problems have progressed too far. Repair behaviors and processes, both formal and informal, are a normal and critically important part of the evolution of relationships. When properly engaged, they contribute in a significant way to making relationships fulfilling and enjoyable for all concerned.

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See also Accommodation; Communication Skills; Couple Therapy; Extradyadic Sex; Forgiveness; Predicting Success or Failure of Marital Relationships; Prevention and Enrichment Programs for Couples; Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Programs (PREP)

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RESILIENCE

Intimacy, betrayal, trust, jealousy, attachment, love, and loneliness are terms that point to the salience of relational processes in both human suffering and striving. In cases of pronounced adversity, the primary developmental threat may be a distorted or

malevolent relationship, as in child abuse and neglect. Yet interpersonal relationships, such as those with supportive, caring adults, are similarly powerful conduits of positive developmental pathways in the wake of adversity. Early relationships with caregivers are especially salient contexts within which core relational experiences occur (e.g., trust, love, connection), primary relational abilities develop (e.g., perspective-taking, regulation, empathy), and influential expectations of self and others are internalized. This entry focuses on relational processes in resilient adaptation and *why* relational processes are central to understanding *how* individuals achieve positive developmental outcomes, especially in adverse contexts.

Resilience Defined

Resilience is a dynamic developmental process wherein the individual is able to utilize resources in and outside of the self to negotiate current challenges adaptively and, by extension, to develop a foundation on which to rely when future challenges occur. In contexts of prior or current adversity, resilience reflects *both* the absence of psychopathology and the presence of competence wherein the individual is able to negotiate age-salient issues effectively. In infancy, these issues center on the challenge of negotiating a consistent pattern of relating to caregivers, whereas the emphasis shifts toward the negotiation of peer relationships and the challenge of self-regulation in the toddler and preschool periods. Thus, resilience is a multidimensional, culturally embedded, and developmentally anchored process.

Resilience is a feature of development, not of individuals. Resilience follows from the operation of normal developmental processes despite extraordinary circumstances, rather than from exceptional individual capacities. To the extent that typical developmental processes are protected or enabled despite adverse experience, resilience is fostered. Relational processes are central among these developmental capacities: relationships between different developmental systems such as biology and psychology; relationships among different levels of the environment such as families, schools, and communities; and, as discussed here, relationships between people.

Resilience-Fostering Relationships

Interpersonal relationships have been a key focus of resilience research since its inception. Pioneers of this field, such as Norman Garmezy, Lois Murphy, Sir Michael Rutter, and Emmy Werner, were the first to document the powerful and positive impact of a supportive, caring, and connected relationship with an adult on developmental trajectories of high-risk youth. In childhood, caregiving relationships are of primary significance, but relationships in other arenas increase in salience over time. Relationships with teachers, coaches, spiritual leaders, mental health providers, and peers take on increasing importance across childhood, whereas adolescence and adulthood bring romantic relationships, employee–employer, and collegial connections to the fore. Yet the nature and quality of these later relationships are uniquely influenced by early patterns of sensitivity and reciprocity in the caregiving milieu. Evidence clearly points to the unique importance of the early caregiving environment for the development of basic capacities, such as self-regulation, perspective taking, and self-esteem, which shape individuals' responses to current and future developmental challenges.

From the earliest days of life, interpersonal relationships influence developmental trajectories, for better or worse. Associations with deviant peers, for example, may engender disruptive, antisocial behaviors among high-risk youth. Yet prosocial peer connections may provide opportunities for high-risk youth to apprehend and practice positive, rule-abiding behaviors. Having documented the importance of relationships for both typical and atypical developmental trajectories, contemporary resilience research has shifted toward delineating processes by which such relationships, particularly early relationships, engender positive adaptation despite exposure to significant developmental threat. Although initially conceptualized at the level of dyads and later families, these relational processes have since been examined at group and cultural levels, as well as at biological, social, and cognitive levels.

Relational Processes in Resilience

Across populations and developmental periods, relational processes take on disproportionate salience in adverse or traumatic contexts. In the

framework of resilience, positive interpersonal relationships operate as protective factors because they decrease the strength of the association between adverse experience and negative outcomes. Across settings and levels of risk and adversity, assets operate as resources that increase the probability of positive outcomes for all individuals, whereas risks undermine adaptive functioning. As complements to assets and risks, respectively, protective and vulnerability factors are disproportionately influential in conditions of adversity moderating the relation between adverse experience and negative developmental outcomes.

Of the myriad factors associated with positive development in adverse contexts, relationships take on unique significance. Trusting, consistent, and supportive interpersonal relationships foster positive development for all people, yet their protective and restorative capacity is magnified in conditions of adversity. Thus, positive human relationships are a protective factor engendering better-than-expected outcomes in the context of adverse life experience. The presence of a supportive mentor may help all youth, but it takes on a unique importance when provided to a youth whose life is otherwise devoid of positive influences, role models, and nurturance.

How, why, and for whom such relationships exert their developmental impact is of great interest to researchers. Relational processes underlying resilient adaptation span cognitive, emotional, and biological systems. Positive relationships with others provide social, moral, instrumental, and emotional support, as well as opportunities for learning and practicing new skills. Further, growth-fostering relationships engender positive self-regard and heighten individuals' regard for others, thereby increasing self-efficacy and the motivation to pursue additional interpersonal connections. At other levels, positive relational processes may activate protective or restorative biological systems and engender adaptive socio-emotional regulation. Yet the impact of relationships on human development is not uniform. As the mechanisms by which relationships exert their protective influence in risk contexts come into focus, efforts to understand individual differences in responsiveness to these processes grow stronger.

Implications

The study of resilience holds important implications for understanding and fostering human development. Resilience follows from a coherent and cumulative developmental pattern wherein key relational capacities are supported, protected, or restored. These capacities operate at biological, psychological, and social levels to enable individuals to develop and sustain growth-fostering connections with other people. Individuals who are able to achieve the developmental expectations of their culture despite adverse experience (i.e., whose development typifies resilience) have been able to develop or sustain necessary capacities to build positive, reciprocal connections with others. Research is needed to identify factors that enable individuals to develop or sustain these abilities despite adversity.

Interventions that aim to promote resilience must introduce the potential for new relationships (e.g., mentors) while supporting core cognitive, biological, and regulatory systems that enable such connections in the first place (e.g., stress reactivity, emotion regulation, relational expectancies, and beliefs). As discussed previously, early childhood is an especially important context for the development of these systems. Thus, applied efforts to support resilient adaptation must identify and protect key processes that enable sensitive and responsive caregiving to infants and young children. In turn, these interventions foster relational processes that are critically important for resilient adaptation.

Tuppett M. Yates and Suniya S. Luthar

See also Family Relationships in Adolescence; Family Relationships in Childhood; Mentoring Programs; Socialization; Social Support, Nature of; Trust

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RESOURCE THEORY

Resources are the objects, activities, processes, concepts, and emotions that have value to relationship partners. A resource can be valued, in and of itself, or only serve as a tool to acquire something of value (a means to an end). The value of any resource is defined by the meaning assigned to it, rather than by the resource. Similar meanings can be frequently assigned by individuals, such that some resources (e.g., money, attractiveness, loyalty) can take on a common or normative value. Resource exchanges occur across many types of human relationships (e.g., parent–child, romantic, friend, work, peer). Indeed, the nature of these exchanges can contribute to the development, maintenance, and/or decline of relationships. Resource theories focus on the identification, valuation, and exchange of resources.

Uriel Foa and his colleagues identified six categories of resources. *Love* represents care, kindness, emotional support, and intimacy. Thus, it reflects a myriad of positively based emotions toward others. *Status* represents the degree of respect, achievement, rank, or admiration. Status can be socially defined at a community level (e.g., national fame, social class, awards), small-group level (e.g., leader among friends), or relationship level (more-powerful/less-powerful partner). *Service* represents the activities performed by individuals to benefit relationship partners. Service often requires people to engage in some effort or work for their partners. Service, however, does not automatically imply subservience (power imbalance/exploitation). For example, parents provide many services for their children, but the parents might not feel exploited. Rather, parents might be quite happy to provide such services.

Goods represent objects, substances, manufactured products, or raw materials. Some goods,

such as meals, are essential to daily existence, but many nonessential goods or luxuries are common to relationship exchanges—for example, gifts. *Information* represents facts, knowledge, insights, guidance, or feedback. Informational resources (e.g., advice) are not limited to formal education, but can be garnered from life experience as well. *Money* represents currency as well as other forms of wealth accumulation, such as investments. Although money might be considered a primary resource in some relationships—for example, employer–employee—it also plays a role in other relationship types (e.g., couples negotiate spending/saving priorities).

Comparatively, love, status, and information are more abstract resources, whereas services, goods, and money are more pragmatic resources. For example, giving feedback (information resource) would require thought, but would not require the use of objects or materials. In contrast, cleaning house (service resource) would require the use of physical objects to achieve resource provision. A single act can be perceived as more than one resource. Thus, cooking can be perceived as a service, a status symbol (for highly skilled cooks), or an expression of love (cooking as a sign of affection). In addition, relationship partners can differ in the meanings that they assign to the same behavior. Thus, individuals can engage in cooking as a gesture of love, but it can be perceived by partners (the recipients) as a service.

Resources can also be contrasted on the degree of specificity. Specificity refers to the extent to which a resource is particular or unique to relationships. Love, status, and information are more specific resources, whereas goods, services, and money are less specific resources. Love and money are considered polar opposites in the specificity dimension. Thus, individuals might expect that the love offered by their romantic partners is particular (and exclusive). If individuals learned that their partners expressed the same love to others, this might be reason to end the romances. Indeed, the individuals might doubt whether the love was ever “real.” However, the same dynamics don’t seem to apply to money. Cash is not exclusively limited to one type of relationship and it is treated as equally real across interactions.

Research has shown that individuals typically prefer to exchange resources that are within the

same category (e.g., exchange love for love) or across similar categories (e.g., exchange goods for services). Thus, individuals might not need to make identical exchanges within categories for their relationship to be stable. Rather, it might be the cumulative exchange across categories that serves as the basis for evaluating relationship quality. If the overall exchange is unsatisfactory, then individuals might alter their exchanges or dissolve their relationships.

There has been some consideration that not all resources might fit easily into the six classifications. So broader conceptualizations of resource categories (e.g., demographics, personal attributes, relationship characteristics, and community) have been offered. These broader categories have been helpful to understanding normative resources, in which members of a community/culture share meanings that guide their exchanges. For example, males and females who hold traditional gender roles expect differences between partners. Traditional men would have more decision-making power than women because men are considered the “heads of the households.” Traditional women would have more closeness to children than men because women are considered the “emotional centers of the families.” For such couples, the resource differences can enhance relationship satisfaction as they fulfill expected norms. In addition, such couples can make complementary exchanges across resource categories. Thus, they might perceive that the rate of resource exchange is equitable even if the resource categories differ.

Relationship partners will not always agree on the value of the resources that they exchange. That is, partners can assign different values to resources. Individuals might offer resources that they value highly, but the partners might see little value in the resources. For example, individuals might perceive that their advice (information resource) is insightful, but their friends might perceive the advice as useless. The different values that they place on the resource could impact their interactions. For example, friends might avoid discussion of problems (where advice might be offered), but enjoy leisure activities. It is important to note that others outside relationships (e.g., family, coworkers, research observers) might also place different values on the resource exchanges. This difference might explain why it is sometimes difficult for outsiders to understand how relationships work for the partners (e.g., spouses, friends).

Norms exist for many relationship types (e.g., parent–child, marriage, friendship) and can affect the nature of resource exchanges. For example, one norm for parent–child relationships is that parents will provide guidance—praise, criticism/punishment—and children will comply with the guidance by continuing good behavior or eliminating bad behavior. It is important to note that awareness of norms does not inherently reflect compliance. Individuals can enact relationships in ways that defy normative guidelines. Defiance can occur from one member of a relationship. For example, as children grow and become adolescents, they may refuse to abide by their parents’ guidelines. For others, both members of a relationship might engage in defiance. So, couples might reject traditional weddings, but utilize goods/services resources to enhance their sense of uniqueness (e.g., “We’ll exchange vows while skydiving because our relationship is too special for a conventional ceremony”). Thus, resources can be utilized to actually defy norms and personalize relationship experiences.

In summary, resource theories provide valuable conceptual models for understanding a wide range of relationship processes. The theories can help us understand the exchanges that occur in casual and close relationships. In addition, the theories provide an explanation for why relationship partners (as well as outsiders) can view the same events/exchanges in different ways.

Jacki Fitzpatrick

See also Exchange Processes; Maintaining Relationships; Money and Couple Relationships; Norms About Relationships

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RESPECT

Respect is a concept referred to in many situations and viewed as important in various kinds of relationships. This entry defines respect and discusses the ways in which it is displayed in human relationships, particularly romantic ones.

The word *respect* can convey admiration, approval, and high valuing of a person or even a thing or an idea (such as respect for religious faith). The focus of this entry is person-to-person respect. Respect has both a cognitive component (such as thinking well of another) and an emotional component (such as feeling admiration toward another). Some writers have emphasized respect as something given to another simply because that other is a part of our human community. Ideally, respect in this sense crosses racial, ethnic, and religious lines and even national boundaries, granting respect (or a sense of worth) to everyone.

If one listens and watches, the word *respect* is heard through the media, is seen on signs in public schools and university hallways, and may even be heard in musical lyrics on occasion. In daily life, however, respect seems sometimes to be less visible than *disrespect*, which is defined as rudeness and disregard. Disrespect is relevant to injustices, status and power differences, social inequities, and the like. For example, persons in authority may have power over others simply because they have an authoritative role, and the role has been given power. Yet the way such persons enact their role and exercise their authority will impact whether they are respected in that role. For example, an authority figure may be feared, yet not respected.

Respect in educational settings, work settings, and the public arena is essential for maintaining social order. Disrespecting others can lead to major breaches of the social order such as crime or even war. Yet minor breaches—being rude to a salesperson or cutting off another car/person on the freeway—may impact social life more negatively than the larger breaches simply because they weaken respect slowly but surely over time.

Respect in the workplace is related not only to effective interpersonal relationships and resulting productivity, but more fundamentally to hiring practices and how people are treated after they are

hired. For example, men have often been viewed as more competent in many work settings, aside from child care, elementary school teaching, and other vocations seen as “women’s work.” Deborah Tannen has said that women in the workplace want to be liked, whereas men want to be respected. If this is so, it may have implications for who is likely to be promoted, given larger raises, and so on. Respect is relevant in all cultures and countries, although criteria for and ways of displaying respect may differ.

Respect has been identified as an important component of friend and family relationships, although it may be shown in different ways in different cultures. For example, in some cultures, it is respectful to make eye contact with another person, whereas in other cultures, a lack of eye contact indicates proper respect. Many cultures pay particular attention to respecting one’s elders.

Respect plays a central role in marital/romantic relationships. No matter what the task division may be in a relationship, mutual honoring and respect are important for satisfaction with and success in a relationship. In fact, respect has been identified as a component of love and as an important factor in marital quality. In some relationships, respect given may depend to an extent on the respect-worthiness of the partner, but in other relationships, respect is a freely given gift, a bestowal of respect.

Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot positioned respect as multifaceted, and she proposed six themes that in her view constitute respect, including attention, curiosity, dialogue, empowerment, healing, and self-respect. What does each of these six themes really mean in a romantic relationship? *Attention* means just that—focusing on the partner and ignoring, at least temporarily, media, children, chores, jobs, and all the things that draw our attention away from the key person to whom we should be attending. It means giving this attention ungrudgingly. We have *curiosity* about our partner—what they are feeling, thinking, and doing. An intimate partner is someone who we know well, yet who can sometimes surprise us and who simply interests us. *Dialogue* implies a mutual and reciprocal conversation; it is a dance in which no one leads and no one follows. It requires clear and frequent communication. *Empowerment* involves supporting and strengthening our partner in whatever

ways we are able. It does not mean that we always agree, but our disagreement needs to be constructive and aimed toward helping our partner. *Healing* is intertwined with empowerment, but is not the same thing. Healing is caring for, supporting, and providing a place of refuge for our loved one. If our relationship is a healing one, surely it is also an empowering one. Finally, *self-respect* places us front and center in the respecting process. It has often been said that we must love ourselves in order to love others, and the same is true of respect. Self-respect and other respect go hand in hand.

It is important to remember that respect can be a part of virtually all of our relationships, including our most intimate ones. It is an act of valuing that we should give others and one that we should also expect from others.

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See also Love, Companionate and Passionate; Love, Prototype Approach; Power Distribution in Relationships; Satisfaction in Relationships; Social Support, Nature of

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RESPONSIVENESS

Responsiveness lies at the heart of many important relationship processes and plays a vital role in any human relationships involving effective communication, caregiving, social support, mentoring, and leadership. Definition and measurement of *responsiveness* vary depending on the relationship context; however, most definitions encompass interaction partners behaving in a warm, sensitive manner that is contingent on and supportive of the other person's needs, emotional

states, and circumstances. Although much of the research has focused on the role of responsiveness in the provision of caregiving and social support within the context of parent-child relationships, adult close relationships, and therapeutic relationships, responsiveness also has been shown to play a central role in many processes in educational, organizational, and health care settings. This entry discusses conceptualization and measurement of responsiveness, reviews relational consequences, and examines other determinants of responsiveness.

Conceptualization and Measurement

Similarities and differences exist in conceptualization and measurement of responsiveness for child-parent relationships and adult relationships. The nature of caregiving in child-parent relationships tends to be one sided, whereas caregiving in adult relationships tends to be mutual and reciprocal with more complex sets of needs and circumstances. Nevertheless, both types of relationships share similarities, in that responsiveness entails reacting in a positive, sensitive, and appropriate manner to the other person's needs and emotional states.

Child-Parent Relationships

Much of the research on child-parent relationships examines how responsive or unresponsive parenting behavior influences the formation of attachment security and affects social and academic development. Typically, the mother is the focus of the investigation. Responsive parents provide warm, sensitive, and consistent caregiving that is contingent on the infants' physiological and emotional needs, including carefully monitoring and attending to the child's distress signals. Parents who offer such security then serve as a secure base from which children can explore their environment, and responsive parents encourage and support such exploratory behaviors that are directed by the child. In contrast, unresponsive parents provide insensitive, neglectful, critical, or inconsistent caregiving that is not contingent on the infant's needs; unresponsive parents do not provide a secure base for their children and may also restrict or become overly involved with the child's exploratory behaviors.

Other research on responsive parenting examines the role of active engagement with the child, such as providing order and structure, teaching cooperativeness, and providing rich language input.

Research on parenting responsiveness usually takes the form of naturalistic observation of child–parent interaction, either in the laboratory or in the child’s natural environment. A coding system is often used to record the behaviors of both the parents and the children. For example, parents may be coded on sensitivity to the child’s needs, their accepting mannerisms, and engagement of the child in a noninterfering manner. This observation can occur once or multiple times over an extended period of time. Other research may take the form of an intervention study, where parents are experimentally assigned to receive either responsive-parenting training or no training, and the effects of the training on the children are measured.

Whether the research is observational or experimental, the outcome typically focuses on infant behaviors, such as distress and contact-seeking behavior upon separation, and on markers of development, such as cooperative behavior, exploratory behavior, and motor and language skills. For older children and adolescents, outcome measures may include social skills, parent–child relationship quality, and levels of motivation and academic achievement. In research where both parents’ report of own responsiveness and child’s perception of parental responsiveness are obtained, much of the evidence suggests that perceived responsiveness of parental responsiveness by adolescents is a better predictor of children’s achievement than parental report of their own responsiveness.

Adult Relationships

Responsiveness in adult relationships encompasses a diverse set of relationship phenomena and is thus more difficult to define and measure. Often providers, recipients, and outside observers report differences and disagreements on what constitutes responsive behavior by providers. Responses that can be considered as sensitive and appropriate to one person’s self-expression and behavior may vary considerably across different people and even within the same person depending on both parties’ needs and circumstances at the time. The complex,

dynamic, and sequential nature of responsiveness also suggests the importance of examining the needs, motives, and behaviors of both interaction partners.

Adult interactions can also be observed naturally, longitudinally, or experimentally using an experimenter-defined coding system for measuring observable responsiveness, by experimentally creating situations in which responsive behaviors can be measured, or through self-reports. For example, research on marital relationships found that, compared with happy couples that communicate warmth and validate each other’s points, unhappy couples communicate more hostility or reject each other’s thoughts and opinions. Outcomes can vary considerably, including personal well-being, relationship development and well-being, and adult exploratory behaviors, such as pursuit and achievement of personal goals as well as reasons for pursuing these goals.

Findings point to the importance of studying perceived partner responsiveness in adult relationships. Perceived partner responsiveness is characterized by the belief that relationship partners care about, understand, validate, and otherwise react supportively to the core, defining feature of the individual’s needs, wishes, and desires. Perceiving responsiveness may be influenced by many factors such as individual differences in personality, expectations, and relationship history. Research measuring both the recipient’s perceived partner responsiveness and the provider’s or observer’s report of responsiveness show differences in reporting of responsiveness. This may occur because the provider’s efforts at providing responsive behaviors often fall short of the needs and expectations of the recipient, fail to be detected by the recipient, or are misinterpreted as being unresponsive. In situations of social support, provider’s intended supportive behaviors may sometimes be experienced as being unresponsive because it may have reduced the recipient’s feelings of competence or induced feelings of interpersonal debt. In such cases of divergence, usually, perceived partner responsiveness is a better predictor of positive outcomes than actual responsiveness. Of course, there are some agreements between the two, suggesting that objective responsive behaviors contribute to perceptions of responsiveness.

Personal and Relational Consequences

Perceiving responsiveness from a relationship partner has many important implications for enhancing both personal and relational outcomes. For example, the availability of supportive relationship partners is associated with enhanced physiological and emotional well-being. Responsive listening can facilitate effective communication and development of relational closeness. Perceived responsiveness plays a larger role in strengthening intimacy than self-disclosure does. Intimacy is enhanced when relationship partners respond to important self-disclosures in such a manner to induce feelings of having been understood, validated, and cared for. In turn, perceiving responsiveness promotes feeling connected and encourages further self-disclosure. Moreover, in contrast to less satisfying relationships characterized by norms of equity, or tit-for-tat, more satisfying communal relationships are characterized by mutual responsiveness to each other's needs and welfare without keeping track of benefits given and received. Accordingly, increasing responsive communication and behavior are key goals of many couple-based therapies. Even in nonromantic relationships, responsiveness plays a large role in promoting effective teaching, mentoring, and leadership styles.

In addition, perceiving responsiveness is critical to the formation of secure attachment, from infant-parent relationships to adult close relationships. Security of attachment is an important predictor of many personal and interpersonal processes—compared with insecure children, secure children are more likely to be socially competent and are more likely to initiate exploration of their environment. Mental models of attachment formed in early childhood have important consequences for adulthood. Secure adults are more likely to have intimate, satisfying relationships than insecure adults, and they are better at receiving and providing responsive support and caregiving. A responsive partner also can serve as a secure base, on whom adults can rely to enrich their careers, hobbies, and personal growth.

Although research tends to emphasize negative events requiring support, personal and relational outcomes have been shown to be enhanced by having a responsive partner who celebrates the person's successes. Responsive partners are more

likely to bring out the best in each other by perceiving and supporting each person's ideals and aspirations. Moreover, responsive interaction may strengthen feelings of security in relationships, leading to enhanced satisfaction and well-being. Such perceived security has other benefits—research also shows that, compared with thinking about an unsupportive or nonclose relationships, people who are asked to think about the supportiveness of a close partner are more likely to seek out unfavorable but useful information that will aid self-improvement.

Other Determinants of Responsiveness

Several factors facilitate or impede the provision of actual responsiveness and the perception of responsiveness. First, some people are better than others at detecting emotional states in others, drawing out more self-disclosure, and communicating responsive behaviors. For example, being female or having high general empathy, self-esteem, or secure attachment all seem to predict actually enacting more responsive behaviors than being male or having low empathy, self-esteem, and insecure attachment.

Second, people may unknowingly foster a reality that matches their general expectations about their social relationships. Individuals whose self-concept includes beliefs that others are unlikely to provide support, who expect rejection, or who are depressed may indeed undermine their relationships by engaging in neglectful, hostile, or excessive reassurance-seeking behaviors and thereby inducing unresponsiveness from their partners. Compared with reports of independent observers, people with low self-esteem sometimes perceive their partners' behaviors as being more unresponsive than they actually are. Such low self-esteem individuals may even regard partners who confirm their low self-views as being responsive and feel that their partners understand them. An ironic consequence of this is that when partners of low self-esteem individuals express high regard, it can increase fear of abandonment on the assumption that sooner or later the partner will begin to see oneself through the same prism of unworthiness. In contrast, individuals with high self-esteem perceive and report more supportive behaviors

from their partners, often more than is judged by outside observers.

Consequently, it is important to consider the interactive nature of dyadic interaction and whether responsive behaviors are mutual and reciprocal. The perception of responsiveness is a function of each partner's needs and motives, expectations of the other's responsiveness, and the nature of the existing relationship. People with insecure attachment may pick as a partner another insecure person who, during their ongoing interaction, may not only confirm the expectation of unresponsiveness, but make the unresponsive interaction a reality. In contrast, secure individuals tend to pick partners who are more likely to be responsive and, in addition, may be able to increase their partners' responsive behaviors through their own responsive behaviors. Even in child-parent relationships, children's temperament and responsiveness to parental behaviors may contribute to responsive or unresponsive parenting styles: Infants who maintain eye contact, smile often, and have calm temperaments may induce more responsive caregiving from parents than infants who fail to exhibit these behaviors. Furthermore, the situation must be taken into account. Levels of responsiveness expected from a specific person or role may influence the process; generally, people expect more responsive behaviors from close partners, but may perceive same behaviors by a colleague to be inappropriate. For example, partners who call several times a day during a sick day may be perceived as being responsive, whereas the same behavior by a colleague may be considered excessive or intrusive. Thus, research on responsiveness often takes into account the complexity of the interactive, dynamic nature of responsiveness, as well as the motives and behaviors of both interaction partners and situational circumstances.

Madoka Kumashiro

See also Attachment Theory; Caregiving Across the Life Span; Communication, Norms and Rules; Communication Processes, Verbal; Interpersonal Sensitivity; Intimacy; Parenting; Reassurance Seeking; Social Support, Nature of; Understanding

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RETIREMENT, EFFECTS ON RELATIONSHIPS

Retirement heralds a new stage in the life cycle. It marks the end of paid employment and the start of life as a senior citizen. Relationships with coworkers are important during a career, but how does retirement affect them? Relationships with coworkers are apt to change, and so are relationships at home, with the extended family and with nonkin. This entry discusses the extent to which personal relationships are affected by retirement.

Social relationships at the workplace enhance enjoyment, creativity, and career development and

are thus meaningful. They also contribute to one's sense of personal worth and importance. In addition, the support provided in these relationships may diminish the effects of work-related stress and often contributes to well-being. However, most relationships with coworkers are not preserved beyond the workplace and do not become personal relationships. Work relationships are more likely to become personal if people work in the vicinity of their home or when coworkers have common interests. If coworkers have shared activities beyond the working environment, the likelihood of coworker relationships continuing after retirement increases.

Three theoretical perspectives predict a retirement-related loss of personal relationships. Holding that old age is a stage of life with limited social expectations about the roles that older adults play, disengagement theory notes that older people tend to withdraw from society. Not only work-related but also other types of relationships deteriorate. For disengaged retirees, loss of the work role places constraints on them, and they are forced to withdraw from certain activities and relationships. In particular, people who have no control over when and how they stop working face greater disruptions in their relationships than people whose retirement occurs as anticipated.

Socioemotional Selectivity Theory predicts that older people disengage from relatively superficial relationships, such as with former coworkers, because they find their emotional engagement with network members such as close kin and close friends more effective for maintaining their social identity and sharing their joys and sorrows. Reengaged retirees also identify retirement with disengagement, but are selective and content with it. If the partner or other significant others in the personal network no longer have a job or never did, the new retiree may be absorbed into a post-retirement world. The retiree typically spends a great deal of time at home, focusing on kin relationships and leisure activities with significant others. It is unlikely that relationships with former coworkers would be continued in a situation of this kind.

According to Social Convoy Theory, networks consist of close relationships determined by attachments and peripheral relationships determined by role requirements. Role-guided relationships (e.g.,

with coworkers) can be important and affectionate, but are primarily linked to the role setting, which generally limits their duration and content. Realigned retirees may look forward to retirement to release them from the pressures of their work role. Retirement decreases the likelihood of coworker relationships continuing. These retirees see retirement as a time for extending their lives in different and more meaningful directions. The initial period after retirement is full of positive changes. Retirees may explore and enjoy new possibilities. Retirees may take new social roles, and people from other role settings such as volunteer work, leisure activities, or grandparenting might replace coworker relationships, although sometimes still some contact is maintained with former coworkers.

Few researchers have studied the retirement effect on relationships. A general finding is that the number of relationships does not decrease contrary to the disengagement perspective. Two studies particularly showed that an estimated average of half the personal relationships with coworkers end shortly after retirement. Network members with whom job-related relationships are continued are now tagged as *former coworkers* or *friends*. These continued relationships are not necessarily part of the persistent core of ties maintained across time and might be ended later. Intensive social interaction with the spouse, local kin, and other people in the neighborhood replaces ties with former coworkers. Retired people also may initiate or renew relationships linked to postretirement activities. Consistent with the social convoy perspective, retirees' total number of personal relationships thus equals the preretirement number, and retirement mainly affects the network composition.

Changes after retirement are not always positive. It is not easy for everyone to preserve a positive mood. After a number of years, the retiree's satisfaction and well-being can decrease, and relationships, in particular job-related ones, tend to deteriorate. Also marriage quality may be affected as older studies show. Marriage may improve because there is more time and energy to devote to the spouse. However, and more important, husbands spending more time at home or in the immediate vicinity can generate spousal tension because the home has traditionally been the wife's territory. As a result of increased female employment and

men's greater involvement in domestic tasks in contemporary Western society, the situation might be different for future cohorts.

No person's biography is one-dimensional, focused only on employment. Retirement may coincide with changes in other life domains. It can, for example, trigger changes in health, and poor health or being a caregiver for others may trigger early retirement. Retirement may be followed by a move to a more pleasant environment. This multidimensionality in personal biographies contributes to individual differences in relationship changes. For some people, retirement might be the start of a third stage of life with opportunities to develop and intensify relationships, whereas for others it leads to a constrained situation with limited chances to maintain existing relationships.

Theo van Tilburg

See also Change in Romantic Relationships Over Time; Contextual Influences on Relationships; Employment Effects on Relationships; Life-Span Development and Relationships; Workplace Relationships

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REVENGE

Definitions of *revenge* in the scholarly literature vary, but there is considerable agreement that the phenomenon these definitions are intended to describe is both ubiquitous and universal, appearing repeatedly and frequently throughout human history and across diverse cultures and relationship forms. Indeed, so common are acts of revenge in literature, historical records, and current events

that some experts have concluded that the desire for vengeance ranks among the most powerful of human passions.

For purposes of this entry, *revenge* is defined generically as action that repays harm with harm. Consistent with this definition, Roy Baumeister has argued that, at its core, revenge entails a reversal of roles in which the original perpetrator becomes the victim. Revenge can thus be seen as a perversion of the maxim “do unto others as you would have them do unto you,” in which an individual does unto others what has been done to him or her.

Revenge is often treated in the scholarly literature as if it is the polar opposite of forgiving. There may be reasons to question this viewpoint, however. For example, Everett Worthington has argued that there are a variety of ways to reduce the complexity of negative emotions (which he calls *unforgiveness*) that often arises when we experience offense or injury at the hands of another and that forgiving and taking revenge are just two of these. From this perspective, revenge and forgiving share a common identity as responses to interpersonal harm or strategies for reducing unforgiveness. In actuality, research suggests that desires for revenge and the inclination to forgive tend to be inversely related to each other, but that, in itself, does not imply that they need be antithetical to each other. Indeed, under certain circumstances—such as when forgiving is used to demonstrate one's moral superiority over an offender—forgiving may in fact serve vengeful purposes.

Empirical research on revenge is rather limited at this time despite that much has been written about the topic from philosophical and theoretical perspectives. In part, the lack of research in this area may stem from a tendency among scholars to focus their attention on acts of revenge that are extreme and violent. Not only are such extreme acts of revenge less amenable to systematic investigation, but existing research suggests that they may reflect just “the tip of the iceberg.” In everyday life, milder, more mundane acts of revenge may be far more numerous and frequent than extreme acts of revenge.

Revenge in Organizational Settings

At present, the literature on revenge in organizations offers the richest descriptive base for understanding

when and how people take revenge and the kinds of consequences that accompany a decision to retaliate in response to perceived provocation. For example, the work of Thomas Tripp and Robert Bies and their colleagues indicates that (a) the desire for revenge is typically triggered by provocations involving the obstruction of goals, violation of rules or norms, and/or threats to social status or power; (b) acts of revenge can take diverse forms that vary in severity, kind, and relation to the initial offense; and (c) revenge may achieve a variety of outcomes such as eliminating injustice; restoring a threatened sense of self-esteem, self-image, or reputation; equalizing power; deterring future acts of harm; and teaching the harmdoer a lesson.

Revenge in Romantic Relationships

Based on the findings of their research, Tripp and Bies have argued that scholarly discussions tend to portray revenge in a biased fashion that emphasizes its destructive, antisocial potential while rejecting the possibility that revenge can sometimes be used for and actually achieve constructive and prosocial ends. Recent research on revenge in romantic relationships corroborates this viewpoint to some extent. For example, participants in a study by Susan Boon, Alishia Alibhai, and Vicki Deveau were interviewed about an episode in which they “got even” with a current or former romantic partner. As part of the interview, participants were asked to consider the consequences that followed their decision to repay harm with harm. Most participants indicated that their vengeful actions had both positive and negative consequences (e.g., redressed the negative feelings they experienced in the aftermath of the provocations that fueled their desires for revenge, elicited empathy in their partners, taught their partners a lesson, gave their partners a taste of their own medicine, etc.; made them feel guilty or bad, compromised their images of themselves as good, moral people, failed to resolve the original problem with the relationship). It was less clear, however, that the positive or constructive consequences they reported were also prosocial in nature (i.e., likely to benefit others, rather than themselves). Participants only rarely described constructive outcomes that benefited other people, although a

small proportion of the sample did claim that their actions benefited their relationships with their partners.

Finally, several scholars have argued that people’s attitudes toward revenge are morally ambivalent. The results of research on revenge in relationships appear to support such arguments. On the one hand, the considerable majority of participants in Boon and colleagues’ interview study asserted that revenge is morally wrong, arguing, for example, that getting even is unethical and immoral, a childish and immature response to wrongdoing, and that better (i.e., nonvengeful) responses to wrongdoing exist. On the other hand, participants in another of Boon and Deveau’s studies were no happier with the situation when an aggrieved individual (the victim in a hypothetical love triangle) decided not to retaliate against his partner than when his retaliatory gesture went to excess. This latter finding is consistent with arguments in the literature that people often perceive those who do not retaliate for harms committed against them as weak and ineffectual.

Susan Boon

See also Anger in Relationships; Dark Side of Relationships; Enemies; Forgiveness; Transgressions; Vengeance

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REWARDS AND COSTS IN RELATIONSHIPS

Among general social-psychological theories that have been applied to social and personal relationship

processes, reinforcement-based theories have been most explicit in addressing rewards and costs in relationships. Reinforcement-based theories owe a considerable debt to B. F. Skinner's operant reinforcement theory, which emphasizes the impact of the physical and social environments on individuals' behavior. Reinforcement-based theories can be classified into three major categories: (1) social exchange perspectives (George Homans's social exchange theory, Uriel and Edna Foa's Resource-Exchange Theory), (2) equity perspectives (J. Stacey Adams's Equity Theory, Elaine Hatfield and G. William Walster's Equity Theory), and (3) interdependence perspectives (John Thibaut and Harold Kelley's Interdependence Theory, Caryl Rusbult's Investment Model). This entry defines the concepts of rewards and costs, and it compares and contrasts theoretical perspectives on rewards and costs. Also, drawing on research by Constantine Sedikides, Mary Beth Oliver, and Keith Campbell, this entry provides a critique of reinforcement-based theories of rewards and costs.

Social Exchange Perspectives on Rewards and Costs

According to Homans's social exchange theory, a reward is anything that an individual considers agreeable, whereas a cost is anything that an individual considers disagreeable. For example, the receipt of money constitutes a reward for the individual, whereas the giving of money constitutes a cost for the individual. Likewise, the receipt of esteem constitutes a reward for the individual, whereas the giving of esteem constitutes a cost for the individual. In Homans's social exchange theory, principles of economic transactions govern social interactions in general (e.g., in order for one person to obtain a reward, another person must incur a cost). To the extent that an individual perceives a relationship as more rewarding than costly over time, the individual is likely to remain involved in that relationship.

Foa and Foa's Resource-Exchange Theory retains the concepts of rewards and costs as defined in Homans's social exchange theory. However, Foa and Foa's Resource-Exchange Theory builds on Homans's social exchange theory by defining a commodity or resource as anything that the individual perceives as rewarding when gained and costly when lost. Moreover, Foa and Foa's

Resource-Exchange Theory not only distinguishes between social and personal relationships, but also distinguishes between tangible and intangible commodities or resources. Social and personal relationships alike are characterized by the give and take of tangible resources (e.g., money, information, services), but personal relationships are unique in that they also are characterized by the give and take of intangible resources (e.g., love, support, esteem). Unlike tangible resources, intangible resources may be given without necessarily entailing a loss for either partner (e.g., by giving love to her or his spouse, an individual may experience greater self-love).

Equity Perspectives on Rewards and Costs

In Adams's Equity Theory, rewards are renamed as positive outcomes, whereas costs are renamed as negative outcomes. However, the premise that rewards/positive outcomes can be distinguished from costs/negative outcomes on the basis of the individual's perception of social interactions as agreeable versus disagreeable remains unchanged. Adams's Equity Theory builds on Homans's original version of social exchange theory by making it clear that ongoing social and personal relationships are not necessarily based on equal investments by partners. In both Adams's Equity Theory and Homans's original version of social exchange theory, an investment is anything that individuals have put into the relationship that subsequently entitles them to rewards. In response to Adams's Equity Theory, Homans's revised version of social exchange theory likewise acknowledges that investments by partners need not be equal. According to Adams's Equity Theory and Homans's revised version of social exchange theory, as long as partners agree in advance regarding inequality of investments, both partners will be inclined to remain in their relationships to the extent that they receive a fair return on their investments.

Hatfield and Walster's Equity Theory builds on Adams's Equity Theory by noting that individuals may experience chronic overbenefits or chronic underbenefits in social and (especially) personal relationships. An overbenefit represents a level of profit (i.e., rewards minus costs or positive minus negative outcomes) that is higher than the individual

deserves given his or her initial investment (compared with the partner's investment). In contrast, an underbenefit represents a level of profit that is lower than the individual deserves given his or her initial investment (again compared with the partner's investment). An individual may be unhappy with overbenefits (due to shame or guilt) as well as with underbenefits (due to anger or resentment), although underbenefits are more likely to lead the individual to end the relationship than are overbenefits.

Interdependence Perspectives on Rewards and Costs

According to Thibaut and Kelley's interdependence theory, a reward is anything that increases an individual's relationship satisfaction or happiness, whereas a cost is anything that decreases an individual's relationship satisfaction. In turn, relationship satisfaction strengthens an individual's relationship commitment or decision to remain in his or her relationship. Thus, rewards and costs indirectly influence an individual's relationship commitment. Also, because commitment directly affects a variety of relationship outcomes (e.g., marriage, divorce), rewards and costs indirectly influence those relationship outcomes as well.

Rusbult's original Investment Model builds on Thibaut and Kelley's Interdependence Theory by including investment, along with satisfaction and perceived alternatives, in predicting individuals' commitment. Like satisfaction, but unlike perceived alternatives, investment is a positive predictor of commitment. In subsequent versions of the Investment Model, Rusbult has added several relationship maintenance strategies that are used as consequences of greater commitment (e.g., decision to remain in the relationship, tendencies to accommodate, derogation of alternatives, willingness to sacrifice, and perceived superiority), as well as consequences of those maintenance strategies (e.g., relationship stability).

Critique of Reinforcement-Based Theories of Rewards and Costs in Relationships

Reinforcement-based theories have gone a long way toward clarifying the give and take of relationship

processes. However, as Sedikides, Oliver, and Campbell noted, such theories are not without weaknesses. To begin with, reinforcement-based theories focus mostly on rules and expectations that regulate the giving and receiving of benefits or costs, rather than the content of benefits or costs as seen from the perspective of the individual. That is, such theories overlook subjective or idiosyncratic construals of benefits and costs when such construals are powerful determinants of partner choice. Partners, for example, give high ranks to such benefits as companionship, feeling loved or loving another, feeling happy or elated, exclusivity, and self-growth and understanding, whereas they give low ranks to such benefits as social support from partner's friends or relatives, learning about other sex, and expertise in relationships. Conversely, partners give high ranks to such costs as stress and worry about the relationship, increased dependence on partner, and social sacrifices (e.g., lack of freedom to socialize), whereas they give low ranks to such costs as monetary losses, loss of innocence about relationships and love, and loss of privacy. Relatedly, reinforcement-based theories do not account for divergent perceptions of benefits and costs: What a relational partner perceives as a benefit may not be received as such by the other.

Moreover, reinforcement-based theories do not pay adequate attention to subjective perceptions of the relative importance of benefits and costs as they apply to different kinds of relationships such as friendship versus romance, communal sharing, authority ranking, equality matching, and market placing. Also, such theories do not account for changes in the relative importance of benefits and costs at different stages in the relationship. Indeed, perceptions of what is rewarding and costly are to a substantial degree in the eye of the beholder, and thus they will change as a function of novelty, satiation, or the availability of alternative partners.

Furthermore, reinforcement-based theories do not provide a compelling account of gender differences in subjective construals of benefits and costs. Women, for example, regard the benefits of intimacy and self-growth as more important than men do, whereas men regard the benefit of sexual gratification as more important than women do. Conversely, women regard the costs of loss of identity and loss of innocence about relationships as more serious than men do, whereas men regard

the cost of monetary losses as more serious than women do. Finally, women regard good partner earning potential as a more important benefit than men do, whereas men regard partner physical attractiveness as a more important benefit than women do. In addition, reinforcement-based theories do not account for age and cultural differences in perceptions of relational benefits and costs.

Understanding of the subjective construals of benefits and costs may increase understanding of the expectations that individuals bring to the relationship, of how these expectations change at different relationship stages, and of how they differ and evolve for women and men. Although the road from stated benefits and costs to real-life partner choices is rocky, in the end, enrichment of the conceptual dimensions of idiosyncratically perceived benefits and costs may contribute to a better understanding of why individuals enter a relationship, why they stay in it, and why they terminate it.

Conclusion

Due to space limitations, the literature review in the present entry is highly selective. For example, among general social-psychological theories that have been applied to social and personal relationship processes, cognitive consistency theories (e.g., Fritz Heider's Balance Theory, Theodore Newcomb's Strain-Toward-Symmetry Theory) are not reviewed because those theories at best are indirectly concerned with rewards and costs. Also, theories that are focused exclusively on interpersonal attraction (e.g., Bernice and Albert Lott's theory of the role of reward in the acquisition of positive interpersonal attitudes, Elliot Aronson's Gain-Loss Theory of attraction) are not reviewed because those theories historically have been applied primarily to laboratory situations rather than to real-life relationships. In contrast, the reinforcement-based theories covered in the present entry have been especially influential throughout the history of relationship research.

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See also Equity Theory; Interdependence Theory; Investment Model; Resource Theory; Social Exchange Theory

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RISK IN RELATIONSHIPS

Risk in relationships can be considered in two distinct ways. From a psychological perspective, *risk* can be defined as a way of thinking about relationships (a cognitive schema) where choices to form and maintain intimate relationships are thought to involve unusually high levels of psychological/emotional investment combined with high uncertainty about outcomes and accompanied by a heightened anxiety about forming and maintaining relationships. These thoughts are likely to be the product of life-course experiences (e.g., divorce) that generate an increased desire for intimacy, but also a fear of negative consequences should a relationship become too close. From this perspective, risk is largely indistinguishable from other concepts such as anxious-ambivalent or fearful attachment styles, trust, and fear of intimacy.

Alternatively, *risk* can be defined in sociological terms as a perceived and/or actual characteristic of the social context within which relationships are formed and maintained. Rather than the outcome

of earlier life-course experiences of individuals, risk is conceptualized as a product of changing structural and cultural conditions experienced by all individuals sharing a common social environment—specifically, a context of late modernity (e.g., contemporary North America and Northern Europe). In such a context, social institutions (e.g., families, communities, and churches) no longer control or provide guidelines for forming and maintaining relationships, individuals take on more responsibility for shaping their own identity and life outcomes, and there is an increased reliance on rational decision making and technology for controlling the physical and social environment, as well as individuals' personal lives. As a result, individuals must make relationship choices that were largely made for them in previous generations and must do so under conditions of expanded options, increased uncertainty, and a greater reliance on logical means–end reasoning about what they believe should be an inherently emotional experience. In addition, these relationship decisions have greater consequence for their identity, and individuals bear more personal responsibility for negative outcomes should their relationships fail. It is in this sense that risk is considered here.

Theoretical Context

Risk in relationships is derivative of the concept of risk more broadly applied to life in modern societies. Ulrich Beck was first to develop the idea of “risk society” as a condition of “late modernity.” In this historical period, life outcomes and conditions are no longer determined by chance, fate, kinship, or divine intervention, and individuals no longer base their actions on tradition—the way things were done before—nor the dictates of family or community authorities. Instead, individuals are expected to control their own destinies by making rational decisions about the best means for achieving their personal goals without clear guidelines and with more significant and unknown consequences.

With choice comes the possibility of risk. Risk, as used in this theoretical framework, is inherently about a link between choices and their potential outcomes. Without choice, our outcomes may be

uncertain or potentially negative, but we lack responsibility for those outcomes and therefore risk is not involved. If our actions are predetermined for us or based on precedent or community control, then there is little or no risk involved. If we did what we were told to do, then any negative outcomes were not our fault. However, when, as in modern societies, we are left to weigh the merits of alternative actions for achieving our goals and then make a decision based on that calculation, we are confronted with the possibility of risk.

Beck and Elizabeth Beck-Gernsheim in *The Normal Chaos of Love* further developed this idea as applied to intimate relationships. They note the demise of traditional institutions responsible for regulating intimate relationships. In highly developed modern societies such as contemporary North America, institutional norms and practices are substantially weakened. For example, there are no longer clear “rules” for dating, it is no longer necessary to make a formal commitment (marriage) before residing with a partner, and legal constraints on marital partners are greatly reduced. This is a process Andrew Cherlin calls *deinstitutionalization*. Individuals are responsible for developing their own criteria for what constitutes a desirable partner, finding ways to meet and get to know potential partners, negotiating the rules of appropriate behavior within relationships with those potential partners, determining the levels of commitment involved in their evolving relationships, and maintaining personal commitment levels that can sustain a rewarding relationship in the absence of community and other institutional constraints.

Making the choice even more risky are the disembedding of social relations that occurs in late modernity, the increased significance of expressive versus instrumental traits in defining the self, and the increased reliance on rationality as a means for managing the risks involved.

The concept of disembeddedness, as developed by Anthony Giddens, refers to the fact that social relationships in modern societies extend beyond traditional social status boundaries and beyond the local community. As a result, the selection process is less regulated by social norms; less informed by having a lengthy history of interaction with potential partners; individuals will feel less justified in settling for someone other than an optimal partner; and the person chosen is more likely to

possess social and personal characteristics that are different from one's own, resulting in greater pressures on the relationship to negotiate those differences. In addition, there will be less community support during the process and a less developed support network to help maintain a relationship once it is formed.

The emergence of what Marlis Buchmann calls the *expressive self* refers to a growing importance of psychological/emotional traits in defining identity and a diminished importance of ascribed traits. For example, traits such as extraversion and empathy take on greater importance than one's kinship or social status (ascribed traits). As a result, our relationship choices depend on our ability to discern more amorphous personality traits and to make uncertain judgments about how our traits fit with those of a potential partner. In addition, the outcomes of those choices take on greater significance in defining who we are because the person we choose will be one of the few people who really sees our deeper psychological/emotional qualities. Thus, the identity stakes involved in choice are raised at the same time that uncertainty about the choice is increased.

Finally, the tendency in modern societies to rely on technological and rational means for managing risks may paradoxically elevate the risks of forming a less authentic and meaningful relationship. Choices become based on artificial and somewhat arbitrary categorizations of the self and others. Furthermore, Eva Illouz notes that relationship experiences and sentiments become commodities in modern capitalistic societies. They are advertised, bought, and sold. In a modern consumer society, we purchase greeting cards to express sentiments that are not our own, show our love for one another through the purchase of symbols of romance or romantic experiences (e.g., a cruise), and demonstrate the quality of our relationship through the purchase of material goods. As a result, it becomes difficult to know whether our relationships are authentic or simply the outcome of consumption.

Conceptual Definition and Measurement

Objectively, risk increases when choice increases, when investments in the decision are greater

(increasing the potential for negative outcomes), and when the potential gains and losses to be realized from the decision are uncertain and significant. Thus, any social conditions that increase the choices, investments, uncertainties, and significance of outcomes during the process of relationship formation/maintenance will increase risks. Choice occurs in the absence of constraints and with the expansion of options. Investments increase when they become more psychologically and emotionally significant. Uncertainty occurs when the probabilities of positive outcomes are offset by the probabilities of negative outcomes or when the probabilities are unknown.

Although it would be convenient if we could quantify changes in each of these dimensions of risk at the societal level and calculate the level of risk involved in relationships in any given social context, this is not realistic. Instead, to assess the dimension of expanded choice, we might rely on broad social indicators such as reduced partner similarity in partner selection (both geographic and social similarity). To assess increased investments, we might analyze cultural narratives for expressions of concern about investments or demographic data on the physical and psychological health benefits of relationships. Finally, to determine levels of uncertainty and significance of outcomes, we could rely on an analysis of cultural narratives or on reported levels of marital distress, violence in intimate relationships, levels of sexually transmitted diseases in the population, and divorce rates. Taken together, such changes would signify increased risk.

It is also possible to assess risk at the individual level by collecting information about individuals' perceptions that there is much to gain and lose in relationship decisions and that the outcomes have high levels of uncertainty attached to them. As a perception, however, it is important to distinguish between risks in one's own relationships and risks involved in the marketplace of relationships. The level of risk that one feels in one's own relationships may be considerably less than they perceive to exist in the world of relationships within which they make relationship decisions. Societies develop cultural mechanisms for dealing with risks and uncertainties through the development and promotion of belief systems (e.g., religion, romanticism, a belief that risk can be managed through

rational decision making, technology and science) and validating rituals (e.g., weddings, honeymoons, anniversaries). In addition, individuals engage in cognitive maintenance activities (self-serving changes in how they think about their situation and reconstruct their pasts) as a means for deflecting potential negatives in their own relationships. As a result, we tend to underplay the risks in our own relationships, but may still feel a sense of risk with respect to the relationship market.

Dimensions of Risk in Relationships

There are several dimensions of the relationship formation/maintenance process where uncertainties have increased and thereby increase risk.

First, risk is increased by an expanded and deregulated marketplace. Those seeking a partner today lack institutional settings for their search, are confronted with the dilemma of whether to use technological search tools that may seem artificial and insincere, and must make a decision to pursue a specific relationship from a larger pool knowing that doing so too early could preclude later options that might be a better fit and waiting too long could lead one to miss out on the best-fitting alternative.

Second, risk is increased by the lack of clear guidelines for making the right choice and the increased emphasis on expressive traits and emotional fulfillment in relationships. As a result, uncertainties arise with respect to how to determine partner compatibility, how to fulfill our own needs and those of our partner, and whether we will be able to find and maintain long-term agreement about our life goals and expectations.

Third, risk is increased by uncertainty with regards to appropriate actions/behavior in searching for and maintaining relationships. In particular, the cultural shift away from gender-specific traits (e.g., masculinity, femininity) has made it increasingly difficult to avoid misinterpretations between heterosexual partners regarding the gender appropriateness of behaviors. The potential for negative outcomes as a result of such misinterpretations extends beyond the search process and is ever present because couples can no longer rely on institutional constraints to maintain their relationships.

Fourth, risk enters into the relationship process as a result of unclear markers of relationship progression (e.g., “going steady,” “engaged”), mixed motives among those in the “market,” and uncertainties about commitment levels of partners. With the lack of clear cultural markers, it becomes difficult to determine appropriate timing for relationship progression and to know whether a given relationship warrants an increase in the levels of investments and sacrifice. Without assurances that a potential partner is also seeking a long-term commitment, the potential for exploitation or wasting time/money on a given relationship increases.

Finally, there are risks associated with the decision to maintain a relationship once established and having to manage breakups should they occur. With increased choice in the relationship marketplace, there is uncertainty around knowing when to hang on or let go of a given relationship (e.g., when does a relationship become too much work to continue, how do we avoid or at least not fear multiple breakups, and how do we avoid being trapped in exploited or abusive relationships?). In addition, with so much diversity in individual lives, it becomes difficult to determine how to keep a relationship vital over time, deal with growth and change within a relationship, manage boundaries and unrealistic expectations, and deal constructively with conflict.

Conclusion

Risk in relationships is a relatively new concept. As a product of modernity, risk arises in relationships as a function of increased choice, psychological/emotional investments, and uncertainties in all stages of relationship process from searching for the best partner, to developing mutual commitment and trust, to maintaining commitment and trust over time. Although a characteristic of the social context, it may provide us with a greater understanding of why problems of trust, intimacy, and commitment at the individual level arise in modern societies.

Richard Bulcroft and Silvia K. Bartolic

See also Commercial Channels for Mate Seeking;
Marriage, Historical and Cross-Cultural Trends

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ROCHESTER INTERACTION RECORD

The time people spend with each other is often described as *social interaction*, and understanding human relationships requires understanding social interaction. Social interaction can be studied using various methods, and an important distinction among these methods is the extent to which a method concerns naturally occurring social interaction or social interaction in controlled settings such as the laboratory. Both types of methods have advantages, and in this entry, a popular (almost the standard) method of studying naturally occurring social interaction, the Rochester Interaction Record (RIR), is described.

The RIR was developed by a group of scholars at the University of Rochester (hence the name) in the 1970s. The primary impetus for developing the RIR was a sense of dissatisfaction with the state of the art of studying social interaction. At the time, much of the research on social interaction was laboratory based. Although such studies provided controlled settings in which specific (and often elaborate) hypotheses could be tested, laboratory studies were and remain, by definition, controlled and limited in their focus. For example, in the laboratory, it is not

possible to study how socially active people are in their daily lives and how they distribute their interactions (with friends vs. lovers vs. strangers, etc.). Moreover, even when an interpersonal process can be studied in the laboratory (e.g., intimacy), the artificial context of the laboratory may alter the phenomenon being studied. Another popular method, global surveys, also have limitations such as the undue influence of recent events on responses, difficulties in remembering past events, response bias, and so forth.

The RIR was developed to provide scientifically valid and useful descriptions of naturally occurring social interactions. Participants in RIR studies use a standardized form to describe their social interactions each day, and studies usually last for 1 to 3 weeks. A *social interaction* is usually defined as “any encounter with another person (or people) in which people attend to one another and adjust their behavior in response to one another.” Moreover, because there is broad cross-cultural agreement about what constitutes a social interaction, such a definition has been used successfully worldwide. To avoid overburdening participants by asking them to describe literally every social contact, in most RIR studies, participants are asked to describe interactions that last 10 minutes or longer. The 10-minute limit eliminates few (if any) important interactions. To avoid problems and biases associated with recalling events over long periods of time, participants are required to update their diaries as soon as possible after the interaction. Originally, participants used paper forms, but recent studies have used electronic data collection (e.g., Web-based, Palm pilots). It is important to note that, as revealed by poststudy interviews and questionnaires, participants typically find that maintaining an RIR diary is relatively easy and does not interfere with their daily lives.

Within this framework, the specific data collected about each social interaction can vary and has varied across studies. It is useful to think of these data as describing two broad aspects of interaction: quantitative and qualitative. Quantitative aspects include where the interaction occurred, how long it lasted, who was there, what was going on during the interaction, and so forth. Qualitative aspects refer to people’s reactions to the interactions: how much they enjoyed the interaction, how intimate they felt the interaction was, the emotions

they experienced during the interaction, and so forth. In this regard, it is important to note that the RIR is more an approach than an etched-in-stone specific method. That is, different researchers may collect different data about social interactions depending on their interests.

Data provided by the RIR can be used to answer two broad types of questions: differences among types of interactions and relationships between measures of interaction and other individual differences. Examples of the first type of question include comparisons of interactions with friends and romantic partners and comparisons of interactions with ingroup and outgroup members (e.g., cross- vs. same-race interactions). The second type of question could concern relationships between social interaction and individual differences, such as personality, racist attitudes, attachment style, and so forth. The data produced by RIR studies constitute multilevel data structures in that interactions are nested within persons; because of this, they need to be analyzed using appropriate (multilevel) techniques.

Given that social interaction is ubiquitous and individual differences in social interaction probably reflect myriad influences ranging from the intrapersonal to the interpersonal to the cultural, it is difficult to make broad summary statements about patterns of interaction. Nevertheless, the available data provide the basis for a few such statements. First, there is tremendous variability among individuals in terms of virtually any measure produced by the RIR. Some people are very active, whereas some are not. Some people find considerable enjoyment in their interactions, whereas others do not. Second, there is considerable variability within individuals in how they feel during and how they react to different interactions. For example, some interactions are very intimate, whereas others are not. Third, people tend to have a relatively small set of close friends (certainly fewer than 5) who account for (or appear in) more than a majority of their interactions. Fourth, markedly unpleasant interactions are uncommon. Certainly, not all interactions are viewed as very enjoyable or very pleasant; however, very few interactions are viewed as very unpleasant or not at all enjoyable.

Broadly speaking, quantity of interaction and quality of (reactions to) interaction are distinct,

unrelated aspects of interaction. This conclusion is based on the fact that quantity and quality of interaction tend to be unrelated and have been found to be related to different individual difference variables. For example, depression is negatively related to people's reactions to and feelings during interactions (e.g., enjoyment, intimacy, control), whereas it appears to be unrelated to social activity per se.

In terms of understanding human relationships, studies using the RIR complement laboratory-based studies, providing in vivo measures of important constructs. Understanding the subtleties of human relationships will require different types of studies using different methods, and the descriptions of social interactions provided by the RIR are a valuable part of this effort.

John B. Nezlek

See also Daily Diary Methods; Experimental Designs for Relationship Research; Quantitative Methods in Relationship Research; Questionnaires, Design and Use of, in Relationship Research; Social Networks, Effects on Developed Relationships

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ROLE THEORY AND RELATIONSHIPS

Role theory is an attempt to understand human relationships as a set of blueprints for interacting. The basic idea is that, in any encounter, individuals are never dealing with the whole person, but with the person in a “status” or social position. As the interaction unfolds, each person is constrained

by existing cultural scripts that specify typical scenarios for each type of encounter. For example, students approaching their teachers, parents encouraging their children, doctors attending to their patients, and friends getting together are all guided by a template of rules they have learned as members in good standing of their culture or subculture. These templates implicitly structure the interaction, including the types of “business” that get transacted and the patterns of deference and demeanor that get displayed. This entry outlines some basic issues of role theory, including conceptual background, the close link between role and identity, and the problems of agency, power, and role transformation.

Beginning with the anthropologist Ralph Linton’s influential formulation in 1936, *status* and *role* became linked to each other as two sides of the same conceptual coin. Unfortunately, consensus over the exact meaning of this conceptual distinction has been lacking, and many analysts forego conceptual purity and use the terms *status* and *role* interchangeably. Because of this muddiness, it is useful to lay out the assumptions that underlie the present definition.

Role Theory and the Culture–Behavior Dualism

Most contemporary social science rests on a dualism that separates meanings from actions or culture from behavior. Cultural meanings are what we think, whereas behavioral actions are what we do. Together the interweaving of observable actions (behavior) and unobservable interpretive “sense-making” (culture) produce the miracle of coordination within human relationships.

The concepts of status and role in Linton’s formulation are best seen as mobilizing the two sides of this culture–behavior dualism (some analysts use the hyphenated term *status-role* as a stretch toward unification). A status is a unit of culture, whereas a role is a corresponding unit of behavior that gives expression to the status. It is useful to think of a status as both a job title and a job description. The job *title* is simply the name of the social position—citizen, friend, lover, Democrat, female, lesbian, mother, gardener, jogger, professor, shopper, moviegoer, and so on. The job *description*

is the unique set of social definitions that distinguish one position from another. These definitions establish the norms and expectations (e.g., rights and duties) that will guide any person who enters that particular position.

In this formulation role (sometimes termed *role performance*) is not the status holder’s *expected* behavior, but his or her *actual* behavior in the position. The actual behavior may or may not conform to the expectations contained in the job description—this is always an empirical question. For instance, people do not expect someone called a friend to speak ill of them to other people, but in their actual behavior, friends sometimes betray one another. They may then be held accountable for violating the “job description” of a friend, even to the point of getting “fired” from the job.

Role Theory and the Self

George Herbert Mead’s classic distinction between the *me* and the *I* is closely parallel to Linton’s *status* and *role*. For Mead, the *me* is a set of organized attitudes of the community, or called-for responses, internalized through what is sometimes termed a *role-taking* process. Much as a status is what I *should* do in a given position and my role is what I *actually* do, the *me* is the self offered to me via other people’s expectations, and the *I* is my response to it (the *I* is the “living act,” as Mead once put it). Ralph Turner’s distinction between *role-taking* and *role-making* is quite similar.

Mead’s me–I distinction not only upheld Linton’s culture–behavior dualism, but it also transformed role theory into a sociological perspective on identity. Indeed, some symbolic interactionists in sociology use the hyphenated term *role-identity* to give expression to this connection between role and self. Each status offers a different me or self to the person who steps into it. The job descriptions that constrain my performances as spouse, teacher, friend, or grandfather are all quite different from each other. They prescribe different kinds of actions, resulting in different self-experiences as I play out my various roles. My *teacher-me* feels quite different from my *spouse-me*, for example. Students in a large classroom expect their teachers to be authorities, and teachers often feel far more authoritative in these situations than they do

anywhere else. In contrast, modern companionable spouses may feel far more affectionate, solicitous, intimate, and relaxed with their spouses than they do in any other role relationship.

Because different roles engender different self-experiences, it is often the case that a person may favor some self-experiences more than others and therefore privilege the roles that make those experiences possible. *Role attachment* is the tendency to select a particular status and invest one's identity in its ongoing deployment, as if this is the true self, the one that really matters. Losing such a status may be devastating—a process of “self-destruction of the self,” as Erving Goffman once put it. Lost statuses that are highly valued both culturally and personally are frequent candidates for this kind of personal crisis. Examples are losing a spouse or partner relationship because of divorce, death, physical separation, or breakup; losing a job because of retirement, cutbacks, or getting fired; and losing a child because of a death or simply because the child leaves home. In all these instances, the person loses a set of regular behaviors and interactions, as well as a set of self-experiences and, hence, selves.

Roles, Selves, and the Issue of Agency

The fact that people may attach themselves to some roles and not to others suggests a certain freedom in the relationship between person and role. Goffman remains the unrivaled master in demonstrating the variability and flexibility of the person–role connection. He suggested a continuum of possibility from role embracement to role distance regarding the standpoint of the person toward any of his or her roles. To embrace a role is to disappear fully and eagerly into its performance and the attendant self-experience it makes possible. To distance from it is to withdraw all of one's inner identification from what one is doing, as if to say, “What you see me doing here is not really who I am.” Complaining, mocking, muttering, sneering, smirking, and moving with exaggerated slowness are all examples that suggest that one is role distancing, or disaffected from the performance that she or he is caught up in. For example, a young adolescent may greet an unwanted parental command with sneering and

muttering compliance and then move through the requested task with an exaggerated show of half-heartedness, leaving little doubt that the self he thinks he is has been violated by this parent–child interaction and its outcome.

As always, however, human agency may run up against structures of accountability regarding the adequacy of a person's role performances. To be sure, no one can force me to embrace my role. If I feel stuck in a status that I cannot imagine getting out of soon, I may use my agency to turn sour and distant from the role through whatever expressive devices or internal machinations I might muster. Nevertheless, if I am to continue a given role relationship, the penalties for distancing and the rewards for embracing the role may be considerable. Many statuses come in pairs, such as wife and husband, friend and friend, teacher and student, parent and child, colleague and colleague, and so on (we sometimes speak of the occupants of paired statuses as *role partners*). Any marriage, for example, is a complex set of reciprocities mapped out in the job description, and highly valued goods and services are typically at stake. If there are no other reliable sources of supply, then both partners may have considerable latitude to hold one another accountable for any signs of half-hearted role performance.

Multiple Roles, Role Strain, and the Work–Family Interface

All people occupy multiple statuses and enact multiple roles, and therefore the question of the impact of one role on another becomes salient. Some theorists such as William Goode have suggested that, in modern societies, role strain—any “felt difficulty” in performing a role—is normal and inevitable. He argued that individuals' total systems of roles are overdemanding simply because time and energy are too scarce for people to meet the myriad demands of their various role partners. Other analysts such as Stephen Marks have argued that time and energy are flexible and expansible and that role strain should be treated as a variable rather than an *a priori* assumption. A great deal of empirical work has focused on the impact of various roles and role combinations on the person's well-being. Many studies have explored the spillover

effects—both positive and negative—of the quality of one role on the quality of another role. Work–family research has occupied the lion’s share of these inquiries, and in recent years, the interest in balance—variously framed as work–family balance, role balance, and life balance—has emerged as a central concern.

Role Theory, Power Dynamics, and Role Transformation

Because roles so often throw the person into a network of relationships, issues of power dynamics are interwoven with how statuses are defined and roles played out. To continue the metaphor, if a status is a job description, then someone must have written it. In a friendship relationship in which the friends are equals, power dynamics may appear to be absent, but they are merely hidden: Each friend has an equal chance of writing the rules, including how and where they should get together, how much contact is appropriate, and what kinds of interchanges should occur. Each friend therefore has the power to hold the other accountable for slacking in their responsibilities. However, many role relationships are hierarchical, as is typically the case with teacher–student, parent–child, coach–athlete, employer–employee, and intimate-partner relationships in which one partner is typically dominant. Where role hierarchy is present, the person at the top of the hierarchy may have the power to create or destroy lower status positions, add and remove people from them, promote or demote people, write and revise their job descriptions, control the use of the physical territory, create the mood or atmosphere of the setting, and mete out the rewards and punishments for good or bad role performances.

It is difficult to transform roles that are hierarchically regulated. Even in role relationships that feel oppressive to lower status persons, they may be dependent on whatever scant resources they get. In turn, the people in the more powerful and privileged statuses may have a vested interest in maintaining the status quo. They may revert to physical violence or other coercive mechanisms to generate compliance.

Nevertheless, even potentially violent repercussions may not stem the tide of resistance on the

part of unhappy status holders. The I is unpredictable, as Mead pointed out. Role performances may take some surprisingly rebellious or innovative turns, contributing to new rules that then reconstitute the status. Moreover, any social arrangement may go through periods of upheaval, and social movements sometimes promote power struggles that are instrumental in creating waves of change. Resurgent feminism in the 1960s helped to rewrite the status of *woman* and *girl*, affecting typical role performances within social institutions such as marriage, family, work, athletics, and education. Hierarchy can be undone, but it most often requires an organized and concerted refusal to do role business as usual.

It is possible, however, for individuals to restructure their statuses and roles without a social movement standing behind them. In literature, some of our favorite stories feature individual underlings who manage, against all odds, to launch successful power struggles. In Ken Kesey’s *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest*, a mental patient named McMurphy systematically undermines the “good-mental-patient-me” that the autocratic Nurse Ratched has crafted for the men on the ward. By slow degrees, he succeeds in rewriting the job description of mental patient to include the right to gamble, smoke without permission, go big-game fishing, and have sex with women. In the end, most of the men reject the role of mental patient altogether. They leave the ward to embrace the alternate role of “real men”—men who do manly activities and are not under the thumb of any woman.

Stephen R. Marks

See also Exchange Processes; Power Distribution in Relationships; Resource Theory; Socialization; Work–Family Spillover

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ROMANTICISM

Romanticism refers to a set of beliefs about the nature of love and romantic relationships, and more specifically about the characteristics of, or criteria for, an ideal relationship. These beliefs tend to emphasize the affective components of relationships and minimize or even discredit the importance of other components; as such, they are often characterized as overly idealistic, unrealistic, or even dysfunctional in nature. Romantic beliefs act as cognitive schema that are believed to be relatively persistent and form a frame of reference for attending to, interpreting, and responding to information and experiences in romantic relationships.

Romanticism commonly involves the idealization of the partner and relationship, or the idea that in true love the relationship will be perfect and the partner will meet all of the individual's needs, and that such a relationship will be easy to maintain. A second common theme involves the idea that there is one perfect person in the world for everyone and/or that individuals have only one true love in their lives. Related to this theme is the idea that you will know this love at first sight, and that true love, as opposed to lesser forms of love, will last forever. A romantic view of love also seems to entail a belief that true love can find a way to overcome all obstacles; that obstacles such as cultural differences, financial instability, or parental opposition should not exert a significant influence on the success or stability of such relationships; and that overcoming such obstacles will help to strengthen the relationship. Romanticism also tends to involve the belief that love is the only

legitimate basis for mate selection. Romantic beliefs often involve the intentional rejection of reason in terms of beliefs that love is a strange and incomprehensible phenomenon that cannot be scientifically understood or predicted, and that we should reject reason and rationality and “follow our hearts” in making these decisions. Romanticism may also involve the idea that you should experience a significant physiological response when in the presence of, or even just thinking about, the love object (e.g., heart racing, chills), and that this relationship should occupy a significant amount of your cognitive and emotional energy (e.g., through daydreaming, obsessive thoughts about the partner, or jealousy). In summary, there is a diverse constellation of beliefs associated with romanticism, many of which involve unrealistic or even dysfunctional components.

Romantic beliefs are proposed to develop through a variety of factors, both micro- and macrolevel. At the microlevel, romantic beliefs develop through the observation of others' romantic experiences (e.g., parents, peers, media representations) and through personal romantic experiences (e.g., romantic relationships, learning about relationships in classes). For example, individuals who watch more visual media (i.e., television and movies) tend to be more romantic, and those who take courses that teach students about the true nature of romantic relationships tend to be less romantic. The effects of these experiences on romanticism are thought to be strongly influenced by more macrolevel socializing agents, such as gender and culture. For example, consistent gender differences are found in romanticism, such that men tend to be more idealistic and romantic in their perspectives on love and relationships than women. There also appear to be cultural differences in romanticism, such that Americans tend to be more romantic than individuals in many other cultures examined (e.g., Korean, Chinese, Indian). It is proposed that these differences are the result of differences in broad cultural features such as the extent of individualism and gender-role norms.

As cognitive schema, romantic beliefs can influence many aspects of our romantic experiences, including our goals and motivations in relationships, attitudes about the partner and the relationship, behaviors in relationships, and interpretations of self or partner behaviors. Research has found

romantic beliefs to exert an important influence on initial attraction and in the early stages of relationship development. Additionally, romantic beliefs have been found to be associated with levels of love, satisfaction, and commitment in relationships.

The data are somewhat more complicated, however, on the specific nature of this influence on relationships. One approach to the study of romantic beliefs defines them as implicit theories about relationships and focuses on beliefs about growth (i.e., that relationship success is a function of cultivation and develops over a period of time through working together to grow closer, conquer obstacles, etc.) or destiny (i.e., that partners are either right for each other or are not) in romantic relationships. High adherence to growth beliefs is associated with attempts to improve the quality of the relationship and longer dating relationships, whereas high adherence to destiny beliefs is associated with a greater tendency to end a relationship when problems arise and a stronger association between satisfaction and relationship length.

However, some perspectives on romanticism see it as inherently problematic for relationships and suggest that the reality of the relationship will often not live up to idealized beliefs about what such relationships should be like, which will lead to more negative evaluations of, or disillusionment with, the relationship. There is evidence to support this perspective because more idealistic and unrealistic relationship beliefs or standards are related to more negative assessments of the ability to improve a relationship's quality and predict greater relationship dissatisfaction and marital distress. Additionally, the greater the perceived distance between the characteristics of an individual's actual partner and their ideal, the less satisfied they tend to be with that relationship. However, there is also evidence that a romanticized perception of a particular romantic relationship, especially premaritally, may promote relational development and satisfaction. Some suggest that this type of relationship-specific romanticism may act to promote commitment by minimizing attention to the negative aspects of the relationship or that a healthy degree of romantic idealization may promote relationship health in much the same way as general idealized beliefs seem to promote general mental health.

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See also Beliefs, Destiny Versus Growth; Beliefs About Relationships; Disillusionment in Marriage; Idealization; Ideals About Relationships; Infatuation; Marriage, Expectations About

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RULES OF RELATIONSHIPS

“Tell the truth to the people you love.” “Don’t say hurtful things to the people you love.” If these somewhat contradictory directives appear to have a common theme and a familiar ring, it is because they are both rules governing human relationships. One can hardly be involved in a relationship without having some idea about the rules that regulate it. This entry defines relationships and rules, briefly discusses types of rules and relationships, and describes the reciprocal relationship between the two.

Defining Relationships and Rules

Defining *relationships* is difficult because of the complexity of the concept. Nonetheless, a reasonable definition is that a relationship is a series of communicative interactions over time between two individuals who agree that those interactions constitute a relationship and who jointly believe that there will be interactions in the future.

The contention that relationships and rules go hand in hand can be traced back to Aristotle. A more recent expert on rules and relationships, Susan B. Shimanoff, defines a *rule* as a followable prescription that designates what behaviors are prohibited, obligated, or preferred in what contexts and in what type(s) of relationship(s).

Much of the literature on rules pertains to verbal and nonverbal *interpersonal communication* behaviors such as being polite. Interpersonal communication, unlike behaviors without communicator intent, refers to the *management of meaning* between relational partners, including what the rules are and what they mean, what the partners' relationship means, and how their relationship and the rules that regulate it are connected.

Contending that a rule is *followable* minimally means that an individual must be aware of the rule and have the linguistic and behavioral skills to follow it. For example, a guest who is unaware of a family rule of not discussing politics at dinner would be excused for breaking the rule because she or he was not aware of it. Additionally, there is no rule that people traveling abroad on vacation must talk to others in their native language because such a rule would be, for most, not followable.

Defining a rule as *prescriptive* means that a person *should* follow the rules of a particular relationship and be willing to suffer the consequences if he or she does not. For example, if a person breaks the friendship rule that one should thank a friend for a significant favor, then that person should not be surprised if the friend is less willing to perform the favor the next time around.

Describing a rule as *contextual* means that the situation needs to be considered when applying the rule. For instance, romantic partners may have a rule specifying that either one should immediately speak up if the other says or does something the partner finds offensive. However, the situation within which something offensive is said (e.g., a public context as opposed to a private one) would influence how the rule is applied. Contextual considerations also encompass situational factors such as type of relationship (e.g., family vs. friends), the formality of the situation (e.g., the bedroom vs. the boardroom), and the cultural and/or geographical context.

Types of Rules and Types of Relationships

Rules governing relationships may be *implicit*, meaning that the rule is not orally communicated but parties are aware of its existence, or *explicit*, in which the rule is verbally communicated. An example of an implicit friendship rule is that friends do not reveal each other's secrets. An openly communicated explicit rule in parent-teenager relationships might be "No yelling." There are also rules about rules, referred to as *metarules*. For example, one member of a quarrelling couple might say to the other, "I know we have a rule not to go to bed when we are angry, but can we make an exception in situations in which we are both exhausted and unable to think clearly?"

There are also rules regulating nonverbal communication. Colloquially referred to as body language, nonverbal communication includes such things as physical contact, tone of voice, and facial expressions. For example, a rule of workplace relationships is that physical contact between workers should not be sexual in nature.

Although different types of relationships, such as family and friendship, share common features, each type of relationship, indeed, each specific relationship within types, has unique properties of its own that can lead to special relationship rules. For instance, friendship and family relationships are similar in that emotional support is expected in each. However, when contrasted to family relationships, friendships are voluntary, whereas family relationships are not, as revealed in the often-stated axiom, "You can choose your friends but not your family."

Relationships may be personal or professional in nature or be a combination of the two that might lead to a conflict of rules. For example, an individual may consider his or her boss to also be his or her friend, but the friendship rule of not telling each other what to do would be trumped by the workplace rule that an employee should follow the directives of her or his boss.

Reciprocal Nature of Rules and Human Relationships

Rules and relationships are reciprocal in the sense that they complement and mutually influence each

other. Relationships in general and specific types of relationships in particular require rules in order to function with some degree of predictability and success. Rules, in a similar fashion, require relationships to determine their form and function. They coexist in a correlational rather than a cause–effect association, meaning that neither causes the other, and yet changes in one invariably bring about changes in the other. Rules influence the properties of relationships just as the properties of relationships give rise to the rules that regulate them.

One way to examine the reciprocal basis of rules and relationships is to briefly inspect an actual set of rules that apply to an actual type of relationship. In a classic article, Michael Argyle and Monica Henderson conducted a study designed to identify fundamental rules of friendships. Note that most or all of these rules would also be applicable to other types of close personal relationships such as family and romantic relationships, but would not be appropriate for casual, spur-of-the-moment, or newly formed relationships, in which there is no desire to form close ties, such as many professional relationships, relationships with friends of friends with whom one has little in common, and relationships in which getting close is against the rules.

In closing, an invitation is offered to the reader to think of a specific friend that he or she has and to go down this list of rules and decide which ones might be implicit or explicit or both, which ones

might regulate verbal or nonverbal communication or both, and which ones might require meta-rules to help in their application. Finally, spend just a moment reflecting on whether these rules existed prior to the formation of your friendship or whether they were mutually established and agreed on as the friendship developed. In no particular order, the rules are:

- Stand up for the other in his or her absence.
- Share news of success with him or her.
- Show emotional support.
- Trust and confide in each other.
- Volunteer help in time of need.
- Strive to make him or her happy while in each other's company.

Michael Monsour

See also Aristotle and Plato on Relationships; Display Rules; Language Use in Relationships; Norms About Relationships; Relationship Types and Taxonomies

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S

SAFE SEX

For sexually active individuals, the likelihood of contracting a sexually transmitted disease (STD) is best viewed as linked to behavior that varies on a continuum from risky to safer. Safe (or safer) sex is defined as taking precautions to reduce the likelihood of negative consequences of sex—including both STDs and unintended pregnancy. Safer sex is typically thought of in terms of barrier protection methods such as male or female condoms (i.e., protected sex), and a majority of studies on safer sex focus on the use of condoms. There are, however, a variety of strategies that one can use to reduce risk of STDs and unwanted pregnancy. These include engaging in lower risk sexual behaviors (e.g., oral sex rather than anal sex), reducing numbers of sexual partners, refusing unwanted sex, not drinking or using drugs in combination with sex, and not having sex with partners that one knows or suspects may be risky (e.g., injecting drug user, sex worker). Thus, rather than a single behavior, safer sex is perhaps best viewed as a set of behaviors and practices that have the ultimate effect of reducing one's risk. Although the only means to eliminate risk is complete abstinence, for most individuals abstinence is neither realistic nor desirable.

Relationships and Safer Sex

Although defining safer sex is an important starting point, sexual behavior (and thus safer sexual

behavior) does not occur in a vacuum. Rather, it takes place in the context of a relationship—be it intimate or casual. Given that this is the case, a large literature demonstrates that the choice of whether to have protected sex (i.e., sex with a condom) is driven largely by relationship dynamics. For instance, many studies of both heterosexual and gay couples show that couples are more likely to use condoms during sex with casual as compared with main or steady sexual partners. This is presumed to be the case because more casual, lesser known sexual partners are perceived to potentially be a threat or risky whereas better known partners are perceived as safe. In addition, a variety of processes appear to play into these dynamics, depending on the type of relationship.

Main-Steady Relationships

Studies suggest that the most likely time for steady heterosexual and gay couples to use condoms is at the start of a relationship. At that point, the relationship is still new, partners may not know one another well, and the relationship itself may be casual in nature and not serious or monogamous. Over time, however, many gay couples will discontinue condom use, while heterosexual couples replace condom use with hormonal birth control. How much time does this take? One study of heterosexual adolescents and young adults found that typical couples dropped condom use in favor of hormonal birth control only 3 weeks after initiating sexual intercourse. From a safer sex perspective, these young people clearly believe that they

are substituting one type of safer sex (condom use with casual partner) with another type (hormonal birth control use with steady partner). The problem for heterosexual couples, of course, is that hormonal methods only protect from unwanted pregnancy and do not protect against STDs. In the case of gay couples, discontinuing condom use leaves them unprotected from STDs. Given that STDs are very common in young people, as are serial monogamy and multiple sexual partners, it quickly becomes clear how STDs are passed within the context of close, steady relationships. In fact, this is thought to be a contributor to the rising rates of HIV/AIDS among African-American and Latina women, who often have their guard down in the context of close relationships. In some cases, such women are unaware of significant risk factors of their male partners, such as bisexuality, multiple partners, and/or injection drug use.

In addition, research has illuminated the relational dynamics that play a role in the reduction of condom use within close relationships. Why would heterosexual couples swap condom use for hormonal birth control when condoms protect from both disease and unwanted pregnancy? Studies in this area have revealed several answers to this question. First, switching from condoms to contraceptives is seen by many couples as a trust and commitment building step, and condoms themselves are sometimes viewed as a symbol of infidelity. In fact, studies have found that talking about STD risk or asking a partner to use a condom in the context of a close relationship is sometimes perceived as implying that one has been unfaithful. Studies also find that higher relationship quality and investment (e.g., having a child together) are related to lower levels of condom use, again suggesting increased commitment equals less protected sex. Such phenomena exist not only among heterosexual couples but also among gay couples as well.

In addition, many studies suggest that relational concerns often take precedence over health concerns within close relationships. Although health professionals' primary concern for a couple may be STDs and unwanted pregnancy, couples' primary concerns may be focused on social and interpersonal issues. For instance, an individual who is feeling pressured by his or her partner to discontinue condom use may do so simply to please his or her partner, to avoid an argument, and to keep

the relationship moving in a positive direction. Given that males have been consistently found to have more negative attitudes about condoms than females, it may (in the heterosexual case) more often be the male who applies such pressure. Finally, individuals (particularly youth) often have an underappreciation for the concept of risk within relationships. Many studies show that young people believe that because they are in a relationship, that this in and of itself renders them safe from STDs. What is not recognized is the cumulative risk that may have been posed by recent sexual partners that one or both members of the couple may have had.

Casual Relationships

The safer sex dynamics within casual relationships are quite different than in closer, steady relationships. Casual relationships include brief, sexual encounters (e.g., one-night stands) and other types of relationships that are casual or new. Compared with steady relationships, trust, commitment, infidelity, and other relational issues are generally not of concern in brief sexual encounters and are of less importance in new relationships where fidelity may not be established. Instead, the health threat posed by a partner that is not known well is likely to be much more salient as compared to a close, steady partner. This results in condoms being much more likely to be used within a variety of new and casual sexual relationships and interactions in both heterosexual and gay couples. This does not mean, however, that condoms are always used in such relationships. Given that condom use still varies in this context, the following question has been posed: What factors affect the decision of whether or not to use a condom within the context of a new or casual sexual relationship?

Despite evidence to the contrary, many studies reveal that both heterosexual and gay individuals think they can tell whether someone is infected with an STD or is "clean." Thus, many individuals appear to use such judgments in making decisions about sex with casual partners. Studies show that misperceptions that have been attributed to individuals who are perceived as clean include (a) attractiveness and health—one is very attractive and/or the person appears healthy; (b) liking—one really likes the person; (c) familiarity—one has

some knowledge or familiarity with the person, often learned through friends and social networks; (d) association—person is not known to associate themselves with those traditionally at risk for HIV (e.g., drug users, bisexuals, etc.); (e) waiting—a partner wants to wait to have first sex, leaving the impression that he or she tends not to be promiscuous; (f) among men, dress-clothing has been found to be a factor (e.g., overly revealing clothing suggests that a woman is a higher STD risk); and (g) just knowing—one just knows intuitively that a partner is safe. Gay men have also been found to endorse additional factors—such as the kinds of clubs one frequents, the types of sex one prefers, and one's dress and occupation—as cues that are perceived as potentially distinguishing HIV-infected from uninfected men.

In addition, there are other reasons why unprotected sex sometimes takes place in casual relationships. In some cases, partners do not want to bring up or talk about the often uncomfortable topic of STDs and safer sex and/or do not have the communication or assertiveness skills to have such discussions and negotiations. Also, given that sex is not a rational act, research suggests that condoms are sometimes not used in casual situations because couples get caught up in the act and never even think to use protection. This may be particularly true when sexual arousal and/or alcohol or other substances cloud one's judgment. In addition, certain personality types such as high sensation seekers have been shown to be more likely to engage in unprotected sex and other risky sexual activities as compared to low sensation seekers.

Concluding Remarks

Owing to the importance of context in decisions about safer sexual behavior, the study of the role of relationship types in STD/HIV risk behavior has emerged as a major area of study in recent years. As has been demonstrated, relationship dynamics play a key role in safer sexual behavior, and understanding such dynamics is thus key to understanding the STD and HIV/AIDS epidemics. Given the complexity of this area, much remains to be understood. For instance, although most studies rely on reports from just a single member of a couple, little is known about how perceptions of sexual relationships

differ when both members of the couple are considered. The few studies on this topic suggest some important differences. In addition, studies that have taken an even broader perspective, studying entire sexual networks, remind researchers that sexually active individuals are actually part of a broader sexual network. When someone with an STD enters the network, that disease can spread quickly, particularly when unprotected sex is taking place in the context of concurrent sexual partnerships. Understanding the perceptions within relationships that lead to unprotected sex is thus key to prevention efforts that ultimately seek to reduce the spread of STDs, including HIV/AIDS.

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See also AIDS, Effects on Relationships; Casual Sex; Communication Skills; Dark Side of Relationships; Extradyadic Sex; Hooking Up, Hookups; Lust; Pregnancy and Relationships; Risk in Relationships; Secret Relationships; Sexually Transmitted Diseases and Relationships

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SATISFACTION IN RELATIONSHIPS

Relationship satisfaction is of interest to researchers, theorists, and practitioners. What follows in this entry is an examination of the issues related to the conceptualization of relationship satisfaction. This discussion of the conceptualization of satisfaction is followed by a summary of the relationship patterns that contribute to the experience of satisfaction within intimate relationships.

Conceptualization

Historically, in the relationship sciences, the term satisfaction has been used to refer to a person's attitudes toward his or her partner and the relationship. People who are satisfied with their relationships feel good about their relationships and believe the relationships and their partners have many good qualities. Satisfaction is thought of as existing on a continuum from highly satisfied to highly dissatisfied. Those who are highly dissatisfied with their relationships are often referred to within the close relationship literature as experiencing relationship distress. Those with extremely negative attitudes towards their partners and relationships are likely, over time, to believe that the relationship suffers from serious problems that threaten the viability of the relationship. Once individuals have reached this level of distress, relationship termination is likely.

Theoretical Underpinnings

Theoretical insights into the factors that define and contribute to relationship satisfaction are found

within two prevailing sociological and/or psychological frameworks—namely, the social exchange and the symbolic interactionist frameworks.

Social Exchange Perspective

The basic tenets of exchange theory suggest that people choose to participate in a particular relationship because of the relationship's ability to provide a satisfactory level of outcomes. Outcomes are defined as the rewards derived from the relationship minus the costs of participating in the relationship. The level of outcomes perceived to be available from a relationship is based on a person's perception of his or her partner's attributes (e.g., sense of humor, physical appearance, etc.) and on the perception of the quality of the interaction between the partners (affection expressed, support experienced, etc.).

The exchange framework offers insights into the factors that define and influence the positive and/or negative attitudes that form around a relationship by focusing attention on the processes people use when evaluating the outcomes derived from their relationships. According to the exchange framework, partners continuously evaluate their relationships by comparing their experiences to their expectations. These expectations are thought to comprise what exchange theorists have come to refer to as each participant's comparison level (CL). The CL is defined as the outcomes that a person has come to expect as a result of past and vicarious experiences. When the outcomes received in a relationship tend to consistently fall above the CL, individuals are apt to be satisfied with their relationships. Conversely, when outcomes tend to fall consistently below this baseline of expectations, individuals then are likely to feel dissatisfied with the relationship.

In that the CL is based in part on relationship norms generally held within society, most participants in intimate relationships have somewhat similar expectations for what is expected and felt deserving. These culturally supported expectations are further refined and shaped, however, by the unique developmental and relationship experiences of individuals. Consequently, expectations should be viewed as reflecting a broad array of contextual and developmental factors. As a result, there exists considerable variability in terms of

what people come to realistically expect is deserved within an intimate, ongoing relationship. This variability makes it difficult to predict with certainty what will generate satisfaction or distress within a particular relationship because these attitudes revolve around the subjectively held and individually constructed expectations of each partner within the relationship.

To add further complexity, exchange perspectives highlight the fact that individuals will differ with respect to the salience of different aspects of their relationships. One individual might attribute a great deal of significance to whether his or her partner helps out around the house. Another individual might attribute greater significance to the quality and frequency of sex. This means that some characteristics of relationships weigh more heavily into the overall feelings of satisfaction or dissatisfaction experienced. When a relationship fails to meet important expectations, this failure is likely to override the satisfaction that might result from less salient expectations being met.

In addition, the exchange perspective highlights the fact that expectations are not fixed—they can and will change over the course of a relationship. For example, changes in expectations are often tied to changes in investments—increased investments are thought to result in somewhat higher expectations for returns. This means that over time, because of changes in life circumstances, it is possible that partners' relationship expectations might fluctuate upwards when they perceive themselves to be investing more than before in their particular relationships. This change in investments and the accompanying change in expectations can result in shifts in the experience of satisfaction because patterns of behavior that were acceptable in the past now fail to measure up to these new, emergent expectations.

Symbolic Interactionism and Relationship Satisfaction

Symbolic interactionist (SI) perspectives focus, as well, on the relationship between expectations and satisfaction. Individuals in an intimate partnership occupy reciprocal and interdependent roles. Individuals carry into their relationships constructions of how they should enact their roles as partners.

And because of the reciprocal nature of roles, each individual's construction of his or her role imposes a set of expectations on the individual who occupies the counterrole position as well. For example, if a wife believes that she should be responsible for only half of the housework, her construction of this role carries with it implications for how she believes her husband should construct his role. That is, she believes that he should be willing to be responsible for his half of the housework.

This partnering of expectations and counterexpectations is important to the understanding of satisfaction in that as long as there are congruent expectations, participants are apt to be satisfied with the relationship. When expectations are not shared, when constructions of roles differ, individuals are more apt to become increasingly dissatisfied with their relationships. This experience of satisfaction or dissatisfaction is explained within the SI tradition by the focus on the interdependent nature of role constructions and identity.

SI theorists view identity and role constructions as linked. People are satisfied when partners act in ways that are consistent with their constructions of roles because the partners' behavior confirms their views of themselves. Conversely, the violation of role expectations is apt to be experienced as an identity disruption. If the violated role expectation is particularly salient or central to the individual's identity, it would be expected that the felt injustice and sense of being discounted would be all the more extreme.

In other words, it is difficult for individuals to not feel as if their identities have been discounted in some significant way when their partners fail to conform to their role expectations. Of course not all role expectations are centrally connected to the sense of self. This is why some issues are more volatile within relationships than others. For example, a partner's messiness may not contribute greatly to dissatisfaction as long as this violation is not experienced as identity disrupting. Under these circumstances, an individual might complain periodically about the messiness, but the messiness does not necessarily detract from the overall feelings of satisfaction with the partner and the relationship.

In contrast, the tendency of a wife to wash the dishes a second time after her partner has already washed them and to revacuum the floors after he has recently cleaned them could become a major

source of tension in the relationship. Such tensions will result only if her behaviors are experienced by him as discounting his view of himself as a caring and responsible spouse and a competent male (at least competent enough to wash dishes and vacuum floors!). In other words, if these identities are central to his view of himself, his partner's seemingly discordant views of his role performance will be likely to result in feeling hurt and defensive.

In sum, within the SI tradition, satisfaction and dissatisfaction are understood as being centrally connected to the dynamic interrelationships among roles, expectations, and identities. Incongruent role expectations are likely to result in an erosion of satisfaction, particularly when the role expectations that are being violated are core to one's identity. The violation of highly identity-salient role expectations generates interpersonal tensions that are not easily managed because of the emotional reactivity and defensiveness that can accompany their negotiation. These identity-driven tensions become the foundation for cascading degrees of marital distress.

Interaction Patterns Leading to Relationship Satisfaction or Failure

A vast amount of research has focused on the predictors, moderators, and mediators of relationship satisfaction. The assumption within this research tradition is that patterns of interaction result in individuals developing positive or negative attitudes towards their partners and relationships. It is important to consider, however, that levels of satisfaction experienced within the relationship also influence the patterns of interaction.

By far the most extensive examination of the patterns of interaction associated with satisfaction and dissatisfaction within ongoing and intimate relationships has been conducted by John Gottman and his colleagues. According to Gottman, how couples manage ordinary difficulties and conflicts are central to the experience of relationship satisfaction. The most important and consistent of the findings of this line of research are summarized below.

Conflict Management and Cascading Negativity

Gottman's research makes it clear that relationship distress is associated with patterns of conflict

management that promote cascading negativity. Specifically, four negativity processes, labeled the *Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*, characterize the management of conflict in distressed couples. Although most couples engage in these negative communication patterns some of the time, distressed couples do them more, and couples who do them a lot are on the fast track to divorce. These patterns include the following:

Criticism: "You are such a slob!"

Contempt: "I would never be so low as to do something like that!"

Defensiveness: "Yeah? Well what about what you did?"

Stonewalling: Shutting down, associated with high physiological arousal and efforts to self-soothe with thoughts such as "I can't believe she's saying this!"

Emotional Disengagement: Gottman's research goes on to note that emotional disengagement is common within distressed relationships. Emotional disengagement can be viewed as both a cause and consequence of relationship dissatisfaction. Emotionally disengaged couples generally demonstrate little of the interest, affection, humor, and concern that characterize happy couples. Emotionally disengaged couples appear fine on the surface but are actually highly distressed as they try to keep their problems from poisoning the entire relationship. However, the cost of this avoidance is the erosion of intimacy and absence of shared positive feelings in their interactions. These relationships slowly atrophy as the partners become more and more distant.

Emotional Flooding: Emotional flooding is an emergency state that can occur during conflict. Although it is more common in men than in women, flooding can happen to either partner. Flooding occurs when individuals are emotionally and physically overwhelmed by the negative emotions experienced within their relationships. At the point of flooding, individuals' palms begin to sweat, their heart rate increases to over 90 beats per minute, and their breathing becomes shallow or irregular. With these physiological symptoms, the partner is unable to think clearly or participate in constructive conversation. The primary focus of the flooded individual is self-preservation, accompanied by thoughts such as "I can't stand this anymore" or "Why is she attacking me?" At the point of

flooding, it becomes extremely difficult for individuals to take in information or respond to others.

Negative Reciprocity: Negativity is not necessarily damaging to relationships. All individuals within intimate relationships occasionally react in negative ways towards their partners. Research makes it clear, however, that a pattern of negative escalation in which negativity is responded to with increased negativity is harmful to relationships. These reciprocally negative patterns are characterized by each partner using a more destructive response to the other.

Conflict Styles of Satisfied Couples

Couples within more successful relationships do not always resolve their conflicts in what relationships experts would characterize as ideal ways. What is clear, however, is that satisfied couples maintain a relatively high (i.e., greater than five to one) ratio of positive to negative comments within their interactions. Maintaining a sufficiently high balance between positive and negative interactions allows relationships to overcome the times when destructive and ineffective conflict management threatens the overall well-being of the relationship. In other words, successful couples manage to resolve a sufficient number of their critical conflicts in positive ways, even if they do not always do it perfectly.

Solvable Versus Unsolvable Problems

A myth about satisfied couples is that they are able to resolve all disagreements. Both happy and unhappy couples have unsolvable as well as solvable problems. Solvable problems have a solution, whereas unsolvable problems are ongoing issues that may never be resolved resulting from fundamental personality, cultural, or religious differences or essential needs of each spouse.

What differentiates successful from unsuccessful relationships is that couples within successful relationships seem to understand and respect the distinctions between the two types of problems, and they handle them differently. Successful couples deal with perpetual problems by learning to accept them. The aim in discussing a perpetual problem is to create an atmosphere of acceptance of the partner's viewpoint rather than to create a condition of gridlock.

Accepting Influence

One way that successful couples deal with conflict is by accepting influence from each other. This term is used to describe each partner's willingness to defer to the other during an argument. Deferring to the other's needs, however, should not be mistaken as surrendering to the other's whims. Instead, accepting influence is the ability to find a point of agreement in the other's position. It is reflected in the ability to see the partner's point of view, to understand the partner's position, or to understand why the partner might feel the way that he or she does. Although accepting influence is difficult at times, it has a positive impact on the relationship, as partners feel validated and secure and realize that they can cooperate and work together as a couple.

Repair Attempts

Satisfied couples also manage conflict and miscommunication with what communication theorists refer to as repair attempts. Examples of repair attempts include apologies, humor, affection, and changing the subject. These interactions are not necessarily related to the content of the argument but may simply provide a brief reprieve from it.

It is interesting to note that successful couples use repair attempts more often throughout conflicts and earlier in conflict situations than do unhappy couples. Using the repair attempt earlier is one way of preventing a conflict from becoming too negative. In contrast, unhappy couples may wait until the argument is heated and divisive before making any attempt at a repair. In addition, unhappy couples frequently respond to attempts at repair by interpreting the overture in a negative way.

Turning Toward

Everyday interactions between intimate partners are characterized by what Gottman and his colleagues call *emotional bids*. An emotional bid occurs when a member of a couple initiates contact with the partner through ordinary conversation. The partner can respond to these emotional bids by either turning toward the partner, turning away from the partner, or turning against the partner. These conversational bids create opportunities to interact and help to define the couple as a couple. When these conversational bids are responded to

positively, the resulting interactions reinforce the sense of connection between the members of the couple. When such bids are not responded to or are negatively reacted to, they undermine the experience of intimacy.

Needless to say, happy couples rarely ignore their partner's bids. Having an eagerness to interact creates more interactions and increases a sense of connection and friendship. In particular, playful bidding is a characteristic of happy couples—this takes the form of good-natured teasing or physically sparring. For example, a husband might throw a crumpled napkin at his wife in response to her teasing him about an improper use of grammar. In many respects, these daily interactions can contribute to the level of positive affect in the relationship.

Positive Sentiment Override

The relationships of successful couples are characterized by what relationship researchers have termed positive sentiment override (PSO). This refers to the emotional climate created by successful and happy couples that enables them to override the negative effects that conflict creates in the relationship. PSO is built on a foundation of fondness and admiration and a good knowledge of the partner's life and world. PSO can be thought of as a filter that colors how couples remember past events and view new issues.

It is important to point out that PSO and conflict management reciprocally influence each other. As such, the effective management of conflict creates an emotional climate that fosters PSO. In turn, the presence of PSO results in couples approaching conflicts in a more constructive way. They are more likely to soften the startup of a conflict by bringing up issues tactfully and more likely to accept influence and to make repair attempts. It is not possible for researchers to determine if the effective management of conflict over time creates PSO or if PSO results in successful couples effectively managing conflict over time. Both factors are present in successful couples and are clearly interconnected.

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See also: Commitment, Predictors and Outcomes; Conflict, Marital; Criticism in Relationships; Disillusionment in Marriage; Intimacy; Marital Satisfaction, Assessment of; Marital Satisfaction and Quality; Marital Stability, Predictions of

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SECRET RELATIONSHIPS

A secret relationship is a type of romance in which the partners involved make deliberate attempts to hide some aspect of their relationship from one or more other persons. Most partners who keep their relationships secret do so because they anticipate some type of negative response if others were to discover it. Examples of relationships that are often subject to secrecy include (but are not limited to) same-sex romances, interracial or interethnic partnerships, interoffice loves, and extradyadic involvements. These relationships can vary on a number of dimensions, such as why the partnership is being kept secret, from whom the secret is being kept, and what the perceived consequences of others discovering the relationship might be.

Surprisingly, although a vast number of studies have been conducted on secret keeping in general, relatively little research has specifically addressed the effects of keeping a romantic relationship secret and how this might affect a partnership.

Early research on secret relationships seemed to suggest that the partners involved might experience greater attraction to one another. However, more recent research has found that this does not appear to be the case. In fact, secret romances actually tend to fare worse than do nonsecret relationships. This entry summarizes the existing research on secret relationships and suggests directions for future work in this area.

Attractive Side of Secret Relationships

The earliest theorizing and research on secret romantic relationships was conducted by Dan Wegner and his colleagues. Wegner theorized that secret relationships are characterized by obsessive preoccupation (i.e., a cycle involving thought suppression followed by thought intrusion). In other words, people who are keeping secrets (not only about their relationships but also about anything else for that matter) want to avoid disclosing that information to others. As one means of doing so, those holding a secret may suppress relevant thoughts in the hopes that this will prevent them from accidentally talking about the secret. However, maintaining secrecy by suppressing thoughts is not ideal because extensive social psychological research has found that thought suppression has ironic effects. Specifically, suppressing thoughts may actually increase the later cognitive intrusiveness of those thoughts. Thus, with regard to secret relationships, intentionally suppressing relationship-specific thoughts actually makes those thoughts more likely to intrude, or pop into mind later on.

Wegner further theorized that this obsessive preoccupation will actually enhance attraction to a romantic relationship. Why might this be? This answer to this lies in psychological research showing that greater thought about any object or concept will result in attitude polarization. This means that one's feelings about the relationship will become more intense with greater thought about one's partner. Because people generally feel positively about their relationships to begin with, thinking about them more typically serves to make this positivity more extreme, and as a result, romantic attraction should increase. Consistent with this reasoning, several researchers have found that greater thought about one's relationship is

associated with greater love for one's partner and enhanced commitment to the relationship.

Support for this theoretical rationale (i.e., that secret relationships facilitate romantic attraction by means of obsessive preoccupation) was found in a series of studies conducted by Wegner and his colleagues. In their first study, undergraduate participants were asked to recall several romantic relationships that they had previously had and report how often they thought about each of these relationships after they had ended. They found that the relationships participants remembered and thought about most frequently were characterized by higher levels of secrecy than those that were thought about less frequently. Similar to this finding, in a second study, undergraduate participants were asked to recall one specific relationship from their past and report on their current level of obsessive preoccupation with that relationship. They found that levels of obsessive preoccupation were higher for past romances that were secret in nature compared to those that were not secret.

Their third and final study was an experiment in which mixed-sex pairs were instructed to play footsie underneath a table while playing a card game against other mixed-sex teams (i.e., participants were instructed to play the game while their feet and their partner's feet were touching). Some of the pairs received instructions to play footsie secretly, while the others were told to do so with the full knowledge of the opposing team. Those pairs who received the secrecy instructions reported greater attraction to their footsie partners than those who did not have to keep it secret. Also, among those pairs who received the secrecy instructions, levels of obsessive preoccupation regarding their footsie partner tended to be higher as well.

One might infer from this theoretical rationale and the supporting set of studies that secrecy will lead only to positive consequences for romantic relationships. However, there are some very important limitations to this research that prevent such a generalization from being made. Specifically, the first two studies reviewed here refer only to people's retrospective self-reports of past relationships. Researchers know that such reports are often biased and thus might not be completely accurate (e.g., people might forget or leave out certain pieces of information about their past romances). In addition, the manipulation of secrecy in the

experimental study, which involved playing footsie secretly underneath a table, does not approximate real-world romantic secrecy for a number of reasons. First, the secret was not being kept from valued others, such as family members or close friends—it was being kept from strangers in a lab setting. Romantic secrecy is likely to be more stressful and consequential when relationships are kept secret from persons who are very important to the partners and/or persons the partners see on a regular basis, as opposed to persons they do not know and/or may never see again. Second, the secret was not being kept for a particularly long time—the secrecy ended once the study ended. Long-term secret keeping (for months or years) is likely to be much more difficult to do and thus more stressful. Finally, there were no serious consequences to be had if others discovered the secret. In real life, people who are hiding their relationships may fear physical assault, loss of income or earning potential, social ostracism, and/or ridicule if others were to discover their romance. Thus, for these and other reasons, this set of studies may not be a completely accurate reflection of the effects of romantic secrecy.

Burdensome Side of Secret Relationships

In contrast to earlier research touting the positive side of romantic secrecy, Craig Foster and Keith Campbell theorized that secret romantic involvements should actually be less rewarding than non-secret relationships. They proposed that keeping a romance secret is a burdensome endeavor due to the host of behaviors that is required to prevent others from finding out about the relationship. For example, persons in secret relationships may be forced to meet only at inopportune times and/or inconvenient places in order to be together. This might mean only meeting late at night or in out-of-the-way locations. Moreover, they may find that they need to change their behaviors when in front of other persons who do not know of their relationship. Thus, they may have to pretend to be just friends and avoid public displays of affection when others are around. Partners will be less interdependent with one another to the extent that they must engage in more of these burdensome behaviors. That is, the partners will have

reduced opportunities to integrate each other into their lives (e.g., by sharing quality time together). Also, if fewer people are aware of the relationship, then there will be fewer people who can provide social support for the partners involved, and previous research has demonstrated that such support is vital to relationship well-being. In short, greater secrecy will make it more difficult to maintain the relationship over time because it requires partners to engage in burdensome behaviors that interfere with relational interdependence.

Foster and Campbell conducted a series of studies to examine secrecy as it occurs in actual, ongoing romantic relationships (as opposed to the previous secrecy research, which only examined past relationships and relationships created in a lab setting). Consistent with their reasoning, the findings indicated that greater secrecy is associated with reduced relationship quality (i.e., less love for and attraction to one's partner, as well as less anticipated distress if the relationship were to end) and with a stronger perception that the relationship is burdensome. In these studies, the effect of secrecy on relationship quality was indirect, with secrecy exerting its influence through relationship burden. In other words, secrecy seems to lower relationship quality by virtue of putting a significant burden on the couple members. In social exchange terms, such burden should increase the perceived costs of remaining in the relationship and hence should reduce partners' satisfaction with and desire to remain in the involvement.

These findings are probably more reflective of the nature of real-world secret romances because the data were derived from participants currently involved in actual relationships. However, these data are not without their limitations. For instance, all participants were college undergraduates. Thus, it is unclear whether their results would generalize to different types of relationships and relationships of longer duration.

Summary and Future Directions

Based upon the research conducted to date, keeping a romantic relationship secret seems to be associated with more negative than positive relational outcomes. However, this is not to say that secrecy will always damage romantic relationships. It is easy to

find instances of secret romances that have lasted for years in which couple members have found their relationship to be deeply satisfying and fulfilling. Thus, an important direction for future research is to examine the types of relationships or circumstances under which secrecy is likely to be more or less harmful to a romance. Factors that might play a role in determining secrecy's effects include from whom the secret is being kept, how long the partners have been involved with each other, how often the partners need to engage in cover-up behaviors, and whether the couple members have a choice with regard to secrecy (i.e., Have they made an active choice to conceal the relationship from others, or has the situation dictated that they have no other option but to hide the romance?).

There are also a number of other important questions with regard to romantic secrecy that have yet to be addressed. For instance, is keeping a relationship secret different from hiding any other aspect of the self? Researchers know that hiding important things about the self is so cognitively taxing and stressful that it can actually harm people's physical and psychological well-being. Given that people's romantic relationships often become defining features of the self (a phenomenon known as cognitive interdependence—people come to view themselves and their partners as one collective representation), it may be that hiding a romantic relationship would be just as detrimental to one's health as hiding any other aspect of the self.

Another important question concerns changes in secrecy across time. Specifically, when secrecy diminishes over time (e.g., when other people find out about the relationship), do relationship outcomes improve? A variety of studies have found that revealing important secrets about the self (e.g., gay and lesbian individuals disclosing their sexual orientation) enhances a person's well-being. Would disclosure of a secret romance lead to similar enhancement in relationship well-being?

In short, there is much to be addressed in future research on romantic secrecy. However, the real key will be further exploring the opposing effects already documented in the literature and delimiting the conditions under which secrecy tends to enhance romantic attraction versus the conditions that ultimately hamper relationship functioning.

Justin J. Lehmiller

See also Extradysadic Sex; Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Relationships; Interracial and Interethnic Relationships; Secrets; Self-Disclosure

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SECRETS

What counts as a secret is sometimes contested. An adolescent who keeps information from a father might consider that information to be private, but the father might accuse the adolescent of keeping a secret. Despite such disagreements, secrets are defined in this entry as information that one person purposefully keeps from another person.

People often keep secrets in close relationships. Almost everyone keeps at least one secret from somebody in his or her family, and in one study, roughly 40 percent of college students admitted keeping aspects of their dating history from their current boyfriend or girlfriend. Given the prevalence of secrets in relationships, it is important to understand them. This entry summarizes some common assumptions about secrets, people's reasons for keeping secrets, and the consequences of secret keeping in relationships.

Common Assumptions

People often assume that secrets are inherently shameful. The phrase “keeping secrets” connotes

something negative. However, not all secrets are negative: A person planning a surprise birthday party keeps secrets. Moreover, keeping secrets often involves following conventions; for instance, most people would find it unseemly if colleagues divulged details about their family finances.

It is also commonly assumed that secrets represent failures to disclose. In North American culture, people value openness, and keeping secrets seems inconsistent with that value. However (as discussed below), people often have many apparently sound reasons for keeping secrets. Thus, keeping a secret is more of a purposeful choice than a failure. Moreover, some research suggests that people can be very committed to the ideal of open communication but not see keeping secrets as impediments to that ideal; for instance, some people want to be able to feel like they could talk about anything with their relational partners, but in reality they keep secrets from them.

Another assumption is that secrets are always deceptive. Certainly, one can lie to keep a secret. However, people also keep secrets by other means, such as simply not bringing up a topic that might be related to the secret. Sometimes the level of deception is so low that others are aware that somebody is keeping information secret. Many people who ask about someone's honeymoon, for example, will be happy to hear about the travel without pressing for the omitted details.

Why People Keep Secrets

There probably are an infinite number of specific reasons for keeping secrets, depending on the particular secret and circumstances. Nevertheless, there are some broad themes that are widely relevant to people's decisions to keep secrets. Perhaps the most commonly cited reason for keeping a secret is that people are concerned about what others might think. If the secret is something that is often stigmatized (e.g., sexual abuse, having HIV), secret keepers may worry about being judged negatively. They also might believe that whomever they tell will subsequently tell other people, a result which would further complicate their desire to manage how others see them.

There are also various relationship-oriented reasons for keeping secrets. Sometimes people

believe that divulging a secret will lead to conflict. Other times, people believe they must keep a secret to preserve their relationship; for example, some college students have reported hiding the extent of their sexual history because they fear their current partner would not want to stay with them if they knew everything.

People also keep secrets to protect others from stressors. Parents might keep financial difficulties from their children; young adults may keep dating troubles from their parents; a family member who is very ill may guard the severity of his or her prognosis. Secrets can also promote closeness; keeping a secret together from others can make people feel a special bond.

Consequences of Keeping Secrets

Despite the negative connotation of secret keeping, the effects of keeping secrets in relationships are multifaceted. Keeping secrets can have many different effects, sometimes both good and bad ones at the same time.

One potential cost of secret keeping is that it can lead people to think about the secret excessively, which can be psychologically distressful. There are also interpersonal risks of keeping secrets. Overall, the more secrets individuals report keeping in their relationships, the less happy they are. However, the absolute number of secrets is probably less important than one's perceptions of secret keeping; for instance, even people with a lot of secrets can be quite satisfied if they see that as normal.

Balanced against such risks are some potential benefits for keeping secrets. Research has shown, for instance, that people's reasons for keeping secrets are not unfounded. Revealing secrets can lead others to experience stress and can damage relationships. Moreover, sometimes others do judge harshly a person who reveals a secret; keeping a secret can therefore protect a person from the risk of being judged.

Given that there are both costs and benefits for keeping secrets, any claims about the universal desirability of revealing (or concealing) secrets should be viewed with skepticism. Whether it is a good idea to reveal a secret in a relationship depends on factors such as the relative value one

places on the various costs and benefits. It also depends on contingencies that the secret keeper cannot completely predict or control. For example, although people deciding whether to reveal a secret may consider whether the confidant would be supportive, they cannot always predict the confidant's response. This complicates decisions about revealing because the confidant's response is a major determinant of how beneficial (and how costly) revealing a secret turns out to be.

John P. Caughlin

See also Deception and Lying; Openness and Honesty; Self-Disclosure; Taboo Topics

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SECRET TESTS OF RELATIONSHIP STATUS

Secret tests of relationship status are calculated strategies that individuals use to learn, often without asking, how another person feels about their friendship or romantic relationship. They are opportunities for an individual to intuit by the other person's reaction whether that person wants to continue or deepen the relationship. Leslie Baxter and William Wilmot, who coined the term *secret tests*, identified seven different ways in which people assess how important a relationship is to the other person involved. From the most commonly used categories to the least, the tests are as follows: endurance tests, triangle tests, indirect suggestion tests, separation tests, directness

tests, asking third party tests, and public presentation tests.

When individuals use endurance tests, they get the other person to help or compliment them (particularly at a cost) or they get the other person to accept a certain amount of mistreatment without complaint (e.g., by being rude to that person). Triangle tests involve putting the other person in situations with others that test his or her fidelity and jealousy. Indirect suggestion tests involve interpreting the other person's reaction to minor attempts at more intimacy through touch, jokes, and hints. Separation tests involve evaluating the effort the other person goes through to reinitiate contact after separation. Directness tests, which are not actually secret, involve asking the other person directly how they feel about the relationship. Third party tests involve asking someone outside of the relationship how the other person feels. Finally, public presentation tests involve monitoring the other person's reaction to defining the relationship for others publicly.

Secret tests of relationship status are used when individuals are uncertain about their relationships. Sometimes uncertainty comes from individuals' own personalities or characteristics; sometimes it comes from the situation. Personality-derived uncertainty may be likened to insecurity. Individuals who most rely on secret tests are those who have low self-esteem, have an anxious attachment style, and are less trusting of others. Women use secret tests more than men, particularly triangle tests and separation tests. However, their reasons for using such tests may stem from their social roles or lack of power in society.

In terms of situation-based uncertainty, circumstances within the relationship are largely responsible for creating instability. Typically, individuals are uncertain when the relationship is new, when it seems to be changing (e.g., from friendship to romance), and when it is threatened by another person or by outside circumstances (e.g., a new good friend or more time spent at work). Individuals involved in cross-sex relationships that may be transitioning from friendship to romance use secret tests more than individuals in stable cross-sex friendships and romantic relationships. Specifically, they rely on separation tests and indirect suggestions to determine how their relationship partners feel about the relationship.

Theories that explain why individuals use secret tests of relationship status were developed from research on decision making, attributions, and personal relationships. They describe individuals' motivation for dealing with uncertainty related to all aspects of their lives, from health care to relationships. Several theories continue to be popular. These can be summarized into three main perspectives: those that assume that uncertainty reduction is a goal, those that assume that uncertainty reduction facilitates further decision making, and those that assume that uncertainty may be reduced, maintained, or enhanced according to the individual and the specific circumstances involved. For simplicity's sake, only the most common theory from each perspective will be summarized.

The Uncertainty Reduction Theory (URT), developed to describe how uncertainty affects communication, presumes that individuals have a need for a stable understanding of their worlds. According to this theory, individuals use secret tests to reduce uncertainty because people are uncomfortable with feeling as though they do not have a full understanding of their relationships. URT describes three basic ways that individuals manage uncertainty: information seeking, planning, and hedging. In the context of secret tests, individuals decide what tests to use during planning; they use active (e.g., third party tests), passive (e.g., observation), and interactive strategies (e.g., endurance tests) to gain information about their relationships; and they hedge (e.g., indirect suggestion tests) to avoid embarrassment or inadvertently threatening their relationships.

The Predicted Outcome Value Theory takes a social exchange perspective on communication, emphasizing individuals' desire to maximize the rewards they incur and minimize the costs. According to this theory, secret tests reduce the uncertainty that keeps individuals from adequately weighing the costs and benefits of their relationships. Secret tests help to define relationships so that they can be compared to similar relationships. This helps individuals determine what level of commitment (if any) they should allocate to the relationship.

The Theory of Motivated Information Management (TMIM) tries to take into account both situational and personality factors to predict when individuals will utilize information-seeking strategies, such as secret tests. This theory presumes

that under some circumstances individuals will want to maintain or even enhance their uncertainty. Further, it suggests that decisions about how to handle uncertainty are influenced by individuals' personalities and their expectations about the knowledge they seek and how they plan to obtain it. The logic of TMIM suggests that secret tests are used when individuals think that by using a specific secret test (e.g., joking), they will be able to find out information that they need (and want) without threatening their relationship.

Overall, secret tests of relationship status help individuals manage their relationships. They provide opportunities for diagnostic information without threatening individuals' own self-esteem or their relationships. Although personal characteristics and circumstances within relationships affect which strategy is selected, uncertainty is the driving force behind the motivation to use secret tests.

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See also Information Seeking; Uncertainty Reduction Theory; Validation in Relationships

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SECURITY IN RELATIONSHIPS

From mothers to mentors, friends to lovers, people have a fundamental need to believe that their

significant others will be responsive in times of need. According to John Bowlby, the father of Attachment Theory, the result of this belief, when fulfilled, is a sense of security—a feeling that the world is generally a safe place and that one can find support in difficult times. As this definition implies, the key ingredient of felt security—security in oneself and one’s social world—is the perceived responsiveness of significant others. For instance, if Jenny is upset after a poor performance review at work, when she gets home and finds Rupert in a bad mood, she will want to assess whether he is likely to respond supportively to her because if he rejects her, she risks feeling worse. At a time when one is looking for social support, “Will others be responsive?” is the pertinent question.

Bowlby described felt security as a key psychological construct, basic to human cognition. Indeed, evolutionary theorists contend that gauging the extent to which significant others will be responsive is critical for human survival. The importance of the concept is also evident in its centrality to three major theories of interpersonal relations, albeit framed in different ways. This entry will deal with the treatment of felt security by Attachment, Sociometer, and Interdependence theories. Although the three theories take different approaches to the concept of felt security, importantly, each views it as rooted in an individual’s mental representations of their experiences with significant others.

Attachment Theory

Attachment Theory, the most extensively articulated of the major relationship theories, posits that adult relationships are shaped by chronic, dispositional relationship orientations first developed in infancy with primary caregivers, or attachment figures. Attachment theorists contend that adult relationships in which romantic partners or significant others take on the attachment figure role are influenced by attitudes toward the self as well as expectations about the responsiveness of attachment figures in general. To continue the example, if Jenny, as an infant, was well cared for by a responsive, emotionally available parent, she is likely to have learned that attachment figures are available in times of need and that she is worthy of

their support and love. Thus, it is likely that she will not be hesitant to turn to Rupert for support when she gets home from a stressful day at work.

Although many attachment theorists acknowledge that people may sometimes develop relationship-specific attachment styles, the theory takes a predominantly trait-like approach to felt security: It is assumed that if Jenny developed a secure (or insecure) attachment style early in life, that orientation will stay with her and strongly influence her adult relationship with Rupert and others.

According to Attachment Theory, a secure attachment style will develop only when the infant learns that attachment figures are emotionally available to them, that is, when they receive an affirmative answer to the question, “Will others be responsive?” If, instead, Jenny’s experiences indicate that the answer is at least in part negative, attachment theorists predict that Jenny will turn to a coping strategy associated with one of two different insecure attachment styles characterized by a trait-like, chronic lack of felt security. These coping strategies are designed to provide optimal safety in the less than perfect circumstance of dealing with unresponsive attachment figures. The seriousness of concerns about partner responsiveness cues the individual to engage in one of two coping responses, hyperactivation or deactivation.

People who react to concerns about rejection with hyperactivation of the attachment system are called anxiously attached. Their relationship patterns may be gleaned from the following items from a popular measurement tool, the Experiences in Close Relationships Questionnaire: Anxious people are relatively likely to agree with statements such as “I often worry that my partner doesn’t really love me” and “I often worry that my partner will not want to stay with me.” This kind of insecurity is typically associated with inconsistent caregiver behavior toward the child, alternately responsive and neglecting. The anxiety reflects residual concerns that the self may not be worthy of caring (a negative self model), resulting from the feelings of uncertainty associated with inconsistent caring. The coping strategy promotes, among other features, a disposition toward vigilance and sensitivity to signs of potential rejection. Though vigilance reduces the risk of missing potential signs of rejection, the hypersensitivity results in ambiguous evidence being interpreted in negative ways

and, ultimately, in unwarranted insecurities about others' caring.

By contrast, others cope with rejection by deactivating the attachment system and are called avoidantly attached. Avoidant people tend to agree with items such as "I prefer not to be too close to romantic partners" and "I find it difficult to allow myself to depend on romantic partners." Avoidant attachment is typically associated with childhood caregivers who are largely unavailable in times of distress. It reflects serious concerns about the generosity and benevolence of others (a negative model of other). As the label implies, the main strategy associated with this form of insecurity is to avoid situations in which one must depend on the good nature of others. Whereas an avoidant style indeed decreases the risk of being let down by significant others, the increased distance and lack of deeper interdependence that results mean that many of the most important benefits of closeness are forfeited. Further, such a style is likely to be self-perpetuating because trust can only be established by taking the risk of relying on others and discovering that they are responsive in times of need.

These two forms of insecurity have been shown to shape perceptions and behavior in close relationships in important ways. As an example, Jeffry Simpson and his colleagues studied the effects of anxious attachment on social interactions between dating partners. Couples discussed either a major relationship conflict or a minor one. Difficult conflicts raise the issue in people's minds about whether a partner will largely look out for himself or herself or will be responsive to the person's needs at some personal cost. Thus, relative to minor conflicts, major conflicts provide much more information about the value the partner places on the self, and therefore function as diagnostic situations for anxious individuals who are not confident of their partner's affections. Indeed, anxious people interpreted their partner's behavior in the major conflict, but not the minor one, as rejecting and unkind. They then reciprocated the behavior they perceived and acted in a more hostile, less accommodating way. However, trained observers rating the videotapes could see no evidence that the partners had actually behaved in a rejecting, selfish way. This disposition to be oversensitive to signs of potential rejection is the very basis of this style, and the study impressively illustrates how anxious

individuals can perpetuate their own fears in a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Attachment theorists have gone further in demonstrating the importance of felt security. Mario Mikulincer and Phillip Shaver have presented impressive evidence for its beneficial effects on mental health, prosocial behavior, and intergroup relations. By priming a secure relationship—that is, by bringing mental representations of a secure attachment figure to the forefront of the mind without conscious awareness of the process—they demonstrated that a sense of security, even temporarily induced, can help a person maintain emotional stability and adaptability in times of stress, reduce the likelihood of post-traumatic stress disorder, increase compassion toward needy others, and reduce aggression toward members of disliked groups.

For example, in one study assessing the effects of security priming on intergroup hostility, Israeli Jews and Arabs came to the lab and completed a 30-trial word-relation task. During each trial, the name of a security-enhancing attachment figure they had previously provided was flashed very briefly (20 milliseconds) on the screen. Control participants were exposed to names of nonattachment figure acquaintances or friends. The exposure time was so short that participants were unaware of having seen the name. In the second part of the study, participants decided how much of an unpleasant hot sauce to assign to either a member of their own racial group or a member of the negatively perceived outgroup. Participants who were primed with nonattachment figures allotted more hot sauce to the outgroup person (i.e., an Arab, if the participant was Jewish, and vice versa) than to the ingroup person. However, when participants had received security primes, the difference was erased: Arabs and Jews were treated the same. Although the aggression measure used in this study was mild, the positive effects of felt security priming are clear. In light of these findings, Bowlby's characterization of felt security as a key cognitive construct appears quite justified.

Felt security clearly plays a pivotal role in Attachment Theory and in the characterization of hyperactivation and deactivation of the attachment system as coping strategies points to its unique framing. Interestingly, attachment theorists have typically studied felt security (a secure attachment

style) largely as the absence of anxiety and avoidance rather than as a concept in its own right. This is rather a different approach from that taken by Interdependence and Sociometer theories, as is explored in subsequent sections.

Sociometer Theory

Mark Leary and Roy Baumeister have proposed that the root of felt security, which they equate with self-esteem, is a summary of people's past, present, and likely future standing with significant others in their social network: It is an aggregate of their perceived social value. That is, from a sociometer perspective, global self-esteem is a barometer of one's perceived relational value. Individuals with higher chronic self-esteem (HSEs) feel that they are generally valued by others and thus experience a sense of social security, whereas individuals with lower self-esteem (LSEs) generally doubt their value as relational partners and are chronically insecure. People rely on these social beliefs to predict future social outcomes and to select interpersonal strategies.

How does this perspective on felt security relate to the attachment theory concept of perceived responsiveness, which is seen as the basis of felt security? Harry Reis, Margaret Clark, and John Holmes suggest that high perceived relational value leads people to strongly expect both caring and responsiveness from significant others. Research has indeed shown that the three concepts are very strongly related and that they essentially overlap with the construct of interpersonal trust. In contrast to Attachment Theory, however, Sociometer Theory does not distinguish beliefs that the self may not be worthy (anxiety) from beliefs about others as unresponsive (avoidance). Instead, it posits a summative evaluation of one's social worth to be used in an interpersonal guidance system. In this context, the term *sociometer* implies a gauge that indicates to people the overall extent to which their social needs are likely to be met.

People rely on the expectations about their relational value embodied in their sociometers to select safe interpersonal strategies. HSEs' strong sense of their relational value leads them to anticipate acceptance from future relational partners, whereas LSEs' interpersonal doubts cause them to anticipate

a chillier interpersonal reception. To cope with this sense of vulnerability, LSEs tend to adopt a self-protective interpersonal style aimed at avoiding rejection, whereas HSEs adopt a riskier, more relationship-enhancing style, aimed at fostering social bonds. For example, HSEs' social confidence causes them to eagerly seek new social opportunities, whereas LSEs' interpersonal doubts make them less willing to enter novel social situations unless acceptance is more or less guaranteed. LSEs also manage the risk of rejection in part by self-protectively underdetecting actual acceptance cues, a perceptual bias that leads them to avoid the risk of trying to draw closer unless the evidence is overwhelmingly positive and clear.

Though people have a chronic or average sense of security or insecurity, they also monitor and interpret current social experiences for information about their ongoing level of acceptance. This state of self-esteem is part of what is called the sociometer's acceptance signaling system, which is attuned to answering the question, "Am I valued?" If the sociometer detects acceptance, it signals this desirable state of affairs with increases in state self-esteem, that is, with positive feelings about the self. This momentary sense of security facilitates efforts to forge social bonds and take the risk of creating closeness. If the sociometer detects rejection, it signals this undesirable state of affairs with decreases in state self-esteem and self-affect. Decreases in state self-esteem alert the individual that his or her social bonds may be in jeopardy and encourage a person to either make reparative efforts or to seek new social acquaintances who might be more accepting.

Interdependence Theory

Interdependence theorists have also described felt security as rooted in perceptions of being valued by others. Felt security has typically been seen as directly linked to perceived regard, the extent to which the self is seen to be valued and cared for by a specific partner. Although theorists in this tradition reinforce the idea that dispositions like anxious and avoidant attachment and self-esteem strongly affect one's perceptions of being valued by, for instance, a romantic partner, they also have demonstrated that feelings of security are partly

determined by experiences with and beliefs about that particular partner, a more social psychological point of view. Rupert and Jenny, for instance, may each have had experiences in their relationship that persuasively demonstrated the other's responsiveness to their needs, over and above their chronic dispositions to trust others.

Consistent with the view of Sociometer Theory, perceived regard is seen as having a chronic, more stable level and a state or context-bound value. That is, confidence that a partner will be responsive will be influenced by current relationship circumstances, such as whether the partner must make a costly sacrifice in order to act responsively, whether a conflict has been recently experienced, whether the person is in a good mood, and so on.

Murray and her colleagues have shown that having high perceived regard in close relationships results in a relationship promoting orientation because closeness is seen as a minimal risk. High perceived regard and the sense of security it fosters reduces people's sensitivity to rejection, reduces social pain when feelings of rejection do occur, and promotes efforts to increase closeness even in the face of concerns about rejection. All three tendencies predict increased satisfaction in marriage over time. In contrast, serious concerns about how one is regarded and loved by a partner result in a sense of vulnerability, which causes the risk regulation system to activate a preventive, cautious approach. Low perceived regard people show an increased sensitivity to signs of potential rejection, report stronger hurt feelings in the face of perceived rejection, and are much more likely to emotionally distance themselves from partners and be less charitable toward them. All three tendencies predict declines in satisfaction over time for both partners.

A sense of security, in the Interdependence Theory perspective, controls everyday decisions to take the risk of creating intimacy and depending on another to be responsive to one's needs. People secure in the belief that their partner values them feel safer taking the risk of disclosing their failures, problems at work, and so on. They feel confident that their partner will help them even when it is costly and that they can turn to their partner for support in difficult times. Such reactions are likely to create a self-perpetuating cycle if such trust is warranted. Not only does the increased interdependence increase the

mutual benefits in the relationship, but evidence that a partner was responsive to one's needs will further strengthen one's sense of security. Conversely, people insecure in their belief that a partner values them may miss the very opportunities that offer the most potential for growth in relationships.

Conclusion

There is impressive evidence to support the claim that the construct of security in relationships is perhaps the most central and critical of any concept. Expectations of responsiveness are pivotal in shaping people's emotions, cognitions, and behavioral strategies in their close relationships. Theories may differ in their explanations for how these expectations develop, but all agree that how secure people feel in their relationships controls people's most basic orientations toward their significant others. A sense of security creates a platform of safety that encourages people to deepen their interdependence with others, despite the risks, to act in a promotive way in their relationships that will realize the most profound benefits. In contrast, a sense of insecurity often leaves people at the margins of their relationships, unwilling or unable to enjoy the benefits of being truly close to significant others because of a self-protective sense of caution rooted in their pessimistic expectations about others.

John G. Holmes and Joanna E. Anderson

See also Attachment Theory; Closeness; Interdependence Theory; Self-Esteem, Effects on Relationships; Sociometer Theory

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SELF-CONCEPT AND RELATIONSHIPS

Scientists and laypeople alike would agree that human relationships have an enormous impact on people's inner lives—such as on their emotional well-being and judgments of life satisfaction. Most people would also agree that relationships can shape how people define and evaluate themselves. For example, a relationship might influence whether a person sees him or herself as patient, whether a person considers having a high-status job to be an important goal, or whether a person views him- or herself as worthy of being loved. This entry discusses how the self-concept is influenced by relationships. The self-concept refers to a wide array of people's perceptions and feelings about themselves, including their views of their physical and personality characteristics, their goals and values, and their positive and negative evaluations of themselves. To define the self-concept and relationships, this entry will first provide some historical background and then describe three recent conceptualizations of the link between the self-concept and relationships, including examples of research spawned by each. Finally, relationship-related aspects of the self-concept will be distinguished from other aspects of the self-concept.

Historical Background

In psychology, the link between the self-concept and relationships is a longstanding one, traceable

to the 1890s in William James's theorizing on the self. James distinguished between the I-self, or the self as subject, whereas the me-self captures the self as object. James further delineated three components of the me-self—namely, the material me, social me, and spiritual me. A link between the self-concept and relationships can be found in the social me, which refers to aspects of the self that are associated with and experienced in relation to individuals and groups whose opinions are valued. In contemporary terms, individuals whose opinions are valued are essentially significant others, or people's close relationship partners, such as spouses, parents, close friends, boyfriends, or siblings or other relatives.

Subsequent to James's early writings, psychologists and other social scientists continued to theorize about the link between the self-concept and relationships. A key example is the work of symbolic interactionists, who believe that the person and society are mutually constructed in the course of social interaction. Charles Horton Cooley, a prominent early symbolic interactionist, coined the term *looking-glass self* to capture the idea that people's views of themselves are based on their perceptions of how others see them. To illustrate, Jane's views of herself as a singer are based on her perceptions of her family's and friends' responses to her singing. If her family and friends cheer her on at the local karaoke bar, encouraging her to sing another song, Jane may interpret these reactions as indicative of their favorable impressions of her singing abilities. Accordingly, she is likely to develop an image of herself as a talented singer. In the same vein, George Herbert Mead, another famous symbolic interactionist, argued that conceptions of the self emerge through perspective taking, whereby people take on the perspective of others on themselves. Finally, an important example outside of the symbolic interactionist tradition is the theorizing of Harry Stack Sullivan, who posited that encounters with significant others provide the forum for personality development and by implication, the formation of people's conceptions of themselves.

Interest in the self-concept and relationships diminished in the mid-20th century as part of the waning of attention to the self in the wake of behaviorism. However, by the late 1900s, the self reemerged as an important topic of psychological

inquiry, and with it came renewed attention to social influences on the self-concept. In fact, tremendous advances have been made on the topic of the self-concept and relationships in the past two decades in particular. This entry turns now to a description of three recent conceptualizations of the link between the self-concept and relationships that emerged during this time.

Recent Conceptualizations

Relational Selves

Relational selves is a term used to refer to aspects of the self that come into play in the context of interactions with relationship partners. Researchers assume that relational selves are represented in people's memories in the form of self-other linkages. More specifically, this conceptualization of the link between the self-concept and relationships assumes that people possess separate schemas—that is, bundles of knowledge stored in memory—of themselves and of each of their significant others. A person's self-concept schemas and each of his or her significant-other schemas are thought to be linked by knowledge reflecting the typical patterns of interaction that the person experiences with each significant other. This is what is meant by self-other linkages. To illustrate, Jason possesses a schema that designates his self-concept as well as a schema that designates his mother. Jason's self-concept and mother schemas are linked by knowledge reflecting the interaction patterns that Jason usually experiences with his mother. For example, if Jason typically submits to the wishes of his domineering mother, the linkages that connect his self-concept schema to his mother schema will embody this interaction dynamic. In other words, the person that Jason is with his mother—or Jason's relational self with his mother—includes the trait submissiveness.

To examine the nature of people's relational selves, researchers often prime, or in other words experimentally activate, research participants' significant-other schemas. That is, they ask participants to engage in some kind of task that temporarily brings their significant others to mind. For example, researchers might ask participants to spend a few minutes visualizing a significant other. Interestingly, significant-other schemas can be

brought to mind even without participants' awareness that this has happened. For instance, researchers might expose participants to the name of a significant other on a computer screen, but the exposure may occur so quickly that participants do not consciously recognize the name. Regardless of how a significant-other schema is activated, when this happens, it is assumed that the relational self associated with the significant other is also temporarily brought to mind since self-concept and significant-other schemas are connected by self-other linkages. As a result, participants' thoughts, feelings, and behaviors reflect the activated relational self. In essence, people think, feel, and behave as they typically do with their significant other.

In one concrete example of research on relational selves, Mark Baldwin and his colleagues exposed psychology graduate students to the face of their graduate advisor, who was presumably a significant other, or the face of someone who was not a significant other. Both faces were shown subliminally, that is, so quickly that the students were not aware of their exposure to them. Importantly, the graduate advisor's face had a disapproving expression while the other person's facial expression was approving. The hypothesis was that exposure to their graduate advisor's disapproving face would activate the students' schema of their advisor, along with the associated relational self. As a result, the students would evaluate themselves as they typically do with their advisor—namely, negatively when their advisor shows disapproval. Indeed, students exposed to their graduate advisor's face subsequently evaluated their research ideas more harshly compared to participants exposed to the face of a nonsignificant other.

In a second research example, Susan Andersen and her colleagues activated significant-other schemas by telling participants they were going to have an interaction with a supposed other participant. This upcoming interaction partner was described in a manner somewhat similar to participants' own significant other, based on descriptions that participants had provided about their significant other in a pretest session. The descriptions of the partner were meant to activate participants' schema of their significant other without participants being aware that this was happening. The researchers hypothesized and found that after the significant other was activated, participants described and

evaluated themselves in-line with how they had characterized their relational self with the significant other earlier in the pretest session. In other words, the relational self associated with the significant other was activated. Applied to everyday social interactions, this study suggests that when people meet someone new who reminds them of a significant other, they come to see and evaluate themselves as they do in their relationship with the significant other. In turn, such changes in the self-concept have implications for the nature of people's social interactions. For example, if Amanda is fun loving and feels good about herself when she is with her best friend, when she meets someone new who reminds her of this friend, she will tend to see herself as fun loving and to evaluate herself positively just as she does with her friend. In turn, she is likely to approach the interaction with the new person in a fun-loving and positive manner.

Inclusion of Other in the Self

Another recent conceptualization of the link between the self-concept and relationships also assumes that people have schemas of themselves and their significant others stored in memory. However, instead of linkages between them, this conceptualization posits that these schemas may overlap with one another. More specifically, it proposes that, to varying degrees, people may include or take on aspects of their significant others as their own. One theory that proposes this kind of conceptualization is the inclusion-of-other-in-the-self approach. Arthur Aron and his colleagues developed this approach to understand closeness in relationships. According to this approach, the closer one's relationship is, the more one's relationship partner has been included in the self—or in schema terms, the more self-concept and significant-other schemas overlap. Research indicates that people may include a variety of aspects of their relationship partners into their self-concepts, including their partners' resources, perspectives, and personality attributes. As an example of the last of these, the closer Samantha's relationship with her boyfriend is, the more her view of herself may come to include her boyfriend's optimistic outlook and love of adventure.

To assess the degree to which people have included relationship partners in the self, researchers

have used both direct and indirect measures. The most commonly used direct measure is a single-item scale composed of seven pairs of circles. In each pair, one circle designates the self-concept and the other, one's relationship partner. The seven pairs vary in terms of how overlapping the two circles are with greater overlap meant to imply greater closeness in the relationship. Respondents are asked to choose the pair of circles that best represents their relationship.

A common indirect measure of inclusion of other in the self involves participants' reaction times on a computer task (i.e., how quickly participants respond to stimuli presented to them on a computer). Before this task, participants are asked to rate themselves and their relationship partner on various personality traits (e.g., outgoing, helpful, assertive, polite). Based on these ratings, researchers identify traits that participants think describe or do not describe both themselves and their partner, as well as traits that participants think describe only themselves or only their partner. After a delay, participants do the computer task, which involves once again indicating whether the traits they rated earlier describe themselves. The computer records how quickly participants make their self-ratings. The logic of this task is that if relationship partners are included in the self, it should be quicker for people to respond to traits that are descriptive or nondescriptive of both themselves and their partners and slower for them to respond to traits that are descriptive of only one of them because the latter requires people to momentarily separate themselves from their partners. To illustrate, if Jack is included in Linda's self-concept to a large degree, Linda should be quick at responding to the trait outgoing, which describes both her and Jack, but slow at responding to the trait punctual, which describes her but not Jack.

Self-Discrepancy Theory is another theory that assumes that aspects of significant others may be included in the self-concept. According to this theory, people hold beliefs about what they are actually like (actual self), as well as beliefs about what they would ideally like to be (ideal self) and what they think they ought to be (ought self). Ideal selves represent people's hopes and wishes (e.g., Steve hopes to be a rock star), whereas ought selves represent people's duties and obligations

(e.g., Steve feels obligated to become a doctor). Ideal and ought beliefs can be thought of as self-guides that people are trying to meet. Research indicates that when people are made aware of discrepancies between their actual self (i.e., who they are) and their self-guides (i.e., who they hope or feel obligated to be), they experience specific emotions. Discrepancies between actual and ideal selves produce dejection-related affect (e.g., disappointment), whereas actual-ought discrepancies elicit agitation-related affect (e.g., anxiety). To illustrate, when the casting director disparages Allen's acting ability, the discrepancy between his actual self (a poor actor) and his ideal self (a movie star) arouses disappointment but not fear.

Where do people's ideal and ought self-guides come from? Children are exposed to parents and other significant others who convey ideal and ought self-guides directly or indirectly through their reactions. Oftentimes, children come to take on their parents' ideals and oughts as their own. However, as people mature, they develop independent standpoints on their self-guides. Thus, people know what significant others hope they become and what significant others think it is their duty to be, but they may not necessarily share these ideals and oughts. Introjected self-guides are significant-other self-guides that people do not themselves endorse. In contrast, identified self-guides are significant-other self-guides that people do endorse. These latter guides are essentially included in people's own self-concepts, and thus, in this sense, they exemplify a link between the self-concept and relationships.

Cross-Cultural Differences

A third conceptualization of the link between the self-concept and relationships assumes that significant others and relationships are more self-defining for some people than for others. In other words, it assumes that there are personality or individual differences in the degree to which the self-concept and relationships are linked. One well-known example of this kind of conceptualization comes from theorizing on cross-cultural differences in the nature of the self-concept. Hazel Markus and Shinobu Kitayama argue that the traditions, institutions, and practices of Western cultures promote an independent self-construal, a

view of the self as a unique, separate, and autonomous entity. For example, children in the United States are encouraged to express their individual preferences from an early age, and to stand out among their peers. This is less true in East-Asian cultures, where children are taught to be attentive to others' preferences and adjust to their peers. The traditions, institutions, and practices of these cultures are thought to foster an interdependent self-construal, a view of the self as interconnected with others, such as one's relationship partners. Thus, from this theoretical perspective, there is a stronger link between the self-concept and relationships for people from East Asian relative to Western cultures.

Research examining this conceptualization has typically compared the responses of people from Western cultures (e.g., United States) to those from East-Asian cultures (e.g., Japan). Consistent with the idea that relationships play a bigger role in the East-Asian self-concept, people from East-Asian cultures tend to refer to their relationship partners more when describing themselves ("I am Amy's best friend") than do Westerners. More indirect evidence of cross-cultural differences in the self-concept has also been found. For example, East Asians tend to take into account the social context more in their explanations than do Westerners. To illustrate, to explain a coworker's silence at a company meeting, East Asians, who presumably hold an interdependent self-construal, would be especially likely to notice and make reference to social considerations such as the coworker's concern over offending others by being too vocal.

Distinguishing Relationship-Related Versus Other Aspects of the Self-Concept

Finally, it may be useful to distinguish aspects of the self-concept that are linked to relationships from those that are not. The self-concept is complex and multifaceted. Indeed, many psychologists consider the self-concept to be composed of three core components: the personal component, the relational component, and the collective component. This entry has focused on the relational component—those parts of the self-concept that are influenced by relationships. The personal component, by contrast, refers to those parts of the

self-concept that reflect who people are as unique, separate, and autonomous individuals. Finally, the collective component of the self-concept embodies those aspects of the self-concept that are derived from the social groups to which people belong—for example, one's ethnic or racial group. In the course of everyday life, different components of the self-concept are activated, thereby shaping people's cognitive, emotional, and behavioral responses. In other words, who people are at any given moment depends in part on the particular component of the self-concept that is active in the immediate situation.

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See also Attachment Theory; Perspective Taking; Self-Esteem, Effects on Relationships; Self-Expansion Model; Symbolic Interaction Theories; Transference

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SELF-DISCLOSURE

Self-disclosure is a process of revealing oneself to others. It is described as what individuals voluntarily say about themselves to others, including their thoughts, feelings, and experiences. Self-disclosure may involve personal information about facts or feelings; it may be about the past, the future, or the present; it may be related or unrelated to the listener. Self-disclosure is key to the development and maintenance of relationships whether it focuses on issues associated with the self, the listener, the relationship, or all three. It can be viewed as a personality trait related to other traits or as an interpersonal process; either way, the extent to which people engage in self-disclosure affects and is affected by social interaction.

Theoretical and Conceptual Foundations

One of the first researchers to examine self-disclosure was Sidney Jourard. Jourard, who was a psychotherapist, described self-disclosure and claimed that it was positively associated with individuals' health and well-being. He argued that being able to share feelings, thoughts, and experiences with another person often serves as a relief to individuals and may elicit support and validation from listeners.

The importance of self-disclosure to the development of interpersonal relationships was initially highlighted by Irwin Altman and Dalmas Taylor. In fact, Altman and Taylor's Social Penetration Theory describes self-disclosure as inextricably tied to relational development. The theory suggests that increases in relational intimacy are a result of individuals sharing increasingly personal information about themselves with each other. When people first meet and do not know each other well, they tend to exchange information that is impersonal and talk about a limited range of topics.

As they come to know and trust each other, they begin to disclose more personal information and talk about a relatively broad range of topics. According to the theory, sharing information is not only a means for individuals to become more intimate with each other, it also is a way for them to evaluate the rewards and costs that may be associated with their relationships. Altman and Taylor suggested that as long as the rewards partners perceive as associated with their relationship are greater than the costs they believe they will incur, relational development will continue.

Altman also argued that relational partners experience an ongoing struggle about how much information to disclose and how much to conceal. In-line with this idea, more recent theory and research suggest that people utilize self-disclosure to regulate and define their relationship boundaries. Thus, self-disclosure may be employed strategically as a means to get closer to someone or it may be avoided in order to preserve relational distance.

In addition to examining the links between self-disclosure and relationship development, researchers and theorists have studied the degree to which individuals reciprocate self-disclosure. Reciprocity occurs when a person discloses to a listener, and the listener discloses in response. Reciprocity has been studied in experiments where a confederate, who disclosed at various levels, was introduced into small groups. Members of the groups responded to the confederate by matching the degree to which the confederate disclosed. Although self-disclosure often is reciprocated within a single situation, it also can be reciprocated at some other time in a different situation. Indeed, in long-standing relationships, reciprocity may take place over relatively long periods of time. For example, research has demonstrated that although husbands and wives may not reciprocate each other's disclosures immediately, they tend to match how much they disclose to each other over time. Reciprocity may be viewed as an expression of trust between partners, as a tendency of individuals to model or mimic each other's behavior, or as a relational norm.

Measures and Methods

The most common measures of self-disclosure are questionnaires that are used to elicit participants'

reports of their self-disclosing behavior. Participants typically are asked either to report what they have disclosed or what they would be willing to disclose to certain people. For example, Jourard's original questionnaire consists of 60 items (a later version had 25) where each of six content areas is represented by 10 items. The six content areas are attitudes and opinions, tastes and interests, work and study, money, personality, and body. Participants' responses are framed in terms of the person to whom the information is revealed, such as the respondents' mother, friend, best friend, and so on.

Another method of measuring self-disclosure is by asking participants to keep diaries in which they report interactions with others, how much they disclosed, and how revealing or intimate their self-disclosures were. Diaries also may be used to obtain written descriptions of disclosures which then are rated by experts.

When researchers want to observe self-disclosure, they often do so by manipulating the degree of disclosure in experiments. For example, an experimenter or a confederate can disclose to a participant at different rates, and the degree of the participant's self-disclosure can be coded.

Self-disclosure can be measured from several perspectives. For example, researchers have assessed how much disclosure occurs because of the discloser's, or the listener's, characteristics. A relatively novel approach is measuring the degree of disclosure in a dyad's interaction that occurs as a product of the relationship itself and the interacting partners together, above and beyond the degree of self-disclosure of each individual. The introduction of psycho-physiological indices such as blood pressure, muscle tension, and skin conductance has likewise expanded the possibilities for interpreting the process and impact of self-disclosure. These indices enable researchers to measure self-reported degree of self-disclosure or anxiety and compare that assessment with some physiological response. Discrepancies between self-reports and physiological measures may indicate ongoing distress that is not self-reported.

Outcomes Associated With Self-Disclosure

Although disclosing information about oneself to others can be risky, self-disclosure has been linked

to a number of positive psychological and physiological outcomes. Some of the psychological benefits of self-disclosure include enhanced self-worth and self-validation. Self-disclosure can protect people from intrusive thoughts, free up cognitive resources, and facilitate insights. People who tend to disclose information about themselves to others typically are less anxious, less depressed, and less lonely and have less problematic interpersonal relationships than do others. Self-disclosure is related to commitment, love, and satisfaction in close relationships. Disclosure shows trust and confidence in others and often creates a positive cycle in relationships.

The physiological benefits of self-disclosure also are striking. Research on self-expression and disclosure of emotional experiences has demonstrated that both can be associated with better physical health. Various health indicators, such as markers of the immune system, blood chemistry related to liver functioning, cardiovascular functioning, physical symptoms, morbidity, and even mortality rates, are related to a range of measures and levels of self-disclosure. In the laboratory, talking about traumas has caused immediate and striking reductions in disclosers' blood pressure level, muscle tension, and skin conductance. The mechanism that researchers believe may be at work here is that repressing negative experiences such as traumas, disappointments, rejection, and losses requires a physiological effort that impairs normal biological functions. Some researchers have argued that there is a curvilinear relationship between degree of self-disclosure and degree of health—that those who disclose in moderation are mostly better adjusted—but this argument has remained intuitive so far.

It is important to acknowledge that because disclosing information about oneself involves vulnerability and risk, it is not always associated with positive outcomes. In fact, a number of motivations work against disclosing. People may perceive the costs of disclosure as too high, or they may fear that their partner will not respond positively to the disclosure. Protecting the partner from being hurt or upset by the information is another restraining motivation. Partners also may fear that the self-disclosure will cause loss of assumed similarity and thus create social distance. They may fear losing their relationship altogether because of the content of what they reveal.

People also may have negative experiences when they disclose. They may feel shame for deviating from expected norms or conversely, may experience regret for not revealing the relevant information sooner. Those who disclose can create undesirable impressions of themselves in their listeners. Self-disclosure that is not well received can carry several costs. These include loss of privacy, being judged, losing face and status, instigating conflict, being deemed to have poor judgment, and so on. Likewise, there may be costs to the listener, such as feeling hurt, being misunderstood, and so on.

Development of Self-Disclosure Among Children and Adolescents

Little is known about self-disclosure with regard to human development. People tend to assume that children express themselves genuinely, in earnest, and therefore that they self-disclose at higher rates than adults. It is reasonable to think that children are relatively naïve and that their judgment of appropriateness is still developing. However, the distinct features of children's self-disclosure have not been investigated systematically. Research suggests that children's willingness to disclose to their parents tends to be higher when their relationship with their parents is warm. Disclosure to mothers and siblings tends to be higher than to fathers. Where relationships with parents are marked by distrust, the children's tendency is to avoid disclosing to parents altogether.

During adolescence, self-disclosure to friends and then to romantic partners tends to increase, as young people seek validation and support more from peers than from parents. This tendency seems to continue through the college years: College seniors were found to disclose to best friends more than did freshmen.

Sex Differences

In North America, women disclose more to other women than men disclose to other men. Women more than men disclose particularly to intimate persons such as their mother, romantic partner, close female friends, and siblings. In contrast, a few studies show that men disclose more than

women to distant targets like coworkers, neighbors, and strangers. Women tend more than men to disclose about intimate topics such as emotions, personal development, and personal relationships. Normative patterns of relating to intimate others may discourage men from self-disclosing. Interestingly, men who avoid disclosing particularly in the context of close relationships regard self-disclosure as a sign of neediness, dependency, and weakness. In contrast, women may see self-disclosing as a desirable process by which they acquire sympathy and support, so it is a source of strength.

Relationships

Research generally suggests that self-disclosure is an important part of close relationships. For instance, there is a positive association between self-disclosure and variables such as liking and relational satisfaction. Experiments where levels of self-disclosure were manipulated have demonstrated that when people disclose to someone, they have a greater tendency to like that person. The reverse also is true: When individuals like someone, they are more likely to disclose to that person. Studies further indicate that in ongoing relationships there is a positive association between disclosure and the tendency of partners to be emotionally involved with each other. Partners who disclose more to each other tend to report greater relational satisfaction and relational stability.

Although self-disclosure appears to be positively linked to happy, close relationships, it is important to note that the association between disclosure and intimacy is not necessarily linear. Some theorists argue that relational partners experience dialectical tensions between being open and closed about what they discuss with each other. Others similarly suggest that partners work together to establish a balance between what they disclose to each other and what they keep private. Scholars also note that, after partners come to know each other well, their need to disclose personal information declines. Further, although self-disclosure among married couples is related to greater marital satisfaction, couples' self-disclosure can depend on the type of relationship they maintain. For instance, researchers have noted that couples can

be characterized as evincing one of three relationship types: traditional, where the partners use regular and traditional daily schedules and stress stability rather than satisfaction; independent, where couples maintain a high level of companionship and are assertive in their relationship; and separate, where partners are disengaged and control psychological and physical accessibility to each other. Studies of couples interacting in a laboratory setting showed that independents disclosed more than traditionals who, in turn, disclosed more than separates. Further, separates and traditionals disclosed a significantly higher proportion of factual information to one another, twice as much as independents.

Context: Cultural Differences, Social Class, Setting

Self-disclosure is influenced by norms and social rules that pertain to what is appropriate, depending on each situation and relationship. Cultures regulate differently the degree to which people self-disclose, the content of their disclosure (defining certain topics as taboo), and the individuals to whom they disclose—parents, siblings, spouse, acquaintances, and strangers. For instance in one comparative study, young African Americans of both genders were found to disclose less than young European men and women. Men of lower income, regardless of origin, tended to report less self-disclosure to intimate persons—family, close friends, partners—and more to distant targets. Women, regardless of social class and origin, tended to disclose more to intimates.

Like culture, physical settings can affect self-disclosure. It is particularly complicated to regulate self-disclosure and privacy in a context where there is reduced physical space and crowding, where privacy is limited, and where much about each person is exposed. A context of this kind is the Israeli kibbutzim. In these very small, modern collective communities self-disclosure is inhibited, although relationships among the members are generally positive and cooperative. One of the explanations for the relative inhibited self-disclosure in the kibbutz is that communal life is based on intense contact most of the day. Until about 15 years ago, children also slept in separate children's houses,

thus experiencing almost around the clock contact. As a result of this intense contact, people may feel the need to guard their psychological privacy and their individuality.

The most common participants in self-disclosure research have been students and married couples. Research on special groups and their special contexts, such as individuals with HIV, gay men and lesbian women, sexual abuse survivors, and so on, will enable scholars to test the extent to which previous research findings valid under these special circumstances.

Self-Disclosure and Psychotherapy

Self-disclosure is important in psychotherapy to clarify the sense of self, to explore inner thoughts and feelings, and to enable people to make choices in their relationships outside the therapy. People who undergo psychotherapy tend to feel more open and to self-disclose more in other contexts (e.g., in their personal relationships) than people who have not had therapy.

Individual psychotherapy usually involves two persons, the therapist and the client-patient. Self-disclosure by the latter is a cornerstone of psychotherapy. By disclosing thoughts and feelings that they see as unacceptable and having those thoughts and feelings accepted by the therapist, client-patients are likely to experience greater internal peace. Greater disclosure by client-patients during therapy is associated with better therapeutic outcomes.

There are two extreme positions concerning self-disclosure by the therapist to the client-patient, as well as a recent position that is more moderate. Jourard who was among the first to coin the term self-disclosure within psychology, regarded it as essential for the therapist to disclose to the client about himself or herself. In contrast, Freud, who laid the foundation for most current psychotherapies, advocated the total absence of any disclosure by the therapist (although in practice he engaged in disclosure). For decades, self-disclosure by therapists was discouraged. Jourard's original sweeping suggestion about its value was ignored. It was considered likely to interfere with the nature of responses from the client and to change the direction of the therapy. The therapist's refraining from verbal self-disclosure was part of an effort not to

contaminate the directions that patients chose to go. It meant belittling the effect of all the non-verbal and indirect information available to the patient about the therapist. In recent years as part of a novel relational-psychodynamic therapy, a degree of self-disclosure by the therapist is considered essential to the psychotherapeutic relationships. The place of disclosure from therapists to clients has been conceived as positive, provided that the disclosure is intentional and planned by the therapist to suit the patient's specific needs. Research indicates that self-disclosure by therapists, when appropriate, and especially in response to similar client self-disclosure, may increase positive, rewarding, and reciprocal self-disclosure by the client.

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See also: Marital Typologies; Openness and Honesty; Secrets; Taboo Topics

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SELF-ESTEEM, EFFECTS ON RELATIONSHIPS

A widespread belief in popular culture is that to truly love others, one must first love oneself. That is, global self-esteem—one's overall evaluation of and liking for oneself—must be high and secure. This entry examines research relevant to this belief. It concerns, first, the concept of self-esteem; then it addresses evidence concerning self-esteem and the initiation of new relationships and the quality of close relationships. Finally, it concerns mechanisms that may link self-esteem and relationship quality.

Typically, self-esteem is measured through a self-report questionnaire with items such as, "I am a worthy person." This entry focuses on such traditionally measured self-esteem rather than on implicit self-esteem—feelings about the self that are beyond full awareness. This entry also focuses on (a) global self-esteem rather than on self-evaluations in specific domains (e.g., academic, social) and on (b) dispositional self-esteem, which has been shown to be quite stable over time rather than state self-esteem, which involves one's feelings about oneself at a particular moment. In most research on self-esteem, people classified as having low self-esteem (LSEs) do not truly dislike themselves; they view themselves positively, just less positively than do people with high self-esteem (HSEs). This entry also assumes that HSEs' positive self-views are genuine and secure—not falsely inflated or narcissistic—which probably would have different consequences for relationships.

Self-Esteem and Relationship Initiation

Although only a few studies have addressed self-esteem differences in relationship initiation,

evidence has emerged that is consistent with Mark Leary's Sociometer Theory. According to Sociometer Theory, self-esteem is a barometer of one's perceptions of one's relational value: HSEs are confident that others value them, whereas LSEs are doubtful. In-line with Sociometer Theory, LSEs compared to HSEs express less confidence that being friendly will bring about affiliative responses from others, tend to underestimate the degree to which new acquaintances like them, worry more about rejection, and according to some studies, are more hurt by rejection when it does occur.

Such differences in confidence about others' acceptance may well contribute to self-esteem differences in relationship-initiating behaviors. HSEs rate themselves, and are rated by others, as being better than other people at initiating relationships. They also report dating more than do LSEs. In contrast, LSEs appear to pass up opportunities for gaining new friendships if those opportunities carry even a slight risk of rejection.

In the case of initiating new relationships, then, popular wisdom appears to be correct: It helps to love oneself.

Self-Esteem and Relationship Quality

Many studies show that HSEs view their interpersonal relationships favorably. Compared to LSEs, HSEs describe themselves as more socially skilled, more popular, less lonely, more socially supported, more accepted by other people in general and by specific people in their lives, more satisfied in both their friendships and romantic relationships, more secure in their attachments, and more optimistic about the future of their romantic relationships.

Such findings may not indicate that HSEs actually do have higher-quality relationships, however. HSEs are more happy and cheerful than LSEs, so they may have more favorable views of everything; they may even see the sky as bluer. Correlations between any two self-report measures—including measures of self-esteem and the quality of one's relationships—may be inflated by such positivity biases, as well as by social desirability concerns and shared method variance. Researchers can use three methods to avoid these problems with self-ratings: assess relationship

dissolution, use relationship partners' ratings (e.g., friend, romantic partner), and attempt to control for the problems associated with self-ratings.

The objective measure of relationship dissolution—whether the friendship has ended or the couple has split or not—would seem to provide an incontrovertible index of relationship quality. Yet very few studies involving self-esteem have employed such measures, and those that have contradict each other. More importantly, relationship dissolution may not be an unambiguous index of relationship quality after all. People often stay in unsatisfactory friendships and marriages, yet some relatively happy relationships dissolve. Decisions about whether to seek a divorce, for example, may be influenced by factors other than relationship quality, such as financial resources. The ambiguity of a breakup as a measure of relationship quality is particularly acute when it comes to examining self-esteem. LSEs tend to stay in relationships even when they are unhappy, probably fearing that they have relatively poor alternatives to their partner.

A second way of avoiding the pitfalls of self-report measures is to examine whether relationship partners share HSEs' rosy views. Although vastly outnumbered by studies of self-rated satisfaction, a few studies have measured the association between one partner's self-esteem and the other's satisfaction. These studies confirm that the higher one's self-esteem, the better the relationship (as viewed by one's partner).

A third approach to the problems of self-report is to retain self-report measures but to attempt to control for the problems that such measures create. An example involves a study by Sandra Murray, John Holmes, and their colleagues in which the dependent variable was perceived regard—for example, Nora's perceptions of her partner Nick's regard for her—rather than relationship satisfaction. These researchers examined the association between (Nora's) self-esteem and perceived regard while controlling for (Nora's) ratings of relationship satisfaction. Results showed that HSEs thought that their partners regarded them more favorably than did LSEs. Because Nora's satisfaction ratings should have been influenced by any tendency on her part to be positively biased or concerned about social desirability, controlling such ratings should control for those problems. Hence, the results strongly suggest that the

self-esteem-perceived regard association is not due to these nettlesome issues.

In sum, studies of relationship quality—involving self-reports, partner reports, and self-reports with controls for positivity biases—suggest that HSEs enjoy happier, more satisfying relationships than do LSEs. But what is the direction of causality? Although it is plausible that self-esteem influences relationship quality, it is also plausible that relationship outcomes influence self-esteem. For example, being happily married could well raise one's self-esteem. It is also possible that a third variable, such as high income or robust physical health, promotes both high self-esteem and happy relationships.

Stronger conclusions about causality are afforded by longitudinal designs that measure self-esteem at time 1 and relationship quality at time 2 (and that control for time 1 relationship quality and time 2 self-esteem, which should control positivity biases). Only a few studies of this design have been reported. Three studies, again coming from Murray's laboratory, suggest that HSEs not only find their relationships more satisfying, but they also experience greater increases in satisfaction over time. In contrast, LSEs not only start out less satisfied with their relationships, but also their satisfaction tends to decline. Self-esteem also predicts corresponding changes in partners' satisfaction over time.

Many more longitudinal studies have examined the role of neuroticism, which is the tendency to view the world as threatening and to experience negative emotions. Such studies are pertinent here because neuroticism is typically conceptualized as including low self-esteem, and measures of neuroticism and self-esteem are moderately to strongly correlated (inversely). Longitudinal studies have shown convincingly that neuroticism is the strongest personality predictor of relationship quality: Couples that include a partner high in neuroticism are less harmonious than those that do not. It is possible that self-esteem may be the true cause underlying these effects. Although it is also possible that any association between self-esteem and relationship quality may be due to the third variable of neuroticism, the possibility that low self-esteem is the active ingredient in neuroticism seems at least equally plausible, as described in the next section.

Mechanisms Underlying the Self-Esteem–Relationship Quality Link

Research has indicated that within their close relationships, LSEs differ from HSEs in a variety of beliefs and behaviors. The following summary focuses only on the beliefs and behaviors that have been shown in other research to be associated with relationship quality. Relative to LSEs, (a) HSEs more openly express their thoughts and feelings with people they are close to, (b) HSEs are more secure in their attachment styles (i.e., they are more willing to get close to and depend on others), and (c) when their partners behave badly, HSEs make attributions for those behaviors that are more charitable. In turn, these three characteristics—self-disclosure, secure attachment style, and benign attributions—positively predict relationship quality.

Some of these associations can be understood within the risk regulation model of Murray, Holmes, and their colleagues. According to this model, people in romantic relationships must balance their desire for closeness against their desire to protect themselves from the pain of possible disapproval or rejection by their partner. Hence, people estimate their partner's regard for them and regulate their closeness accordingly. Self-esteem enters into this model because it is a strong predictor of perceptions of the partner's regard. Murray and her colleagues have shown across many studies that LSEs underestimate how much their partners love them. When judging their partner's regard for them, they seem to project their own self-doubts. An LSE, George for example, assumes, without supporting evidence, that Gracie shares his unfavorable view of himself. LSEs' perceptions of their partner's regard also seem to be readily contaminated by how they feel about themselves in other spheres of life. On days when they have succeeded in some way at work, for example, LSEs feel more loved and accepted by their partner, whereas when they fail, they feel less loved. HSEs do not display the same pattern. Murray and colleagues' studies also show that people with LSE seem ready to interpret ambiguous cues from their romantic partner as signs of rejection. For example, when their partners are in a bad mood, LSEs tend to take it personally and to feel hurt. When they believe that their partner sees a problem in their relationship,

they are more likely than HSEs to fear losing their partner's love and commitment.

The risk regulation model also predicts what happens when people have the insecurities exhibited by LSEs: They attempt to reduce closeness and interdependence with their partner. In several studies, Murray and her colleagues have shown that when their insecurities are heightened in the ways just described, LSEs self-protectively withdraw, derogate their partners, or otherwise behave badly toward their partners on subsequent days. In contrast, HSEs behave in the opposite way: When their insecurities are heightened, they perceive greater love from their partners, have more generous perceptions of them, and draw closer. As one would expect, LSEs' customary reactions are more destructive to the relationship than are HSEs'. In several studies, such patterns predicted declines in the partner's satisfaction with the relationship. LSEs may bring about, then, the very rejection that they fear. In contrast, HSEs' more constructive responses are more likely to resolve the issues that gave rise to their insecurities in the first place.

In summary, although few studies have directly and rigorously examined the effects of self-esteem on relationship quality, many rigorous studies have identified self-esteem differences in important perceptions and behaviors—perceptions and behaviors that have been shown to predict relationship quality. These findings strongly point to several ways in which high self-esteem can contribute to happy relationships and low self-esteem can contribute to unhappy ones. As was true for relationship initiation, then, the popular wisdom that loving oneself helps one to love others seems highly plausible.

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See also Intimacy, Individual Differences Related to; Neuroticism, Effects on Relationships; Risk in Relationships; Self-Concept and Relationships; Sociometer Theory

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SELF-EVALUATION MAINTENANCE MODEL

How do people know who they are? Social psychologists have long noted that self-knowledge derives from social comparison processes. That is, people define their attributes based on how they perform relative to others. This perspective informs how self-identity is developed. Taken alone, social comparison perspectives might lead to the assumption that people strive to outperform others. This contrasts with research investigating an alternative perspective, the need to belong. How do self-identity and belongingness needs coexist? This entry reviews Abraham Tesser's self-evaluation maintenance (SEM) model, a framework for understanding the interaction of these two fundamental drives.

The SEM model holds that individuals are interested in upholding a positive self-evaluation. People want to feel good about themselves. According to the model, three mechanisms interact to predict self-evaluation. These mechanisms are performance, relevance (or importance) of the domain to the person, and closeness. Generally, people feel good when they outperform others and feel poorly when outperformed. This reaction is not always true. How people react depends on the relevance of the domain they are competing on, or how important the domain is to them.

In the first example, Lilly and Oliver have a dinner party. Both cook. The guests seem to like

Oliver's food but do not respond as positively to Lilly's. Lilly is outperformed on a dimension important to her. She feels bad. In the SEM model, this is an example of negative comparison. Oliver has outperformed Lilly on a dimension important to him. He feels positive, or has positive comparison.

Suppose that Oliver, a technology consultant, gets a contract for the development of a new gadget. He has outperformed Lilly. Technology is not highly relevant to Lilly. She is unlikely to feel bad. In fact, she might feel pleased to be associated with Oliver and his good performance or positive reflection. In contrast, imagine if Lilly, a medical doctor, received an award for implementing a new computer-based patient monitoring system at work. She has outperformed Oliver in a domain that is not relevant to her but is to Oliver. Her self-evaluation would be negatively affected by this knowledge.

The outcomes of these scenarios depend on how close Lilly and Oliver are. According to the SEM model, closeness intensifies reactions. Research supports this theory. Reactions are stronger when people are put in performance situations with close others versus distant others.

What do these results mean for close relationships? For instance, are people more likely to have intense emotional reactions in close relationships? Research on the SEM Model has shown that people are more likely to report negative affect when outperformed by a close other compared to a distant other and when the domain is important to the person. Negative communication in close relationships also follows SEM model predictions. One study looked at both partners' perspectives. The first condition was the most positive. The domain was relevant to the outperforming partner but not relevant to the outperformed partner. Both felt positively about the performance outcome. In the intermediate condition, the domain was relevant to both partners. The outperforming one felt positively; the outperformed individual felt poorly. In the third condition, the domain was relevant to the outperformed partner and was not relevant to the outperforming partner. Both partners experienced negative self-evaluation. Couples in the third condition expressed the highest levels of negative communication, intermediate levels of negative communication in the second condition, and low levels in the first condition.

Clearly, SEM processes can destabilize relationship balance and happiness. Negative outcomes are not inevitable, however. The SEM model posits that people can make adjustments on any of the three domains in an attempt to uphold a positive self-evaluation. An individual may reduce a negative affective reaction by changing the perceived relevance of the domain in question (“Oh well, that particular kind of technological adaptation isn’t that important to me”), by making downward distortions of the other’s performance (“Anybody could implement those kinds of simple technology programs”), or by changing closeness (“I didn’t really want to stay in this relationship anyway”). These adjustments reduce the threat of the performance outcome and reinstate a stable emotional state.

In close relationships, the SEM model suggests that people will make increasingly complex adjustments in an effort to sustain both closeness and positive self-evaluation. In one study, following performance feedback, partners made adjustments in the relevance of relationship-enhancing domains. When outperformed, people increased the perceived relevance of the domain to the partner and decreased the relevance of the domain to themselves. For example, if Lilly was outperformed by Oliver on cooking, she might have said, “Oh well, cooking has always been extremely important to Oliver. I like to do it, but wouldn’t say it’s the most important thing I do.” As relationships become more committed, these types of adjustments become increasingly and iteratively refined so that people create specific niches within the relationship where they can both perform well and sustain their self-identities while also maintaining closeness. Oliver and Lilly, for instance, may come to a point where Lilly defines herself as an excellent baker and Oliver defines himself as a great chef.

These refined adjustments also influence affect. It might be rude to gloat if outperforming a partner on a dimension relevant to both persons. Likewise, if a partner outperformed the other on a dimension relevant to the other person and that person became bitter, this might pose problems for the relationship. Research shows that in committed relationships, people attenuate their responses in relationship-enhancing ways. They are more empathic and less bitter. These patterns occur only

in committed relationships and not in early, dating relationships, suggesting that these reactions develop over time.

In sum, SEM processes provide a useful framework for understanding how it is possible to simultaneously honor both self-identity and belongingness needs. As relationships increase in commitment, the SEM model predicts that partners will make increasingly refined adjustments in their self-definitions as they negotiate how to retain closeness and relationship happiness while upholding self-identity.

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See also Belonging, Need for; Happiness and Relationships; Satisfaction in Relationships; Similarity in Ongoing Relationships; Sociometer Theory

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SELF-EXPANSION MODEL

The Self-Expansion Model is a conceptual framework that attempts to describe how people think, feel, and act in close relationships. Originally proposed in 1986 by Arthur Aron and Elaine N. Aron, it was inspired by an integration of Eastern psychology’s views (mostly Vedanta) on the evolution of the self and the nature of love with contemporary Western psychological work on motivation and cognition. In the years since, it has generated a large body of research while undergoing continued theoretical refinement.

The Self-Expansion Model is based on two fundamental ideas:

1. *Self-expansion motivation*: People seek to expand themselves by expanding their ability to accomplish their goals, leading to ever greater goals or life purposes. This basic motive has been described in Western psychology as exploration, effectance, curiosity, competence, or self-improvement.
2. *Inclusion of close others in the self*: One way in which people expand themselves is by including others in themselves through close relationships in which inevitably the other's resources, perspectives, and identities are experienced, to some extent, as one's own.

This entry describes each of these two ideas in more detail along with representative research related to each in the context of close relationships; it briefly concludes with examples of research and applications generated by the model in areas other than close relationships.

Self-Expansion Motivation

According to the model, a central human motive is the desire to expand the self—to acquire whatever skills or resources that will enhance one's ability to accomplish one's always evolving goals. Rapid expansion of the self, as often occurs when forming a new romantic relationship (or learning a sport or exploring a new, interesting place), results in high levels of excited positive feelings. Rapid de-expansion of the self, as might occur with the sudden death of a spouse (or the onset of a physical handicap or being imprisoned), leads to intense negative feelings.

For a more concrete idea of what is meant by self-expansion in a close relationship, consider three items on a questionnaire developed by Gary Lewandowski and A. Aron: "How much does your partner provide a source of exciting experiences?" "How much has knowing your partner made you a better person?" and "How much do you see your partner as a way to expand your own capabilities?"

On the surface, a self-expansion that involves including the other's resources in one's self may sound like the height of selfishness, as if one is taking resources from the other in order to accomplish one's own goals. But it is not, for several reasons. First, the motivation is usually not conscious. Second, when one is self-expanding by

including another in the self, the other is generally having the same experience so that, as discussed below, their identities come to overlap. Thus, third, one is not taking from another, or even sharing resources with another, but rather in an important sense the other's resources are experienced as one's own because there is no longer an other person. The two persons are expanding to include each other so that they are becoming the same identity, with the same needs. For many purposes, they do act as separate persons and view each other that way, but they can also act as if they have fused their identities.

Self-expansion motivation affects initial attraction in interesting ways. It is well established that in the context of romantic and friendship relationships similarity attracts. The self-expansion model explains this attraction is due in part to the fact that any relationship expands the self, and people are aware that it is easiest to develop a relationship with someone who is similar. However, the model also proposes what has been supported by recent experiments: If one thinks it is likely that one will be able to develop a relationship with a particular person, one will be most attracted to the person if that person is different from oneself (e.g., different interests or ethnic backgrounds). This is because people who are different offer greater opportunities for self-expansion.

Is there evidence that developing a new relationship does expand one's self? In one study, undergraduates were tested five times over a 10-week period, and at each testing, they answered questions about what had happened since the last testing. Buried among these were questions about whether they had fallen in love. At each testing they also did a 3-minute listing of words or phrases in answer to "Who are you today?" For those who fell in love, there were more words and more different aspects of the self listed after falling in love. Another study found that for those who fell in love there was a substantial increase from before to after in self-efficacy, the sense of being able to accomplish one's goals. Looking at this yet another way, but in reverse, Lewandowski and his colleagues focused on relationship breakup. They found that the more expansion a relationship had provided before the breakup, the greater the contraction of the self after the relationship's dissolution—as indicated by both decreases in the

number of “Who are you today?” listings and by lower scores on a measure of self-efficacy.

Self-expansion motivation also explains the typical decline in satisfaction in a romantic relationship after the honeymoon period—plus it suggests how this decline might be averted. When two people begin a relationship, there is often an initial, exhilarating period in which they spend hours talking, engaging in intense or sometimes risky self-disclosure; thus, the partners are expanding their selves at a rapid rate. But once they know each other fairly well, opportunities for further rapid expansion of this sort inevitably decrease. On the other hand, even in a long-established relationship, if a couple is able to do self-expanding (novel, challenging, exciting) activities together, the resulting rapid self-expansion can become linked with the relationship and thus keep it vigorous.

In one series of laboratory experiments, couples’ marital happiness was assessed before and after doing an interactive task. Some couples were assigned a self-expanding, highly novel and challenging task; others, something more mundane. (In the expanding activity, the two were tied together on one side at wrists and ankles and then had to crawl together on mats and climb over a barrier while pushing a foam cylinder with their heads. This was timed, and the couple received a prize if they beat a time limit, but the situation was rigged so that they almost made it within the time limit on the first two tries and then just barely make it on the third try. The mundane activity was much less challenging and exciting.) Couples in the expanding-activity condition experienced a greater increase in love and relationship satisfaction.

In a study outside the laboratory, one group of married couples was assigned to spend an hour and a half each week doing an activity they chose from a list of highly exciting but only moderately pleasant activities; another group chose from a list of only moderately exciting but highly pleasant activities. The couples doing the highly exciting activities showed a greater increase in marital satisfaction over the 10 weeks of the study.

Yet another line of research emerging from the self-expansion model focuses on passionate love as a goal-oriented motivational state, an intense desire to expand the self by forming a close relationship with a particular other person, rather than on love as a specific emotion in its own right,

such as sadness or happiness. In a series of 10 studies, Bianca Acevedo and her colleagues found that, as with other goal-oriented states such as hunger, people report diverse emotions when they experience the drive state of romantic love. Also, when they do not spontaneously feel the spark of passionate love for someone, they have a much harder time producing this desire than they do producing specific emotions.

Using a brain-scan (functional Magnetic Resonance Imagery [fMRI]) approach to get at this motivation-versus-emotion issue, A. Aron and colleagues recruited participants who were intensely in love. When these participants viewed a picture of their partners, they showed consistent brain activation in regions associated with motivation and reward, consistent with the idea that romantic love is a motivational state. There were also brain activations in areas associated with emotions, but these were in different emotion areas for different participants, consistent with the idea that romantic love is highly emotional, but leads to different emotions according to the particular circumstances.

Inclusion of Close Others in the Self

According to the self-expansion model, the general motivation to expand the self often leads to a desire to enter and maintain a particular close relationship because close relationships are an especially satisfying and human means to self-expansion. Each includes, to some extent, the other’s resources, perspectives, and identities.

Resources

Seeing oneself as including a partner’s resources (e.g., knowledge and material and social assets) means seeing oneself as having access to them, as if to some extent they were one’s own (e.g., as if one were actually thinking “I know I can do this because my partner knows and will show me how”). Similarly, when the other is included in one’s self, as if the identities have merged, to some extent what happens to a close other happens to oneself. Thus, it is not surprising what occurred in a study in which participants made a series of decisions distributing gains and losses of money to self, best friend, or another person, under conditions in

which the friend and other person would not know who was responsible for the decisions. The participants allocated to their best friend about what they allocated to themselves, while they allocated consistently less to the nonclose other. Indeed, many studies have now found that people react to a close other's gains and losses as if they were their own.

Perspectives

Including another in one's self also refers to experiencing the world from the other's point of view. For example, this kind of inclusion shows up as the exception to the well-established tendency of people to see their own actions as being caused by the situation ("I'm generally honest, but in this situation I had to lie"), but another person's as caused by the kind of person he or she is ("He's dishonest"). Studies based on the self-expansion model have shown that people are likely to understand why close others do things in the same way as they understand why they do things themselves (i.e., giving more weight to the situation).

Similarly, seeing the world from a close other's perspective means that if people are asked to form an image of themselves or of someone else interacting with various objects (e.g., riding a donkey, setting a clock), when asked later, they forget more of the objects with which they formed images of themselves interacting; the same forgetting occurred

when they have formed images of close others interacting with objects. This occurs for objects imaged with the self because the self is a background to experience so that images that involve the self are less vivid and memorable. According to the self-expansion model, this also occurs for objects imaged with close others because close others are treated like the self and thus also serve as a background to experience.

Identities

Identity refers to the personal characteristics and memories that make people who they are. The self-expansion model emphasizes that people easily confuse their own characteristics or memories with those of close others because close others are actually part of the very makeup of the self. This has been found in a variety of studies using methods such as reaction time, memory, picture recognition, and brain scanning. One example is a procedure in which people are shown a series of personality traits, one at a time. For each trait, they press either a "Me" button if the trait is true of the self or a "Not-Me" button if it is false of the self. The important finding is that people are consistently slower at pressing these buttons for traits on which what is true or false of the self does not match what is true or false of a close other. The idea is that if something is true of oneself but not of one's partner, because one's partner is part of

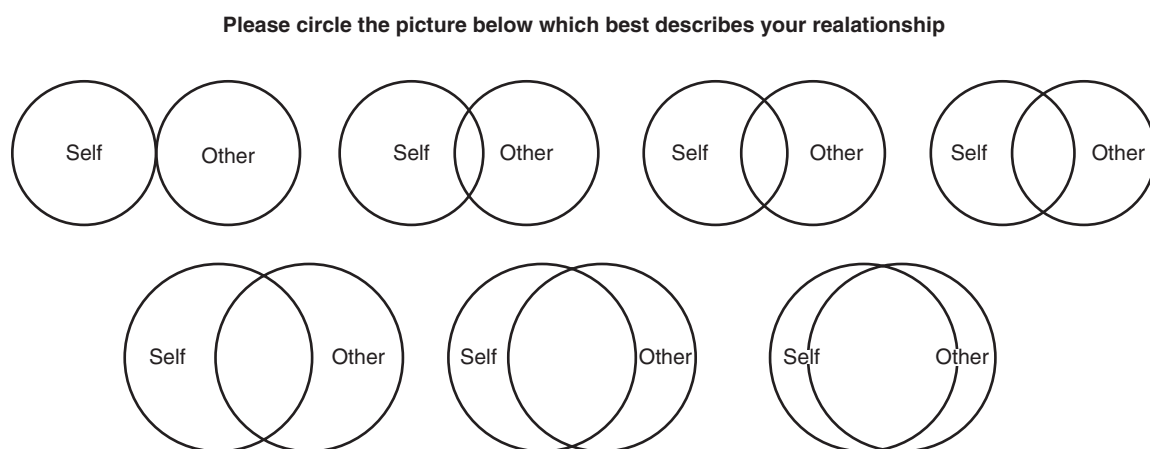


Figure 1 The Inclusion of Other in the Self (IOS) Scale

Source: From Aron, A., Aron, E. N., & Smollan, D. (1992). Inclusion of Other in the Self Scale and the structure of interpersonal closeness. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 63, 596–612. Used by permission of the author.

who one is, then in a sense it is also not true of oneself. Thus it takes people about 65 milliseconds longer to say it is true of oneself. This result has been replicated in many different laboratories and is stronger the closer the two people are.

Finally, an influential methodological development from the self-expansion model is the Inclusion of Other in the Self (IOS) Scale, shown in Figure 1. When people select a pair of circles with a great deal of overlap, it means they feel highly interconnected with the other person. The IOS Scale has been widely used and correlates well with other, less obvious verbal measures of closeness. For example, those who rate a relationship as very overlapping on the scale have a stronger effect on the Me and Not-Me reaction time procedure. As another example, they use more plural pronouns (such as *we* and *us*) when writing about their relationship. Perhaps this measure has been so successful because the metaphor of overlapping circles corresponds to how people actually see themselves in close relationships.

Beyond Close Relationships

The self-expansion model has been applied in a variety of unexpected ways in order to understand the paradox of altruism (why people would ever be motivated to do something that provides no benefits to the self) and to understand people's relationships to their social groups, communities, the environment, God, and even commercial products. It has been especially productive in the context of inter-group relations, where work by the Arons in collaboration with Stephen Wright, Jennifer Eberhardt, Kristin Davies, and others has led to new interventions to reduce prejudice. One example is as a 4-hour procedure that systematically creates closeness between pairs of individuals from different groups (e.g., different ethnic groups, rival political groups, police and community). The result is more positive attitudes towards the group of one's partner. The principle here is that creating a close relationship with a person leads to including the person in the self, and thus to including the person's group identity in the self. This reduces prejudice towards the entire group of the other person—a promising development for a strife-torn world.

Arthur Aron and Elaine Aron

See also Aristotle and Plato on Relationships; Boredom in Relationships; Closeness; Falling in Love; Intimacy; Love, Companionate and Passionate; Motivation and Relationships; Self-Concept and Relationships

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SELF-MONITORING AND RELATIONSHIPS

Self-monitoring is a theory of the regulation and control of expressive behaviors and image projection. Certain individuals, high self-monitors, out of a concern for cultivating images and status, are particularly attuned to contextual and social cues. The self-presentational behavior of high self-monitors is flexible and tailored to their situations. A typical high self-monitor would endorse

the following item from the Self-Monitoring Scale: "In different situations and with different people, I often act like very different persons." In contrast, low self-monitors are less responsive to social context and possess smaller repertoires of self-presentational skills. Low self-monitors value consistency between expressive behaviors and inner attitudes and emotions. A typical low self-monitor would endorse the item, "I have trouble changing my behavior to suit different people and different situations." Self-monitoring propensities are related to a wide range of behaviors and life domains, including control of emotional expression, consistency between attitudes and behaviors, organizational behavior, and as discussed in this entry, interpersonal relationships. This entry reviews the general concept of self-monitoring and discusses its relevance to human relationships.

Self-monitoring orientations have profound implications for interpersonal relationships. Just as high self-monitors focus on images and appearances in their enactment of expressive behaviors, they also focus on external qualities of friends and romantic partners, a focus which facilitates the creation of social worlds that allow them to play many roles with complementary casts of characters. Similarly, low self-monitors are not only attuned to their own dispositions and attitudes but are also attuned to internal qualities of others, a sensitivity which facilitates the creation of social worlds that allow them to be themselves.

Friendships

High and low self-monitors approach friendships in very different ways. High self-monitors emphasize shared activities and place little emphasis on nurturance and general compatibility. They have relatively superficial relationships that are limited to specific contexts. In contrast, low self-monitors strive for general compatibility and shared values. They have relatively deep and nurturing relationships that generalize across contexts and activities and are attracted to potential friends with similar attitudes, whereas high self-monitors are attracted to those with similar activity preferences.

Moreover, the social worlds of high self-monitors are more segmented than those of low self-monitors.

That is, high self-monitors are likely to choose specific people for specific activities, and their enjoyment is dependent on matching the right person with the right activity. In contrast, low self-monitors have relatively homogeneous social worlds in which they engage in multiple activities with a few people, and their enjoyment does not depend on matching people with activities. Further, given the choice of doing an activity with either a moderately liked friend who is good at the activity or a highly liked friend who is not good at the activity, high self-monitors choose the skilled partner, whereas low self-monitors choose the liked partner. These findings suggest that high self-monitors desire friends who facilitate the enactment of particular roles and allow them to cultivate desired images, whereas low self-monitors desire friendships based on liking and similarity, allowing them to be who they are with nurturing others.

Romantic Relationships

Self-monitoring is also involved in romantic relationships. In choosing dating partners, high self-monitors pay particular attention to the attractiveness of potential dates and prefer an attractive partner with an undesirable personality to an unattractive partner with a desirable personality. In contrast, low self-monitors attend to personality and attitudinal attributes of potential dates and prefer an unattractive partner with a desirable personality to an attractive partner with an undesirable personality. Moreover, high self-monitors express a greater desire for attractiveness, sex appeal, and social status in potential dating partners, whereas low self-monitors express a greater desire for similar values, honesty, and loyalty in potential dating partners. Thus, just as in friendships, high self-monitors focus on the external qualities, and low self-monitors focus on the internal qualities of romantic partners.

The functioning of low and high self-monitors in romantic relationships reflects two distinct orientations. Low self-monitors have a committed and restricted sociosexual orientation. In exclusive dating relationships, low self-monitors have relatively long relationships, are unwilling to date alternative partners, and report that they have made greater time and emotional investment in

their relationships than their partners. In addition, low self-monitors view love as a psychologically close and emotionally intense undertaking or as a quest to find a compatible life partner; they also believe there is only one person ideally suited to them. High self-monitors, in contrast, have an unrestricted sociosexual orientation. They are more willing to play the field of potential partners and report that their partners typically invest more in their relationships than they do. They have exclusive dating partners for relatively short periods of time and if not involved in an exclusive relationship, date many people. High self-monitors view love as a social game and believe there may be more than one person whom they can love.

These divergent orientations also manifest themselves in marital satisfaction and functioning. Low self-monitors, relative to high self-monitors, report greater consensus in matters such as finances and religion, greater partner engagement in positive activities, greater investment of resources, more commitment, more intimacy, and greater marital satisfaction. Moreover, currently married high self-monitors are more likely than low self-monitors to have been divorced.

Together, these findings show a distinct pattern. High self-monitors, in the service of role enactment and image cultivation, are attuned to the appearances of friends and romantic partners, whereas low self-monitors, in the service of intimacy and authenticity, are attuned to the inner attributes of friends and romantic partners. Although much is known about the impact of self-monitoring in relationships, many areas of interest—relationship maintenance, patterns of influence, the development of relationships over time—remain to be explored.

Paul Fuglestad and Mark Snyder

See also Friendship Formation and Development; Personality Traits, Effects on Relationships; Physical Attractiveness, Role in Relationships; Sociosexual Orientation

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SELF-PRESENTATION

Self-presentation is the goal-directed activity of controlling information about oneself to influence the impressions conveyed to audiences. Through self-presentation, people construct and maintain identities that allow them to relate to others and accomplish goals that are served by appearing to be a certain type of person. People try to shape impressions of all aspects of their lives (e.g., roles, abilities, personalities, motives, attitudes, histories, relationships). The study of self-presentation involves examining (a) how people, as agents, try to influence how they are regarded and treated by others and (b) how people, as targets, respond to the self-presentations of others. Given the wide range of self-presentation research, this entry highlights implications for relationships.

The idea of self-presentation can be traced to antiquity and was exemplified during Elizabethan times by Shakespeare's conclusion that the world is a stage and people are like actors. In 1959, Erving Goffman discussed the theatrical elements of social behavior; his seminal observations captured the interest of social scientists. Early research, beginning in the 1960s, focused on people's willingness to exaggerate or misrepresent information to accomplish selfish goals such as gaining power and approval, as illustrated by work on ingratiation. Today, the scope of self-presentation research is much broader. Research indicates that self-presentation can be consciously controlled or automatic, deceptive or truthful, and guided by positive or negative motives (e.g., to help or to exploit others). As such, many researchers regard self-presentation as a fundamental characteristic of all social behavior and not just as a specific form of social behavior (e.g., one that is inauthentic, self-conscious, and power oriented).

Dimensions of Self-Presentation

Self-presentation varies in the extent to which it involves automatic versus controlled processes. Much self-presentation reflects habitual action sequences that can be activated outside of awareness and unfold without cognitive effort. Mannerisms, expressions, and affections that prove useful in making desired impressions become habitual with repeated practice and can be triggered by appropriate social cues. Automatic self-presentation predominates in routine situations where little is at stake (e.g., relaxing with friends). Controlled self-presentation, which involves conscious monitoring and regulation, occurs under challenging conditions, as when the other is significant (e.g., an important first date), the situation is important (e.g., a job interview), the desired image is not routine (e.g., differing from self-beliefs), and the actor is uncertain about the type of impression that might be created. On these occasions, people may report feeling on stage and apprehensive about evaluation. Because it can be automatic, controlled, or a mix, self-presentation is relevant at all stages of relationships. Long-term relationships can even be refreshed when people break routines, attend more closely to their partners' preferences, and consciously try to make a good impression, thereby avoiding partners' complaints of being taken for granted.

Self-presentation also varies in how much it corresponds with the actor's private self-beliefs. People often attempt to convey an accurate self-portrait, one that permits self-verifying feedback and a feeling of authenticity. Usually this portrait reflects a slightly glorified self-view but one that is genuinely believed by the actor to be true. On other occasions, people exaggerate or even mislead others to accomplish their goals. People are more likely to try to impress others when (a) the others are more significant (attractive, powerful, expert), (b) there is more to be gained (or lost) by influencing the audience (e.g., job interview), (c) information that is inconsistent with the self-presentation can be hidden from the audience, and (d) relevant prior self-beliefs are weak, inaccessible, or unimportant. People's desire to impress others can even put them at risk for health problems (e.g., eating disorders, sun tanning, risky sex, smoking). Self-presentations

initially intended to create a desired impact on others can change the actor's own self-beliefs, as when people publicly play a new role and later change their self-beliefs to become more consistent with the role. Changes produced by public self-presentations can carry over to new settings with different audiences.

There are individual differences in the willingness and ability to convey an inauthentic self-portrait. Self-monitoring, a frequently researched personality variable, reflects individual differences in tendencies to use, or avoid, activities that involve inauthenticity and social appearances. Inner-directed people are more likely to rely on their private beliefs and values to guide their self-presentations, whereas outer-directed people conform more to the expectations of others and try to be the type of person others prefer. Self-presentational skills (acting and role-taking abilities) are associated with convincing performances regardless of whether the goal is to deceive or be authentic.

Remedying Threats

Self-presentation is also used to protect one's identity and maintain stability in relationships when confronting failures and transgressions. People then engage in remedial activities that fall into three broad categories. Accountability avoidance strategies allow people to postpone, avoid, or escape from threats (e.g., keeping transgressions secret). Accounting strategies are self-serving explanations, which permit the actor to make excuses that try to minimize personal responsibility (e.g., "It wasn't my fault") or justifications that try to change the appearance of the event and its consequences (e.g., "I did it for your own good"). Apology strategies admit blameworthiness and regret, affirm the value of the rules that were violated, and extend promises of better future behavior. Accounts and apologies that seem sincere reduce the negative repercussions for the actor, resulting in less condemnation, negative impressions, and punishment. When hurtful acts occur in relationships, these strategies permit people to try to restore the relationship to its pre-transgression status while seeking understanding or forgiveness.

Mutual Activities

People are not on their own when it comes to constructing and protecting desired identities. People often work as teams, as in the case of husband and wife who act in concert to project their family image. Even when not part of a formal team, people help one another to construct and protect their identities. Norms of politeness prescribe that people have a duty to respect the “faces” of others. Research also indicates that people are especially helpful to those they like by strategically bolstering and protecting the latter’s desired identities. For example, people will strategically help their friends by describing them in ways that are expected to make a good impression on attractive (but not unattractive) others. Self-presentations are performances and are shaped by their expected consequences for self and others.

Barry R. Schlenker

See also Accounts; Facework; Ingratiation; Self-Monitoring and Relationships; Self-Regulation in Relationships; Self-Verification

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SELF-REGULATION IN RELATIONSHIPS

Self-regulation refers to the self-exerting control over its own responses. Regulation means change, as in changing one’s thoughts, feelings, or behaviors, but it also involves an effort to bring something into agreement with various standards, such as goals, norms, or expectations.

Human beings engage in many acts and forms of self-regulation. In general, self-regulation is a

potentially powerful and multiple useful set of ways people can alter themselves and their responses so as to improve their relationship outcomes. This entry describes how self-regulation is relevant to close relationships.

Understanding Self-Regulation

Self-regulation is related to familiar concepts such as self-control and self-discipline. It makes behavior considerably more flexible because one does not have to act on just one’s first impulse. Current speculations are that self-regulation evolved to facilitate two important patterns of behavior. First, it permitted improvements in social life because individual animals were able to alter their behavior to the demands and opportunities of the group. Second, it enabled humans to resist temptations in the immediate present so as to pursue delayed but ultimately beneficial outcomes. Clearly, both of these patterns of behavior can be useful for improving relationships. Changing one’s behavior to meet the requirements of others is highly useful for a long-term relationship or marriage. For example, people may seek to live up to the expectations of others or learn to suppress some of their impulses in order to abide by agreements and commitments that are useful for getting along with one’s partner.

By the same token, resisting immediate temptations for the sake of long-term benefits is crucial to the success of long-term relationships. One may, for example, hold one’s tongue rather than giving in to the impulse to say something hurtful. Indeed, relationships may benefit from regulating behavior that is not directed at the partner. Many marriages have suffered conflict and stress over money, for example, and if one person spends money impulsively, both of them may later have to deal with debt or the inability to afford important things.

Self-regulation can involve both states and traits. The trait aspect is reflected in stable, consistent patterns of self-control. For example, some people generally behave in a more controlled, disciplined, consistent manner, while others behave in a more spontaneous, impulsive, uncontrolled manner. State fluctuations in self-control can involve various factors, but one central issue is that each person’s

willpower appears to be limited and so when it is expended on one act of self-regulation, afterward there may be less available to use for other challenges. This so-called state of ego depletion refers to the condition in which the person's willpower is temporarily reduced, usually because the person has expended it recently on other acts. Self-control may also fluctuate with changes in emotional, mood, and motivational states. Alcohol intoxication is a particularly important state that often contributes to relationship problems, and one way that alcohol causes problems is that it impairs self-regulation. Such times present a risk for behavior that could be harmful to relationships.

In particular, modern life often sees relationship partners engaged in careers and coping with many stressors. They may come home exhausted and depleted from these. Research indicates that self-regulation tends to deteriorate as the day wears on, as people use up their resources that they built up from a good night's sleep. If their time together occurs mainly in the evenings when both have depleted their capacity for self-regulation, they may treat each other in less than optimal ways. Some marital therapists advise struggling couples to save energy for each other rather than putting it all into work and other separate challenges.

High Trait Self-Control Strengthens Relationships

People with poor self-control may be charming and attractive because they are spontaneous, impulsive, and fun loving. But what happens in long-term relationships? Should they marry each other or find someone with better self-control? Social psychologists have repeatedly found that similarity leads to attraction and bodes well for long-term relationship success. Yet similarity in self-control is not what produces the best relationship outcomes. Instead, the sum total of the two partners' self-control levels matters: The more total self-control the two partners had between them, the better the relationship fared. The benefits of self-control were evident in current happiness and satisfaction with the relationship as well as in long-term stability (i.e., staying together vs. breaking up).

Why is Self-Control Beneficial?

Multiple studies have investigated why good self-regulation is beneficial for relationships. One important benefit involves accommodating oneself to the partner. Accommodation, by definition, means altering the self to fit better with the partner. If both partners do this, they are likely to get along much better than if either (or both) persists in doing things that the other cannot abide or that are known to have destructive effects on relationships.

A particular focus of accommodation involves how the person responds when the partner does something hurtful or offensive. Research shows that when one person responds destructively to the other's destructive behavior, a vicious circle of escalating antagonism develops that can seriously damage the relationship and that is difficult to reverse. People with good self-control are more able to prevent or break this circle than are people with poor self-control. This applies also to state fluctuations: During the state of ego depletion, people are more likely to respond destructively when the partner does something destructive.

Self-regulation also benefits relationships by helping people resist temptations and stay committed. When self-control is low or resources are depleted, people begin showing more interest in other attractive people they meet, ones who could potentially lure them away from their current relationship. It appears that one contributor to a healthy and strong relationship is that partners regulate their attention so as to avoid paying attention to such external temptations.

Probably all relationships encounter setbacks and stressors at times. When joint efforts meet with failure or frustration, partners may be tempted to blame each other, according to a common tendency known as the self-serving bias. However, blaming each other is likely to be divisive and to put further strain on the relationship. With good self-regulation, people tend to shield their partners from blame, even at the cost of taking extra blame on themselves. However, when self-regulation is impaired, including in the state of ego depletion, people start to blame their partners. Very likely emotional distress and alcohol intoxication contribute to problems in the same way.

Undoubtedly physical violence is an important contributor to some of the worst relationship

outcomes. When frustrated or upset, some people lash out physically (or in other ways) at their partners. Self-regulation helps people resist these destructive impulses. That is because aggressive impulses often arise in the normal and natural course of events, when people are frustrated with each other or conflicts arise. Most people manage quite effectively to restrain themselves and hold back from acting on or expressing these aggressive feelings, but when self-regulation is impaired or low, the restraints are weakened. Therefore, when self-regulation is poor (again, such as during ego depletion), people are more likely to inflict physical violence on their partners.

Effects of Relationships on Self-Regulation

The capacity for self-regulation is not exclusively devoted to relationship behavior in most cases. Because willpower is limited, a person must essentially decide whether to spend more of it on interacting with the partner or on dealing with other events and challenges in life, such as work and study. The limits of willpower suggest that the more one puts into the relationship, the less remains for other activities.

So-called high maintenance relationships are relevant here. The term comes from cars and other machines, some of which require a higher-than-usual amount of care, effort, and expense. Applied to relationships, the category of high-maintenance refers to ones that demand a relatively high amount of effort, attention, and sacrifice in order to be successful. These are not necessarily harmful or problematic relationships. Indeed, some high-maintenance partners may offer a great deal of pleasure and satisfaction, provided they receive the investments they require and that the other person then offers something valuable in return for the investments and efforts.

Recent research suggests that high-maintenance interactions deplete self-regulatory resources. That is, interacting with a partner who is demanding and who presents multiple potential problems can drain a person's willpower, leaving the person less able to perform well in other contexts or meet other challenges. It seems likely that high-maintenance relationships would have similar effects. To illustrate, a high-maintenance relationship

partner might be someone who demands constant attention or praise, who is easily angered and therefore must be spoken to with great care and positivity, who expects others to stop what they are doing whenever the person wants their attention, who has very detailed expectations about how others will behave or about how the joint living space will be kept by others, or who insists on always being right and will not tolerate disagreements. It is of course entirely possible to live happily ever after with such a partner, but it will not be easy, and one will need considerable self-regulation to keep that person happy.

Conversely, anecdotal impressions and scattered evidence suggest that some relationships and interactions can have the opposite effect of actually strengthening the person and improving his or her capacity to self-regulate in response to other challenges. A full-fledged test of this hypothesis is yet to be found in the literature, partly because it presents a variety of methodological and possibly ethical challenges, but if it is true it would provide an important insight into how people may benefit from a good, supportive attachment.

Roy F. Baumeister

See also Accommodation; Transformation of Motivation; Responsiveness; Work–Family Spillover

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SELF-VERIFICATION

Self-Verification Theory suggests that once people develop firmly held beliefs about themselves, they come to prefer that others see them as they see themselves. For example, just as those who see themselves as relatively dominant want others to see them as dominant, so too do those who see themselves as relatively submissive want others to recognize them as submissive. This motive seems to influence relationship quality in that people who are more satisfied when their partners confirm their self-views.

Developed by William Swann, the theory holds that among people with positive self-views, the desire for self-verification works hand in hand with another important motive, the desire for self-enhancement. That is, if the self-view is positive, both the desire for self-verification and self-enhancement will compel people to seek positive feedback. If the self-view is negative, however, the two motives conflict. For those who perceive themselves as disorganized, for example, the desire for self-verification will encourage them to seek evidence that others perceive them as disorganized, but the desire for self-enhancement will motivate them to seek evidence that others perceive them as organized. Self-Verification Theory suggests that because stable self-views guide behavior and provide people with a sense of coherence, stable self-views become intrinsically desirable, and so people with negative self-views will sometimes prefer negative, confirming evaluations over positive but disconfirming ones.

Researchers have reported considerable support for Self-Verification Theory. In one study, participants with positive and negative self-views indicated whether they would prefer to interact with evaluators who had favorable or unfavorable impressions of them. Just as people with positive self-views preferred favorable partners, those with negative self-views preferred unfavorable partners. The latter finding showed that self-verification strivings may sometimes override positivity strivings.

The tendency for people with negative self-views to seek and embrace negative evaluations has emerged again and again using many procedural variations. Men and women are equally inclined to display this propensity, and it does not matter

whether the self-views refer to characteristics that are relatively immutable (e.g., intelligence) or changeable (e.g., diligence), whether the self-views happen to be highly specific (e.g., athleticism) or global (e.g., low self-esteem, worthlessness), or whether the self-views refer to the individual's personal qualities (e.g., emotionality) or group memberships (e.g., American). Furthermore, when people choose negative evaluators over positive ones, it is not merely to avoid disappointing the positive evaluators, for people with negative self-views choose negative partners even when the alternative is participating in a different experiment.

If people discover that their relationship partner sees them in a manner that challenges their self-view, Self-Verification Theory predicts that they will strive to change their partner's mind. They may, for example, behave in ways that make it clear to their partner that they have the qualities in question. If these efforts fail, people may decide to leave the relationship. That is, when college students find themselves with positive roommates, those with positive self-views prefer to stay, but those with negative self-views make plans to find another roommate. Similarly, just as married people with positive self-views are especially intimate with spouses who perceive them favorably, people with negative self-views withdraw from spouses who perceive them favorably—and in extreme cases, take steps to divorce them. This pattern does not emerge with dating couples, however, apparently because for dating partners, the first priority is keeping the relationship alive, and positive partners seem more apt to remain interested.

Self-Verification Theory posits that people should intensify their efforts to elicit self-confirmatory reactions when they suspect that others might be misconstruing them. In one study, participants who perceived themselves as either likable or dislikable learned that they would be interacting with people who probably found them to be either likable or dislikable. Overall, there was a tendency for participants to elicit reactions that confirmed their self-views. This tendency was exaggerated, however, when they believed that their evaluators' appraisals might disconfirm their self-conceptions. That is, when participants suspected that the evaluators' appraisals clashed with their self-views, they intensified their efforts to obtain self-verification.

Self-verification strivings theoretically bring stability to people's lives, making their experiences more coherent, orderly, and comprehensible than they would be otherwise. These processes are adaptive for most people because most people have positive self-views, and self-verification processes encourage and enable them to preserve these positive self-views. Self-verification processes are also adaptive for groups of people and society in general in that they make people predictable to one another, and this greases the wheels of social interaction. Not surprisingly, then, research indicates that when members of small groups receive self-verification from other group members, their commitment to the group increases and their performance improves. Self-verification processes seem to be especially useful in small groups composed of people from diverse backgrounds because they foster mutual understanding. Such understanding, in turn, encourages people to open up to their coworkers, which in turn generates creativity and superior performance on tasks that emphasize creative output.

Despite being adaptive for most people most of the time, self-verification strivings may have undesirable consequences for people with negative self-views. For example, self-verification strivings may cause people with negative self-views to gravitate toward partners who mistreat them, undermine their feelings of self-worth, or even abuse them. And if people with negative self-views seek therapy, returning home to a self-verifying partner may undo the progress that was made in therapy.

But if people with negative self-views sometimes sabotage themselves, it is not because they are masochistic or have no desire to be loved. In fact, even people with very low self-esteem want to be loved. What sets people with negative self-views apart is their ambivalence about the evaluations they receive. On the one hand, positive evaluations foster joy and warmth initially, but these feelings are soon chilled by incredulity. On the other hand, although negative evaluations may foster sadness that the truth could not be kinder, it will at least reassure them that they know themselves.

William B. Swann, Jr.

See also Affirmation; Dark Side of Relationships; Self-Concept and Relationships; Self-Esteem, Effects on Relationships

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SEX AND LOVE

Sex and love are two fundamental aspects of being human. Love has many meanings but is restricted in this entry to romantic, passionate love. Sex refers to the thoughts, desires, emotions, and behaviors associated with sexual expression.

Love and sex; the words fit together naturally. This apparent truth was not always so, and even today relationship researchers do not necessarily agree on how sex and love fit together in people's lives. Love and marriage is another pairing that seems natural. However, for most of human history, marriages were arranged, and romantic love between partners was of minor concern. Today most people seem to link love and sex rather naturally. But questions such as how love and sex are linked and which of the two may be more important have generated much research and discussion, which is the primary focus of this entry.

One conceptual way to think about the link between love and sex, proposed by Arthur and Elaine Aron, is to imagine a continuum. One end of the continuum is labeled *love is really sex*, meaning that sex is the more important of the two. The other end is labeled *sex is really love*, meaning that love is more important than sex. People can place various combinations of love and sex at different points on the continuum.

The idea that love is really sex is most congenial to approaches that study the evolution of sex and love. Sexual drive in humans ensures procreation,

necessary for survival of the human species. In addition, theorists have argued that beyond sexual mating and reproduction, emotional bonding between mating pairs of early protohumans helped promote survival of offspring. Such bonding would involve each parent's concerns about the welfare of the other parent as well as of the offspring and would give a selective survival advantage for the offspring, as compared to mating pairs without such an emotional bond. In this way, passionate, romantic love slowly evolved as a part of sexual mating.

Considerable research has explored love and sex at other points on the continuum, where sex is less dominant and the two are more balanced in importance. For example, romantic love has been shown to be one motive for sexual activity, and in turn, sexual desire is intertwined with romantic love. Research has shown that college students clearly subscribe to the view that love and sex are both important and that whereas love may be more important initially in a relationship, sex provides a powerful way in which to express that love. In fact, other research found that people interviewed about their intimate relationships reported that sexual activity was one of their predominant ways of communicating their love to their partner. Indeed, considerable scholarly work has shown that passionate, romantic love and sexual activity are consistently linked together.

This balancing of love and sex is important not only for young people in relationships but also for people throughout the life span. Although sexual intercourse may decline with both the age of the partners and the length of a relationship, some type of physical expression of love typically continues to be present in most partnered relationships.

In surveying the Arons' continuum, it is important not only to look at the end, which says that love is really sex or the vast middle range of the continuum where love and sex are more or less balanced, but also to briefly consider the opposite end of the continuum, where sex is really love. Sex expresses love is a view commonly held, but it is not the same as sex is love. Certainly some people believe that love is all there is and that sex is simply intended for procreation. Although research has not shown this to be the dominant view, it should be acknowledged.

Why does research more often show that people believe that love and sex are linked—if not

balanced perfectly—rather than that sex is all there is or love is all there is? In other words, why are humans somewhere toward the middle of the Arons' continuum rather than at one of the two extremes? Perhaps the answer lies in the uneasy tension between people's evolved animal nature and their spiritual (i.e., cognitive, emotional, mystical) strivings, which creates a perpetual social dilemma.

People solve the dilemma by the creation of culture, the vast network of beliefs, attitudes, and material artifacts that enfold people as social beings (persons) and thereby attempt to integrate people's animal and spiritual natures. Cross-cultural research has found that romantic, passionate love may be a universal, something found in all societies. Anthropologists have also commented on the difficulties that any culture has in combining sex and love. Some cultures emphasize sex somewhat more, whereas other cultures emphasize love relatively more. Apparently the struggle to do so is itself a human universal. And as such, it is likely to continue.

Although the why of sex and love is interesting to scholars, the how of sex and love is more compelling to most of humanity. The ways in which people integrate sex and love—or fail to do so—have ever-present implications for people's quality of life.

Clyde Hendrick

See also Love, Typologies; Respect; Sexuality; Sexuality and Attachment

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SEX DIFFERENCES IN RELATIONSHIPS

The popular press would have people believe that women and men are radically different. John Gray uses the metaphor *Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus* to represent differences between women and men. Deborah Tannen is more modest in her claims, arguing that because boys and girls grow up in what are essentially different cultures, talk between women and men is cross-cultural communication. If women and men are as different as Gray and Tannen portray them, then one would expect heterosexual romantic relationships to be fraught with misunderstanding and miscommunication. Indeed, Gray's book, *Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus*, is filled with stereotypical differences between women and men and their resulting relational problems. If women and men are as different as Gray and Tannen portray them, their same-sex friendships also should reflect these differences. Indeed, in 1982 Paul Wright, a prominent friendship researcher, depicted women's friendships as face-to-face and men's friendships as side-by-side.

This entry briefly reviews research on psychological sex differences and then focuses on research on sex differences in intimacy in heterosexual romantic relationships and sex differences in intimacy in women's and men's same-sex friendships.

Psychological Sex Differences

Thousands of studies on psychological sex differences have been conducted, so many that a number

of meta-analyses of these analyses have been conducted. A meta-analysis is a quantitative summary of the results from multiple quantitative studies on a given topic (e.g., sex differences in self-disclosure). First, an effect size, which measures the magnitude of sex differences, is calculated for each study. A typical measure of effect size is d , which represents the difference between the means for women and men in standard deviation units. Then the average effect size across studies (weighted by sample size) is calculated and represents the difference between women and men across studies. Finally, a homogeneity statistic is used to determine whether the effect size varies across studies more than one would expect as a result of sampling error, in which case a search for moderator variables (e.g., variables that affect the size of effect size) may be conducted.

Jacob Cohen offered the following guidelines for interpreting d : $d = 0.20$ is small, $d = 0.50$ is moderate, and $d = 0.80$ is large. An effect size of $d = 0.2$ indicates that sex accounts for 1 percent of the variance in the dependent variable and represents an 85 percent overlap in the distributions of women and men on the dependent variable. Cohen labeled a value of $d = 0.5$ as a medium effect size. When $d = 0.5$, there is a 67 percent overlap in the distribution of women and men on the dependent variable. Cohen labeled a value of $d = 0.8$ as a large effect size. A large effect accounts for 14 percent of the variance in the dependent variable. When $d = 0.8$, there is a 53 percent overlap in the scores of women and men on the dependent variable. These associations are depicted in Figure 1.

Recently, Janet Hyde advanced the gender similarities hypothesis, which states that women and

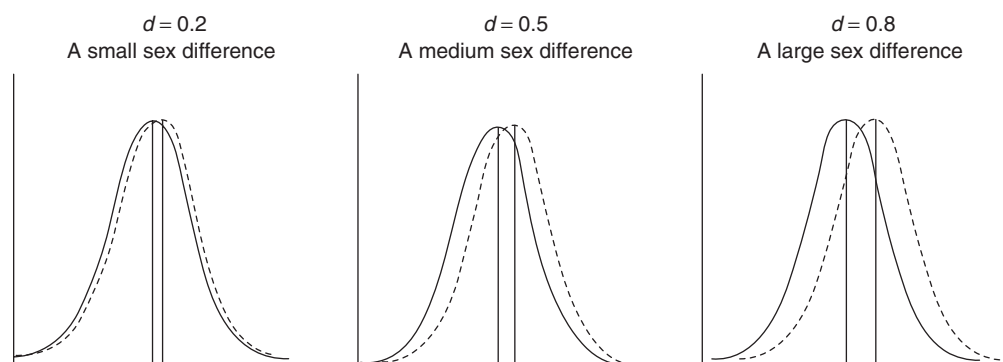


Figure 1 Degree of Overlap Between Women and Men for Different Effect Sizes

men are similar on most, but not all, psychological variables. Hyde reviewed 46 meta-analyses on cognitive variables (e.g., cognitive abilities), verbal and nonverbal communication (e.g., self-disclosure), social or personality variables (e.g., aggression, leadership), psychological well-being (e.g., self-esteem), and miscellaneous constructs (e.g., moral reasoning). The results of her review support the gender similarities hypothesis. She provided evidence that most psychological gender differences are in the close-to-zero or small range (78 percent), the major exceptions were aggression and some aspects of sexuality. Hyde also found that gender differences vary substantially in magnitude at different ages and depend on the context in which measurement occurs.

Hyde included several meta-analyses on sex differences in aggression. All of them found a moderate effect size for physical aggression and a small or smaller effect size for psychological or verbal aggression. John Archer recently conducted the most comprehensive meta-analysis on sex differences in aggression. Sex differences in aggression were highest for physical aggression (depending on how measured, they ranged from .39, self-report, to .84, peer report). Sex differences were smaller for verbal aggression (.14 observation to .51 peer report), which is consistent with results from previous meta-analyses. Sex differences in aggression were absent or in the female direction (women more aggressive than men) for indirect measures of aggression (-.74 observation to -.01 peer nomination). Archer also examined sex differences in trait anger to test whether sex differences in aggression may be the result of sex differences in tendency to experience anger and found no sex differences.

Although the studies included in Archer's meta-analysis of sex differences in aggression for non-U.S. samples were limited in number and geographical scope, they showed a pattern of sex differences that were similar to those for U.S. samples, indicating generalizability across cultures. Sex differences in physical aggression began at an early age (as shown in observational studies of children 1–6 years) with differences in verbal aggression developing soon afterward (as shown in self-report studies beginning at age 6). There was no evidence that differences in physical aggression increased with age, and there was no evidence that they increased at puberty (when testosterone levels

increase in men). There was some evidence that they peak between the ages of 20 and 30 (although samples of older participants were limited in number). Indirect aggression was greatest (moderate effect size) in teenage girls as measured by peer report, but this was not the case for self-report data. No differences in indirect aggression were found in young adults (but this only includes self-report measures, no peer report measures).

The largest psychological sex differences found in Hyde's review of meta-analyses involved measures of sexuality. A meta-analysis conducted by Mary Oliver and Janet Hyde found two large gender differences in sexuality, incidence of masturbation (men report masturbating more) and attitudes toward casual premarital sex (men report more liberal attitudes). There were small-to-moderate sex differences in attitudes toward premarital intercourse when the couple was engaged or in a committed relationship, attitudes toward extramarital sex, and sexual permissiveness (males more permissive in all three cases), anxiety or guilt about sex (females more anxious), endorsement of the double standard (more endorsement by women, but Oliver and Hyde point out that all these studies were conducted prior to 1978 and included samples < 20 years old), age of first intercourse (males younger), incidence of sexual intercourse, number of sexual partners, frequency of intercourse, and incidence of homosexual behavior (all higher for males). There were no sex differences in attitudes about homosexuality, attitudes about civil liberties for gay men and lesbians, sexual satisfaction, attitudes towards masturbation, incidence of kissing, and incidence of oral sex. Similarly, in a meta-analysis of sex differences in sexual arousal in response to sexual stimuli, Sarah Murnen and Mary Stockton found a small-to-moderate effect size with men reporting more arousal than women.

Almost all the significant effect sizes in the Oliver and Hyde meta-analysis showed gender differences becoming smaller over time. Examination of age trends was limited in that the sample consisted of adolescents and early adults; however, over this age range, in general, gender differences narrowed with age. The authors note a major limitation of the studies reviewed, that the data were collected by self-report methods rather than direct observations of behavior. It is possible that males have a tendency to exaggerate their sexual

experiences and that females may underreport their sexual experiences.

Sex differences in aggression and sexuality, as well as other sex differences, have been attributed primarily, but not exclusively, to one of two types of explanations, sociobiological explanations or sociocultural explanations. From a sociobiological perspective (labeled evolutionary psychology by David Buss), an individual's goal is reproductive success—that is, maximizing the number of genes passed on to the next generation. Because of the different parental investment of women and men in their offspring—women invest a great deal in individual offspring because they produce few eggs and are pregnant for 9 months, whereas, men have little investment in individual offspring because they do not get pregnant and they produce many sperm—different strategies for reproductive success have evolved for women and for men. Sexual selection is the assumption that members of the sex that have the least parental investment compete for access to the other sex. Thus, men, because they have less parental investment, should be more aggressive than women.

Sex differences in aggression may also be attributed to sociocultural differences. One sociological account of sex differences in aggression is Alice Eagly's Social Role Theory. According to Social Role Theory, sex differences in social behaviors arise from the historical division of labor into women's role as homemaker and men's role as breadwinner. As a result of the different social roles inhabited by women and men, gender roles emerge creating expectations about the characteristics and behaviors of women and men. Men are expected to fulfill the masculine gender role (aggressive, forceful, competitive, etc.), and women are expected to fulfill the feminine gender role (warm, affectionate, gentle, etc.). Boys learn that being aggressive is an appropriate behavior that fits their masculine role. Girls learn that aggressiveness is not appropriate to their gender role.

Sociobiological theory also can explain men's more liberal attitudes towards casual sex. Because sperm are plentiful, whereas eggs are rare, it makes evolutionary sense for men to inseminate many women but for women to be careful about not wasting their eggs. In addition, women are pregnant for 9 months, so at birth their parental investment greatly exceeds men's, leading women to

want to ensure the viability of their offspring by being highly selective in their choice of mate, favoring a mate who is willing and able to provide resources. Sociocultural theories also predict that women should hold more negative attitudes about casual sex than men. Neither evolutionary theory nor Social Role Theory predicts sex differences in masturbation.

Sociobiological accounts of sex differences are supported by results indicating early emergence of sex differences and generalizability of sex differences across cultures (differences are innate not learned). Sociocultural accounts of sex differences, including Social Role Theory, are supported by results indicating later emergence of sex differences and lack of generalizability of sex differences across cultures (sex differences are learned).

Sex Differences in Intimacy in Heterosexual Romantic Relationships

Intimacy plays a critical role in the development of interpersonal relationships, and intimacy is thought to be one of the major differences between women and men. To test whether there are sex differences in intimacy in heterosexual romantic relationships, Arlene Lundquist conducted a meta-analysis. The meta-analysis included 146 studies and yielded 257 independent effect sizes representing 40,600 participants.

Averaged over all effect sizes, d was .11, indicating that females were slightly more intimate than men. Type of intimacy significantly influenced average effect size in 8 of 10 categories of intimacy. Women showed greater intimacy on measures of overall intimacy, self-disclosure, and Erikson-theory-based intimacy instruments (an individual's capacity for intimacy based on Erikson's psychosocial stages), but the differences were small. Men showed greater intimacy on measures of sexual intimacy, marital-relationship satisfaction, and miscellaneous intimacy measures, but again, the differences were small. No differences were found for relationship characteristics or dimensions (e.g., trust, compassion, caring), love-passion, conflict resolution, and self-reported capacity for intimacy. All the effect sizes were heterogeneous (varied more across studies than expected due to chance) except for love-passion and conflict resolution.

The magnitude of gender differences declined over the years.

Lundquist concluded that gender differences in intimacy of romantic relationships are small and that all nine moderator variables studied—research design, data collection method, sample size, sex of researcher, type of intimacy, publication date, participant's age, marital status, and length of relationship—influenced effect size to some degree.

Sex Differences in Intimacy in Same-Sex Friendships

Men's and women's friendships have been portrayed in the popular and scholarly press as different. Men's friendships are portrayed as agentic or instrumental and women's friendships as communal: Female friends talk, while male friends do. There are no meta-analyses of sex differences in intimacy in same-sex friendships, but a number of friendship and relationship scholars have conducted narrative reviews of the research on sex differences in intimacy in same-sex friendships.

Beverly Fehr conducted a narrative review of research on sex differences in same-sex friendships. Fehr reviewed a wide range of variables conceptually defined as or related to intimacy. Fehr concluded that women's friendships are more intimate than men's. She specifically ruled out several rival hypotheses (men are as intimate as women, but only in the closest friendships; men are as intimate as women—they just do not like the word intimacy; men appear less intimate only because intimacy is defined in a female way; men and women have the same definition of intimacy, but different thresholds for what they consider intimate; men are less intimate, but they like it that way) and instead concluded that men's friendships are less intimate than women's friendships because men choose to be, even though they may not particularly like it that way. However, many of the studies reviewed found similarities and differences (indeed, Fehr, says that some support was found for both sides of the issue in virtually every case), and no effect sizes were reported for any of these differences.

Paul Wright conducted a narrative review of the research on sex differences in same-sex friendship, less comprehensive but more focused than Fehr's

review, and retracted his earlier depiction of women's friendships as face-to-face and men's friendships as side-by-side. Wright articulated four problems with the classical view of women's friendships as communal and men's friendships as agentic. First, friendship researchers highlight results showing sex differences and disregard or downplay results showing similarities. Second, agency is assessed in terms of shared activities, and it is assumed that activities are impersonal and instrumental. However, activities as well as talk vary widely in intimacy, and men may express intimacy more through activities than through talk. Third, the findings on friendship communality and agency are reported separately and in a noncontextualized manner. However, most friendship theories portray the development of friendship as marked by an increase in agency and communality, and most research on friendship development supports a positive correlation between agency and communality. Fourth, sex differences in friendship tend to be explained in dispositional terms (e.g., personality traits) to the exclusion of structural terms (e.g., roles); however structural, rather than dispositional, differences may explain differences in men's and women's friendships.

Wright reviewed research that indicates fundamental similarities in women's and men's friendships. First, women and men have similar conceptions of and value the same things in friendship. Second, although there is evidence that women's friendships are more communal than men's, there is no evidence that women's friendships are less agentic than men's. Third, both women and men most often engage in casual conversation (talk for talk's sake) rather than intimate conversation or activities in their same-sex friendships. Fourth, fun and relaxation are common and highly valued features of friendships for both women and men (a point also made by Fehr).

Wright also reviewed research indicating that although there are differences between women's and men's friendships, these differences are embedded in a larger context of similarities. First, using interviews and self-report measures, the typical talk versus activity differences are found (women talk, men do). However, female-male similarity is found in studies using diary techniques, and when more detailed self-report measures are used, women's reports of activities increase as do men's

reports of talk. In addition, female friends self-disclose more than male friends (although the differences are small), but neither sex self-discloses very much. Second, although women's friendships are more intimate than men's friendships, men's friendships are intimate, just not as intimate as those of women. Third, women's friendships are more holistic than men's friendships; however, holistic friendships are relatively rare for both men and women. Fourth, women's friendships are more satisfying than men's friendships; however, again, men's friendships are satisfying.

Although there is no definitive answer to the question of sex differences in personal relationships, when the results of meta-analyses are taken into account and when both similarities and differences are taken into account, it can be concluded that women and men, as well as women's and men's friendships, are more similar than different. The vast majority of problems experienced in heterosexual romantic relationships are most likely not the result of sex differences but are the result of two people who are different from one another (not because of sex) who are trying to live interdependent lives. Although women and men are different with respect to a few variables (such as aggression), women and men are similar or only show small differences with respect to a number of other variables (such as self-disclosure). And although there are some differences between women's and men's friendships, in particular, women's friendships are more intimate (communal) than men's, men's are still fairly intimate, and there are little or no differences in activities in women's and men's friendships. Perhaps it is time to stop perpetuating the myth that women and men are radically different. The truth of the matter may not be that men are from Mars and women are from Venus, but that women and men are from the same planet, Earth.

Kathryn Dindia

See also Communication, Gender Differences in; Friendships, Sex Differences and Similarities; Intimacy; Intimacy, Individual Differences Related to; Self-Disclosure

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SEX IN ESTABLISHED RELATIONSHIPS

Most men and women will, at one point in their lives, enter a romantic relationship with someone. Sexuality often plays a part in bringing couples together (e.g., through the experience of sexual attraction), and for most it will continue to play a role after dating and courtship end and they enter a committed, established relationship. The importance of sexuality, however, will vary from individual to individual and from couple to couple. Unlike many other and mostly positive features of a close relationship, such as experiencing intimacy and receiving support, sexuality often brings both joys and challenges. It can contribute to fulfilling and lasting relationships, but it also can be a source of conflict, insecurity, and jealousy and can cause breakups and divorces. People bring different sexual experiences, propensities, and expectations to their romantic relationships. Couples may be more or less compatible in any of those areas, and their degree of compatibility may change over time, as may the couple's ability to recognize and adjust to such changes.

Expectations Regarding Sex in Different Types of Relationship

Although romantic or intimate relationships come in many different forms, most of them come with relatively specific expectations regarding sex. For example, relationships can be categorized as being

either monogamous (sexually exclusive) or non-monogamous (nonexclusive). In Western society, marriage between a man and a woman is the most common form of established relationship and has the strongest governmental, social, and religious recognition. Although heterosexual marriage is equated with monogamy, a marriage can, like other forms of intimate relationships, be nonmonogamous or open by agreement. The arrangement can be limited to sex, but it can also go beyond sex and allow for multiple, concurrent relationships. In addition to marriage, many couples may choose to live together (or cohabit), either as a step towards marriage or as an alternative way to define and express their feelings for and commitment to each other. Many gay and lesbian couples live together, although increasingly, in the United States and other countries, they may get married. Monogamy tends to be more important for lesbian than for gay couples; the latter more often negotiate nonexclusivity. In comparison to heterosexual and gay and lesbian relationships, less is known about bisexual men and women in established relationships.

Frequency and Quality of Sex

A number of studies, involving national samples, have explored how often couples engage in sexual activities. On average, married men and women report having sex about six times a month, although differences between couples are large. The average frequency is higher for cohabitating men and women and for gay couples and lower for lesbian couples. Relationship duration is one of the factors known to influence the frequency of sexual activity; it is highest during the first few years of newly established relationships and then tends to show a steady decline. This applies to both heterosexual and homosexual couples. A number of variables can contribute to changes in frequency, including health problems, pregnancy and childbirth, job stress, and habituation (or reduced novelty). Aging also plays a role, although—and this is true for most other variables—individual differences in its effects on sexual desire and response are substantial. In addition, when considering the frequency of sex, it is important to recognize that sex can be defined in

various ways. Some men and women do not consider oral-genital contact or anal intercourse to be sex even when they report engaging in these behaviors. And for many couples, although the frequency of sexual intercourse may decline, other forms of sexual or physical intimacy (including kissing and genital touch) may not change or may even increase over time. The relationship between frequency of sexual activity and sexual satisfaction is, for these and other reasons, complex. Although higher sexual frequencies tend to be associated with higher sexual satisfaction, frequency of sexual contact does not fully explain overall levels of sexual satisfaction. In addition to frequency, satisfaction depends on the quality of sex, but this variable is not as easy to define and measure and may include a role for other aspects of the relationship, including the experience of emotional intimacy.

Sexual Problems and Problems With Sex

Most couples will at one time or another be confronted with problems, whether transient or more enduring, related to sexuality and sexual health. These problems may arise from various sources, including differences in expectations regarding the nature, timing, and frequency of sexual activity. Also, mood, conflict, daily stressors, and life events, as well as the passing of time itself, may influence a person's sexual needs and desires. Although sexual problems are typically identified in an individual, a couple's relationship is often a key component in the understanding of the onset and course of sexual problems. Determining a diagnosis when dealing with couples can be a challenge because of the presence of disparities between partners. For example, low sexual desire in the female partner is one of the most commonly reported sexual problems by heterosexual couples. Although in some cases this complaint may indicate a true dysfunction, more often than not it reflects a problem with sex rather than a sexual problem. Consistent with this view, relationship conflicts are believed to be the most common cause of hypoactive sexual desire in women. In general, low desire, pain during sex, and difficulties achieving orgasm are examples of sexual problems that all tend to be associated with

poorer relationship satisfaction and with less attraction to, emotional closeness with, and feelings of love for one's partner. Several studies have found that sexual problems are associated with lower relationship satisfaction. Clearly, sexual problems can cause as well as result from relationship problems, and their impact on relationship trajectories can be expected to vary.

In addition to sexual problems that stem from differences between spouses in their expectations and sexual makeup, other factors, including stress, health problems, and the treatment of such problems, can all interfere with an individual's sexual functioning and satisfaction. Depression and other mood disorders have been found to influence sexual functioning in many men and women. In addition, drugs to treat depression, in particular the selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs; e.g., Prozac), have the potential to negatively affect sexual response. Treatments for sexual problems, including medical ones (e.g., Viagra), exist but their effectiveness is variable, and their long-term effects on the couple's relationship and on the dysfunction itself are not well understood.

Infidelity

Sexual exclusivity is one of the strongest norms governing most types of established relationships, including marriage. Yet whereas the vast majority of people in monogamous relationships hold unfavorable attitudes towards extradyadic sex, a substantial number report having sex outside of their relationship at least once in their lives. Studies using nationally representative samples of married men and women have found that approximately 20 to 25 percent of men and 10 to 15 percent of women report engaging in extramarital sex at least once during their marriages. Along with sexual dysfunction, infidelity—while differently defined by different people (e.g., some consider flirtation and sexual fantasies forms of betrayal)—is among the most significant threats to the stability of a relationship. Research comparing over 150 cultures has shown that infidelity is the single most cited cause of divorce. In Western countries, between 25 and 50 percent of divorcees cite a spouse's infidelity as the primary cause of the divorce.

A number of studies have linked personal values, sexual opportunities, and relationship satisfaction to the occurrence of extradyadic sex in monogamous relationships. However, others have failed to find significant associations between extradyadic sex and happiness or satisfaction with the relationship, or even with quality of sex within the relationship. When not caused by relationship conflict or low relationship satisfaction, infidelity may be associated with opportunity and permissive values, but either or both may in themselves be related to an individual's sexual makeup. Some studies, using national samples, have found a higher likelihood of sexual infidelity among men and women with stronger sexual interest levels.

Sexual Aggression

In some individuals, an association exists between sexual impulses and behavior and emotions such as jealousy and anger. In some relationships, these associations can lead to destructive, coercive, and violent forms of behavior. Marital rape, for example, is believed to be more common than any other type of rape, and several studies have found strong associations between jealousy and husband violence. Relationship violence has been found to be associated with higher levels of sexual activity within the relationship. Although a number of studies have explored possible underlying mechanisms, including possible links between sexual aggression and personality traits such as antisociality, research on the question of why these associations are more likely to exist and emerge in some individuals than in others is still minimal, and even less is known about sexual abuse and aggression in gay and lesbian couples.

Pregnancy and Parenthood

Many couples in an established relationship hope to have children at some point or already have them. Although this is particularly true for heterosexual couples, gay and lesbian couples are also choosing parenthood—for example, through adoption or some form of assisted reproduction (e.g., donor insemination, surrogate mothers). For many couples, preparing for parenthood is an exciting but also challenging journey. For example,

approximately 15 percent of married heterosexual couples are estimated to experience problems in conceiving and seek help, which not uncommonly involves recommendations regarding the timing and frequency of sexual intercourse. Little is known about how couples negotiate differences in the desire to have or the timing for children and how they deal with the associated worries or anxieties. In heterosexual couples, pregnancy often affects various aspects of sexual functioning and satisfaction. The frequency of sexual interactions between spouses tends to decline throughout pregnancy, only to increase again weeks and sometimes months after childbirth. Also, pregnancy appears to be a time of increased risk of sex outside of the relationship in monogamous relationships. Although there is less agreement in the literature on the determinants of postpartum sexual activity, most research suggests that parenthood transforms the sexual lives of most couples. A recent statistical analysis involving a large number of studies found that parents tend to report lower marital satisfaction than nonparents, but the role of possible changes in sexual behavior and satisfaction is still largely unknown.

Aging

During midlife and beyond, most men and women will experience a number of changes, physical and otherwise, that may influence their sexual desire and response and thus their relationships. In many men and women, the desire for and frequency of sexual activity (especially intercourse) with one's partner will decrease. In women, menopause brings about hormonal changes (in particular a decrease in the production of estrogen) that impact vaginal lubrication and other physical aspects of sexual response, which together may make intercourse more difficult and uncomfortable. In men, hormonal changes include a gradual decrease in the production of testosterone, which may make it more difficult to obtain or maintain erections or reach orgasm. Also, the increased likelihood of having to cope with diseases and other health problems can negatively impact sexual desire and response. Despite the many biological changes and other, including social, emotional, and health-related challenges (e.g., death of a spouse, moving

to a nursing home) associated with aging, many older people continue to engage in satisfying sexual activity, even at more advanced ages.

Erick Janssen

See also Extradysadic Sex; Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Relationships; Marriage and Sex; Sex and Love; Sexual Dysfunctions

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SEX RATIO

The sex ratio (SR) is the most popular index of sex composition used in demographic and other scholarly analyses; it is defined as the number of males per 100 females:

$$SR = \frac{P_m}{P_f} * 100$$

An SR above 100 indicates an excess of males, and an SR below 100 indicates an excess of females. In some countries including India, Iran, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia, the SR is calculated as the number of females per 100 males, but the SR formula shown above is used by most demographers and international bodies such as the United Nations.

Henry Shryock, Jacob Siegel, and Associates have noted that SRs of nations are usually around 95 to 102 unless some major loss of life affects the country. A national SR lower than 90 or higher than 105 is extreme.

Marcia Guttentag and Paul Secord's *Too Many Women? The SR Question* is the best accounting of the SR in historical populations. In high SR societies, young adult women are decidedly valued.

They might be permitted to choose their own marriage partners or to marry into superior socioeconomic classes. High SR societies might promote sexual morality, in particular the virginity of potential brides and the fidelity of women in marriage. Some cultures tend to endorse sexual exclusivity and love on the part of both sexes, while others accept promiscuity and infidelity on the part of men.

Many of the characteristics of low SR societies are the opposite of those in high SR societies. Women are likely regarded as sex objects, feeling immobilized and devalued by the society. Due to their oversupply, they are rarely able to marry into higher socioeconomic classes. Greater numbers of men and women tend to remain single, and those who marry are more prone to get divorced.

Most societies have SRs at birth (SRBs) between 104 and 106. This so-called biologically normal SRB is likely an evolutionary adaptation to the fact that females have higher survival probabilities than males. Since at every year of life males have higher age-specific death rates than females, slightly more males than females are required at birth for there to be around equal numbers of males and females when the groups reach their marriageable ages.

Biology thus dictates that the age-specific SR will be highest at the very young ages and should then decline with age, attaining a value of around 100 for persons in their late 20s and continuing to decline to levels around 50 or 60 in the oldest ages.

Dudley Poston and Karen Glover have shown that the SRB in the United States is invariant, at about 105 for every year. In contrast, China had an SRB only slightly above 107 in 1980, a ratio which began to increase in the late 1980s, reaching 115 in 1990, 120 in 2000, and 118 in 2005. This has occurred in China (and in Taiwan, South Korea, India, and several other Asian countries) for three main reasons: (1) fertility has declined very rapidly in China from six children per woman in the 1960s to around 1.7 at the start of the new millennium; (2) China is characterized by a Confucian patriarchal tradition where son preference is strong and pervasive. When Chinese women were having six children on average, the probability was very low (less than 2 percent) that none of the six children would be male. By comparison, Gilles Pison has written that when women have between one and two children, the probabilities

are between 25 and 50 percent; and (3) ultrasound technology enabling the prenatal determination of sex has been widely available in China since the 1980s; thus, many Chinese use this technology to identify the sex of the fetus, and in many instances, if it is a female fetus, to then abort it.

Researchers have estimated that there have already been born in China around 32 million boys who will not be able to find Chinese women in the marriage market. What will these many millions of young men do when they cannot find brides? These Chinese bachelors will never marry and will have no other choice but to develop their own lives and livelihoods. They will likely resettle with one another in bachelor ghettos in Beijing, Shanghai, Tianjin, and other big cities, where commercial sex outlets would likely be prevalent. John Laub and Robert Sampson have observed that males are more prone to crime if they never marry. Another major issue of concern is the potential for an HIV/AIDS epidemic of a scale previously unimagined. This will especially be the case if China's commercial sex markets in the big cities expand to accommodate the millions of surplus males.

At the end of the 20th century, the population of the world was aging dramatically. In 2000, the average annual growth rate of persons ages 80 and older was 3 times greater than that of the total population and twice as high as that of the population ages 60 and over. Women's life expectancy in every age is greater than that of men. Women hence comprise a majority of the older population. Data from the Population Division of the United Nations for the year 2000 indicate that the global SR of the population ages 60 or over was 81 males per 100 females; there were approximately 63 million more women ages 60 years and over than men.

For the more developed nations, the SR in 2050 of the older population is projected to be around 78 males for every 100 females for those over age 60 and 56 males for every 100 females for people over 80. The U.S. population is projected to include almost 87 million persons over age 65 in 2050, with 56 percent of it female, according to data from the United Nations. The dependency ratio, that is, the economically dependent population (those under 15 and those 65 and over), divided by the economically active (those aged 15 to 64), is projected in 2050 to be 67.5. Knowledge of the SRs of societies provides very important

information and insights about their cultures, economies, and demographics.

*Dudley L. Poston, Jr., Heather Terrell Kincannon,
and Bethany S. DeSalvo*

See also Abortion; Cohabitation; Loneliness; Marriage Markets; Mate Selection; Sexuality; Sexually Transmitted Diseases and Relationships

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SEX-ROLE ORIENTATION

A person's sex-role orientation can be described as the extent to which he or she possesses characteristics of masculinity, femininity, or androgyny (and is separate from sexual orientation). Sex-role and gender-role are two terms that are often used interchangeably, although sex is traditionally reserved for the biological category of male and female and gender is more often used to refer to the societal expectations placed on men and women. Traits and behaviors assigned to the male gender role are described as masculine (e.g., independent, competitive), whereas traits and behaviors assigned to the female gender role are described as feminine (e.g. emotional, kind). Sex-role orientation influences a variety of human relationships ranging from the socialization of children to interactions in

the workplace and most importantly, in close relationships. This entry describes the history of the study of sex-roles, the primary ways in which sex-roles are measured, and key psychological processes related to sex-roles. Sex-role orientation is of particular importance to understanding human relationships, as many relationship behaviors and processes (e.g., communication) are strongly tied to partners' sex-role orientation.

Measurement of Sex-Role Orientation

The study of gender roles began to intensify in the 1930s when intelligence researchers (principally, Lewis Terman) hypothesized that gender may be a better predictor of intelligence than sex. In 1936, the first measure to assess gender, the Attitude Interest Analysis Survey (the name disguised its true intent) was published, followed by the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory that also had a scale tapping into gender. The Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI) and the Personal Attributes Questionnaire (PAQ) are currently the most common measures of masculinity and femininity. The BSRI consists of 20 masculine (e.g., ambitious, self-reliant, independent, assertive), 20 feminine (e.g., affectionate, gentle, understanding, sensitive to the needs of others), and 20 socially desirable but gender-neutral personality traits (e.g., truthful, happy, conceited). The PAQ consists of 12 adjectives assessing femininity-expressivity (e.g., kind, gentle, helpful) and 12 adjectives assessing masculinity-instrumentality (e.g., active, competitive, independent). Given that masculinity and femininity are seen as distinct concepts—that is, a person can have high or low levels of each rather than conceptualizing masculinity and femininity as opposing ends of a single dimension—both measures use separate scales for each. Participants indicate how true each of the adjectives listed are of them.

Many attributes on the BSRI and PAQ are socially desirable, which led to the development of other measures that included more negative items. Individuals are more likely to say they possess positive characteristics regardless of whether the characteristic is masculine or feminine, a tendency which can interfere with true measurements of sex-role orientation. Consequently, an extension of the PAQ

was developed in 1979 that included the darker side of masculinity and femininity—referred to as unmitigated agency and communion. These two concepts are closely related concepts to masculinity and femininity. Individuals high in unmitigated agency (similar to masculinity) focus more on themselves to the exclusion of others. Individuals high in unmitigated communion orientation (similar to femininity) focus on others' needs and forming connections to the exclusion of self. Today gender and sex-role orientation are best viewed as psychological concepts with many different components.

The majority of current research on sex-role orientation is still consistent with early definitions of the concept. Changing times and recent research suggests taking another look at the validity of the BSRI and other such measures. Are the behaviors and values considered masculine in the 1970s the same as those considered masculine today? Do men and women endorse the adjectives in the same way? Evidence suggests this is not the case. For example, women's scores on the BSRI and PAQ masculine scales have increased steadily over time. Today, both men and women are encouraged to develop healthy relationship skills and to treat each other with respect (feminine characteristics). Being androgynous (high on both scales) is associated with better outcomes for both men and women.

One new approach to the study of sex roles, developed by Vicki Helgeson, estimates the probability that a person is male or female given a set of gender-related observable factors such as what the person wears (e.g., a dress) and what the person likes (e.g., football). Examples or responses that discriminate men from women are assigned weights depending on how well they differentiate men from women. This method, known as gender diagnosticity, includes indicators such as work preferences, personality characteristics, attitudes, mental abilities, and leisure activities. Sex category is linked to sex-role based on the assumption that behaviors that show sex differences serve as measures of masculinity and femininity within the sexes. For example, occupational preference ratings that show sex differences (e.g., men more likely to work in construction) in a given population can be used to assess masculinity and femininity within the sexes. Revised measures of sex-role orientation have also been developed in order to differentiate individuals who are neither masculine

nor feminine (called undifferentiated) or high in both (called androgynous).

Determinants of Sex-Role Orientation

An individual's sex-role orientation has been shown to be determined in part by parental behavior and rearing practices. For instance, in one study, males with an androgynous sex-role orientation typically acknowledged having a mother and father who were both equally affectionate. Sex-role orientation is thought to develop based on the rewards or punishment for early childhood behavior as suggested by Social Learning Theory. Parents may have only rewarded behaviors that fit sex-role norms. For example, parents tend to encourage boys to be rugged and encourage girls to be communal. Children also learn sex-roles by observing and modeling the behavior of same-sex parents.

Some theorists believe that sex roles are biologically based. Evolutionary theorists, for example, propose that the behaviors and attitudes exhibited by the different sexes have evolved to be distinct over time, given that each sex had different roles to play (e.g., caregiver vs. hunter) in the human evolutionary past. There are also a number of sex differences in anatomy, hormones, and brain functioning and organization that may account for some differences in sex-role orientation. For example, women have higher levels of the hormone oxytocin that facilitates bonding and nurturing of relationships. Men have higher levels of testosterone, a hormone related to aggression. Cross-cultural and cross-species research also show sex differences. The fact that different cultures with different socialization practices and nonhuman animals with different communication processes (and no media influences) also show sex differences supports biologically based theories of sex-role orientation.

Key Correlates of Sex-Role Orientation

One of the best established correlates of sex roles is aggression. Aggression has been linked to the male sex role by authors such as Myriam Miedzian who argue that violence cannot be studied without considering the fact that men are much more

likely to commit acts of violence than women. Miedzian argues for the existence of a masculine mystique that plays a major role in criminal and domestic violence. This masculine mystique consists of toughness, dominance, emotional detachment, and competition and results in society's not only tolerating violence in boys but also encouraging boys to be violent. This masculine mystique is more dangerous for lower-class than for upper-class boys, who can validate their masculinity through other channels, such as achievement. The female sex role, on the other hand, might also inhibit aggression via the role of empathy, a critical feminine sex-role attribute. The higher one's empathy, the lower one's aggression and as such, empathy training has been used in interventions to lower aggression. For example, children 7 to 11 years old who were trained to be empathic showed a decrease in aggression.

A large literature has studied how sex-role orientation relates to different behaviors, ranging from cognitive abilities to traits such as leadership. Boys who are high in masculinity and low in femininity and girls who are high in femininity and low in masculinity tend to score somewhat lower on scholastic ability tests. Masculinity has been found to be associated with self- and other-perceptions of leadership.

In certain settings, being high in the sex-role orientation of the other sex may have advantages. For example, some studies have found that women in the workplace who are high on masculinity are less anxious and experience less stress on the job compared to women low on masculinity. Other studies have found that individuals with feminine sex-role orientations had higher levels of fear in work settings. Fit between sex and gender role is also important. During an informal 5-minute dyadic discussion, masculine men and feminine women talked, smiled, laughed, and gestured less than other sex-role orientation combinations.

In the health arena, individuals high in masculinity are likely to be at risk for a variety of health-related problems such as coronary heart disease and hypertension. Traits such as aggressiveness and competitiveness, more common to masculine individuals of both sexes, increase cardiovascular reactivity and can endanger health. Men and women with high femininity scores have been found to have decreased risk for heart attacks.

Masculinity has also been associated with some positive health outcomes. A large review of the literature showed that masculinity has a moderately strong relationship to both high adjustment and lack of depression. Femininity in contrast has a major health advantage in that it has been found to lessen some of the harmful effects of stress. Individuals high in femininity both perceive and receive higher levels of social support, which buffers them against stress and is associated with positive health outcomes. In particular, expressiveness and a more developed feminine identity have both been related positively to psychological well-being. In contrast, androgynous individuals tend to have better mental health and higher self-esteem as compared to individuals with feminine or masculine sex-role orientations. Sometimes sex-role expectations can have negative consequences for the person. Sex-role strain is likely to occur when sex-role expectations conflict with natural tendencies. For example, men are supposed to kill bugs and spiders around the house. A husband who does not want to do this but who is expected to may experience sex-role strain.

Sex-Role Orientation in Relationships

Although gender and sex are important factors for studying close relationships, masculinity or femininity (and not just being a man or a woman) may have even greater influence on relationship outcomes. For example, higher femininity in both husbands and wives relates to higher levels of marital adjustment. This is likely because feminine traits such as expressiveness and communality contribute to higher degrees of relationship quality in general. Communal orientation has been correlated with enhanced trust, higher levels of connectedness, and a greater willingness and preference for discussing emotional subjects. Femininity is thought to influence relationship satisfaction via interpersonal skills where those high in femininity are also better at providing social support and at self-disclosing. Masculinity does have some benefits for a relationship. For example, masculinity has been associated with initiating relationships and bringing up issues of conflict.

People apparently recognize the value of feminine traits in a relationship. Men and women both

perceive a potential mate to be more desirable if he or she has feminine as well as masculine qualities (i.e., is androgynous), although feminine characteristics are rated as more desirable than masculine characteristics. Interestingly enough, both men and women rate themselves as behaving in a more feminine way and a less masculine way when they are with their partners than when alone. Especially important is the finding that people who behave in feminine ways with their partners report the highest relationship satisfaction. Relationship satisfaction for women in particular is related to their own and their husbands' degree of femininity.

Of note is the finding that couples in which both members have traditional sex roles have the least relationship satisfaction as a couple compared to relationships in which one partner is androgynous. This finding has also been found for gay and lesbian relationships. Couples who are most distressed are those in which both partners are undifferentiated.

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See also Communication, Gender Differences in; Feminist Perspectives on Relationships; Gender-Role Attitudes; Gender Roles in Relationships; Gender Stereotypes; Marital Satisfaction and Quality

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SEXUAL AGGRESSION

Sexual aggression in close relationships involves attempting to achieve one's personal sexual goals without regard for a partner's sexual wishes. There are two broad forms of sexual aggression in a relational context. *Sexual coercion* consists of nonforceful influence techniques such as being physically persistent, using psychological manipulation, lying, and making use of drugs and/or alcohol in an attempt to attain sexual interaction, while *sexual assault* primarily involves threats or use of force against one's partner to attain sexual access. These two forms of sexual aggression sometimes overlap, which is not surprising since they share an underlying theme of power and control. Sexual aggression can also co-occur with psychological and physical aggression. Because of this, some scholars use the term *intimate partner violence* to capture the full range of interpersonal violence that can be experienced in close relationships.

Rates of Sexual Aggression

Patricia Tjaden and Nancy Thoennes's national study of women's and men's experience with intimate partner violence provides the best contemporary estimates of how frequently sexual aggression takes place in close relationships. Of the 8,000 women in their survey, 14.8 percent had experienced rape and 2.8 percent attempted rape. The assailant was a present or past intimate partner for 62 percent of the sexually victimized women. In fact, consistency in rates across this and other studies suggests that 15 percent of U.S. women will experience rape in their lifetime, most frequently at the hands of a relational partner.

Tjaden and Thoennes's findings for the 8,000 men they surveyed stand in sharp contrast to those for women. Rape was exceedingly rare for these men: Only 2.1 percent reported being a victim of a rape, and only 0.9 percent reported being a victim of an attempted rape. Moreover, men's sexual victimization most frequently occurred before age 12 (48 percent of the time), and the assailant was much more likely to be a man than a woman. Comparing the findings for men and women demonstrates that

women are at much greater risk of experiencing sexual aggression.

It is important to highlight that most experiences of sexual aggression occur in the context of a romantic relationship. Scientific investigations focused on adolescents, young single adults, and married partners, as well as gays and lesbians, repeatedly demonstrate that sexual aggression exists across the full range of romantic relationships in these diverse populations.

Describing Sexually Aggressive Men

It is evident that men are much more likely to be sexually aggressive than women, and sexually aggressive men share a number of traits. When compared to men who are not sexually aggressive, they characteristically hold a unique set of beliefs about sex and relationships. For instance, male sexual aggressors are more apt to believe in rape myths (e.g., women say no but mean yes, women dress in a way that invites sexual advances, etc.), to see men and women as sexual adversaries, to accept interpersonal violence, and to see force as a legitimate means for procuring sex. They are also apt to be traditional in their attitudes about women's role in society; a belief that places women in weaker positions relative to men. Sexually aggressive men use these beliefs to justify their aggressive actions towards women.

In addition to holding these beliefs, sexually aggressive men are also likely to possess certain personality characteristics. They can be impulsive and dominant and have problems understanding social rules. Moreover, they are often angry and feel hostile towards women, possibly because they believe women have treated them poorly in the past. There is evidence that they lack empathy and as a result, do not fully comprehend the impact their aggression has on their victims.

Sexually aggressive men, when compared to their nonaggressive peers, additionally possess a unique sexual profile. Again compared to non-aggressive peers, they lose their virginity at an earlier age, often have more sexual partners, and typically engage in sexual intercourse in casual as opposed to committed relationships. They value and may actively seek sexual novelty. Moreover, they find depictions of sex and violence arousing and may view violent pornography.

Collectively, these traits paint a picture of sexually focused, aggressive individuals who use their beliefs, their personality, and their sexuality to dominate women.

Contextual Factors, Relational Dynamics, and Sexual Aggression

Numerous relational dynamics are linked to sexual aggression. First, it is important to consider the contextual factors that are a part of sexual aggression, as they increase the risk of its occurrence. For example, most instances of aggression take place in a private or secluded setting such as a residence or a car. Another contextual factor is whether either partner consumes alcohol and/or uses drugs. Intoxicants can cloud the judgment of the victim, manufacture an excuse for an aggressor's behavior, or do both.

In addition to context, issues of consensual communication are involved. Consent involves knowledge, the consenting individual has all relevant information and is aware of what he or she is consenting to, and agreement, a clear choice to engage in sexual activity free from unwarranted influence. Within the context of sexual activity, individuals might communicate nonconsent (e.g., saying "no," blocking a partner's roving hands), enact affirmative behaviors (e.g., increasing sexual intimacy nonverbally), or use affirmative language (e.g., clearly saying yes). Communicating and attributing consent are complex relational processes, as sexual advances are often responded to with nonverbal messages that represent multiple meanings and are vulnerable to misinterpretation. Moreover, sometimes individuals fail to communicate no with direct assertions but use indirect messages instead. The lack of direct clear communication risks misinterpretations of consent.

Commonly held expectations that an increase in commitment gives one the right to an increase in sexual intimacy also play a role. As a result, romantic partners may become more aggressive in achieving sexual goals that they believe they are entitled to as a part of committing to a partner. This may explain why monogamous young adult romantic relationships experience higher levels of sexual aggression when compared to casual romantic relationships. Beliefs tying commitment to

sexual intimacy also likely contribute to sexual aggression in marriage where some husbands believe they have a right to sexual access whenever they wish as part of their marital contract.

Sometimes one partner wants to have sex, while the other does not wish to, even though they have engaged in sex in the past. The latter partner may still say yes while actually meaning no because of expectations and/or pressure set by society's views about relationships, such as what should take place in marriage or because of the expectations of either partner in the relationship. Sometimes, however, individuals say yes to unwanted sexual interaction or may not clearly communicate "no" because they fear physical aggression will follow if they do not allow sex to transpire. This particular dynamic can be a part of any case of sexual aggression regardless of the commitment level of the relational partners.

Given that control and power are key relational dynamics in sexual aggression, it is not surprising that sexually aggressive men often attempt to control their partners in areas of the relationship outside of the sexual arena. They may attempt to socially isolate their partner, control the economic resources available to the partner, and make partners account for their time. In its most extreme form, this results in some men brutally pairing physical and sexual assault or gaining sexual access by threatening physical violence.

Social Support for Sexual Aggression

Scientists have argued that social support for sexual aggression contributes to its existence. For instance, there is a lack of social consensus as to what constitutes rape. When faced with an account of a man possibly being sexual aggressive towards a woman, individuals consider a number of factors when deciding whether a rape took place. Some of the decision making focuses on the woman and her actions. Individuals are less likely to conclude that she was raped if she wore revealing clothing, had been drinking, did not clearly say no, or had consented to participate in sexual acts other than intercourse. A woman who engages in any of these behaviors is often perceived as being at least somewhat to blame for the circumstances she finds herself in. Some of the decision

making focuses on the man. If he threatens or uses force, individuals will likely conclude that he raped his partner. However, if he was sexually coercive, using techniques such as being physically persistent, plying the woman with alcohol, or psychologically manipulating her, his actions will be judged as wrong but not sufficient to constitute rape. Thus, the societal view of what constitutes rape is not always clear. On one level, sexually aggressive men are aware of the lack of social consensus and use it to their advantage when deciding how to achieve their sexual conquests. On another level, without a social consensus as to what constitutes rape, men can continue to be sexually aggressive without worrying about suffering negative sanctions for their actions.

Sexual aggression among college youth is also higher in communities that ascribe to traditional masculine ideals. Specifically, higher rates of sexual victimization are connected to fraternity functions and/or with fraternity members. When compared to male college students who are independent of the Greek fraternal system, fraternity members are more apt to endorse, support, and use sexual aggression. The fact that fraternity social functions frequently involve heavy use of alcohol likely plays an additional role. Alcohol may be used in these social situations as a means of increasing sexual access to the women who attend these functions.

Social support for sexual aggression additionally occurs at the peer level. Sexually aggressive men tend to choose friends who engage in similar acts. These friends provide social reinforcement for each other's sexual aggression in the form of increased social status. This form of reinforcement is a particularly salient motivator for sexually aggressive men. In other words, such men find the recognition their friends give them for their sexual conquests particularly rewarding.

Finally, support for sexually aggressive acts may be related to certain developmental experiences from the family of origin. Although not uniformly true, some aggressive men grow up in violent family settings. Some were victims of sexual and/or physical abuse; others had parents who were violent toward each other. These early life experiences have the potential to serve as models for how partners should interact in later life romantic relationships.

Survivor Outcomes

It is important to recognize the full reach of sexual aggression in society. Fear of being victimized can cause women, regardless of whether they have personally been victimized, to restrict daily activities such as going to their car by themselves, using public transportation, or even walking by men on the streets. Worries about possible victimization can lead college women to adopt strategies to protect one another at times when there is an elevated risk of victimization. For instance, one female friend in a group may limit her alcohol intake and look out for the other members of her group when going to a singles' gathering. Thus, even women who have not directly experienced sexual aggression often restrict their lives as a precautionary step against possible threats.

Women who survive direct experiences with sexual aggression can be affected in a number of different ways. Some incur physical injuries. These can include bruising, lacerations, and torn muscles, at times focused around their vagina or anus. Psychological function is frequently impaired both in the short and long term. Victimized women can become depressed, angry, anxious, and irritable as an outcome of their traumatic experience. Self-blame, feelings of guilt, and decreased sexual functioning is common. Furthermore, it can affect survivors' romantic relationships. They often find it difficult to trust partners and may experience an overall decrease in relational quality even when paired with a nonaggressive partner at a time following their victimization experience.

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See also Abuse and Violence in Relationships; Conflict, Marital

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SEXUAL COMMUNICATION BETWEEN PARTNERS

Sexual communication is a strong predictor of the degree to which couples are satisfied with their sexual relationships. Just as good general communication is important for relationship satisfaction, good communication about sex is important for sexual satisfaction. Sexual communication can help determine whether a partner is interested in sexual activity and can lead to enhanced arousal when sexual encounters do occur. In addition, open sexual communication plays an essential role in safer sex practices. This entry reports on the nature of research in this area, the correlates and predictors of sexual communication, and the relationship between communication about sex and safer sex practices.

Methodology

The study of sexual communication has involved the examination of various factors, including the frequency of discussion of sex-related topics,

degree of discomfort or apprehension in discussing sexuality, expression of preferences for certain sexual activities and techniques, self-disclosure of sexual history, and negotiation of contraceptive methods. Almost all research has relied on self-report, with that method's inherent shortcomings such as the possibility of deliberate deception, faulty memory, and distorted perception. For certain types of sexual communication such as discussions of safer sex, members of a couple do not agree about the amount of discussion that has occurred between them. Although much sexual communication is indirect or nonverbal, it is largely verbal communication that has been studied. In addition, for many couples, a great deal of communication occurs during the sex act itself, and this exchange of information has rarely been examined.

Function of Sexual Communication

Communication about sex plays a vital role in several aspects of a relationship, including the determination of interest in sexual activity, learning about the types of sexual activities that appeal to one's partner, the effectiveness of various methods of stimulation, and the minimizing of risk of pregnancy and infection. The strong relationship between sexual communication and sexual satisfaction is a consistent finding. Virtually every study that has examined this relationship has found these two relational aspects to be highly positively correlated. Both the frequency and the quality of sexual communication seem to be related to a satisfying sexual relationship. Lack of sexual communication or difficulties in communicating about sex are linked with sexual problems or dysfunction. In one study, the variable most predictive of overall sexual dissatisfaction was inhibited communication. In addition, sexual communication has been related to partners' satisfaction with control over aspects of their sexual relationship. Communication about sexuality is also related to general relationship satisfaction.

The relationship between sexual communication and sexual satisfaction appears to be due to several factors. First, greater communication about non-sexual issues predicts sexual satisfaction independently of sexual communication, so the correlation

could, in part, be related to higher levels of overall communication. Also, both general communication and sexual communication lead to relationship satisfaction, which in turn leads to sexual satisfaction. Finally, and perhaps most obviously, communication about preferred activities directly leads to greater sexual satisfaction.

Predictors of Sexual Communication

Research is mixed with regard to whether men or women are more likely to talk about sex within a relationship, with some studies indicating that males are more likely to raise sexual issues and other studies indicating that females are the ones most likely to do so. It does appear that same-sex couples engage in more sexual communication than do mixed-sex couples. Factors that lead to greater sexual communication include a more positive emotional orientation toward sexuality (erotophilia), less traditional views of sex roles, less belief in the sexual double standard (the notion that casual or permissive sex is more acceptable for males than for females), less apprehension regarding communication in general, and less self-silencing (especially for women). In general, people who are more self-disclosing about other topics also tend to be more self-disclosing about sex. There is a positive relationship between the quality of general communication and the quality of sexual communication. Finally, some research has suggested that sexual communication is more likely within committed relationships.

Sexual Communication and Safer Sex Practices

Past sexual behavior is often underreported to partners, leading to an unrealistic assessment of risk. Young adults tend to avoid conversations regarding negative aspects of sexual behavior such as infidelity and sexually transmitted infection. In addition, discussing HIV/AIDS risk appears unrelated to the likelihood of discussing sexual pleasure. The use of condoms is more closely related to the specific discussion of condoms or sexual history than to more general communication regarding safer sex, but at least among adolescents and young adults, general sexual communication is related to the greater likelihood of contraceptive use.

Many people are hesitant to discuss contraception in the beginning of a relationship, particularly as it pertains to disease prevention, for fear of hurting their partner's feelings or triggering a negative reaction such as anger. This fear is usually unfounded, however, as people report being grateful when a partner raises the issue. Nonetheless, only about half of adolescent couples discuss contraception prior to engaging in sexual intercourse for the first time. Research indicates that adolescents and young adults are frequently untruthful in their discussions of their sexual histories, including the reporting of their past partners and past sexually transmitted infections.

In the United States, women are more inclined to discuss their sexual history and aspects of safer sex than are men and are often the ones to initiate such discussions. Nonetheless, when such discussions occur, they appear to be equally effective for men as for women in terms of leading to less risk-taking behavior. However, in countries with a more traditional or machismo-based culture such as various Latin and African countries and in other countries within certain subcultures where there is a large imbalance of power between the sexes, women are less likely to raise issues of condom use or safer sex, thus putting themselves and their partners at higher risk.

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See also Communication, Gender Differences in; Communication Skills; Marital Satisfaction and Quality; Marriage and Sex; Safe Sex; Satisfaction in Relationships; Sex in Established Relationships

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SEXUAL DYSFUNCTIONS

Sexual functioning is affected by a complex interplay of physiological, psychological, and contextual factors (e.g., physical health, life stress, past interpersonal experiences, current relationship quality) and may therefore change over time with age, life stages, and duration of relationships. Indeed, everyone may experience ups and downs in his or her sexual functioning. However, when sexual difficulties are persistent or recur frequently and cause marked distress and interpersonal difficulties, then one may have a sexual dysfunction. The general heading of sexual dysfunctions encompasses a variety of disorders that are characterized by disturbances in the various phases of the sexual response cycle of desire, arousal, orgasm, and resolution, as well as sex-related pain disorders. These disorders may be lifelong problems or develop after a period of normal functioning. They may be situational difficulties, which develop only under certain circumstances or with specific partners, or generalized ones. To be sure, sexual dysfunctions are fully understood only when taking into account their interpersonal context. Thus, whether an inhibited sexual response is a dysfunction per se rather than an adaptive reaction to adverse circumstances (e.g., relationship difficulties) remains controversial. This entry describes the sexual response cycle and impairment of its functioning, and examines the causes of impairment as well as related treatment.

Sexual Response Cycle

The fundamental diagnostic categories of sexual dysfunctions reflect the traditional view of the four-phase model of human sexual response. This model, which is based on sexual response more characteristic of men than women, assumes a linear progression of relatively discrete phases. The cycle begins with an initial awareness of

sexual desire (i.e., yearning for sex and thinking or fantasizing about it) that leads to the arousal (excitement) phase. The *arousal phase* is characterized by increased blood flow to genital tissues that produces vaginal lubrication in women and erection in men. This phase may lead to the reflex rhythmic muscular contractions of the *orgasm phase* that release muscular tension and blood from the engorged blood vessels. In the *resolution phase* that follows, the physiologic changes that took place during the preceding phases are reversed and the body returns to an unaroused state.

Contemporary research suggests that women's sexual response is more complex than is indicated by this model, and involves overlapping phases of sexual response in a variable sequence, particularly when engaged in a long-term relationship. In the initial phase of a relationship, women typically experience relatively high and spontaneous sexual urges. At later stages of a relationship, when couples are more likely to experience habituation to sex and tend to show lower levels of sexual intimacy (e.g., engagement in foreplay, expressing signs of affection), women's sexual desire, which is more affected by relational context than men's, may become a responsive rather than a spontaneous event. As such, at the beginning of a given sexual interaction, a woman may not necessarily sense sexual desire per se, but rather be motivated to engage in sex for other reasons (e.g., promoting her sense of closeness, pleasing her partner, obtaining relief from stress). Then, when a woman is willing to become sexually receptive, she may consciously focus on sexual stimuli and feel sexually aroused. This subjective sense of arousal may, in turn, trigger the desire for sex itself (i.e., responsive sexual desire). If the sexual stimulus is perceived as effective and the woman can stay focused long enough, she may experience sexual satisfaction (with or without orgasms).

These differences between men's and women's sexual responses have proven useful for defining, diagnosing, and treating sexual dysfunctions. Current understanding of dysfunctions and related definitions acknowledge that decreased spontaneous desire ahead of sexual activity does not necessarily constitute a desire disorder. It is also recognized that whereas genital congestion in men (i.e., erection produced by an increased blood flow

to genital tissues) is equated with the subjective sense of arousal (i.e., feelings of excitement), there may be discrepancies between the two in women. Women's subjective sense of arousal is more likely to be affected by the thoughts and emotions elicited in the presence of erotic stimuli than by the physical response in and of itself. Women may therefore exhibit genital lubrication without feeling sexually aroused or feel sexually aroused without genital lubrication.

Definitions and Prevalence of the Major Sexual Dysfunctions

Desire Disorders

An individual is considered to have a *desire dysfunction* when he or she is not motivated to have sex for any reason and is not receptive to adequate sexual stimulation. This lack of interest should be beyond the normative lessening that may occur with life cycle and relationship duration and should cause marked distress or interpersonal difficulties, such as in the case of discrepancies of sexual desire.

Arousal Disorders

Female Subjective Sexual Arousal Dysfunction. A woman is considered to have this dysfunction when she experiences markedly diminished (or absent) feelings of sexual arousal (i.e., sexual excitement and pleasure) from any type of sexual stimulation but shows vaginal lubrication or other signs of physical response.

Female Genital Sexual Arousal Dysfunction. A woman is considered to have this dysfunction when she experiences impaired (or absent) genital sexual arousal (i.e., genital congestion) from any type of sexual stimulation and reduced sexual sensations from caressing genitalia but feels a subjective sense of sexual arousal from nongenital sexual stimuli.

Female Combined Genital and Subjective Arousal Dysfunction. A woman is considered to have this dysfunction when she experiences markedly reduced (or absent) subjective and genital sexual arousal from any type of stimulation.

Erectile Dysfunction. A man is considered to have an erectile dysfunction when he cannot attain or sustain penile erection sufficient for sexual activity for at least 3 months.

Orgasmic Disorders

Female Orgasmic Disorder. A woman is considered to have an orgasmic disorder when she experiences markedly diminished intensity of orgasmic sensations or marked delay (or an absence) of orgasm from any kind of stimulation, although she does experience high sexual arousal.

Male Orgasmic Disorders. This category includes a spectrum of disorders ranging from delayed ejaculation (i.e., undue delay in reaching a climax during sexual activity) to orgasmic dysfunction and anejaculation (i.e., the absence of ejaculation during orgasm).

Premature Ejaculation. A man is considered to have premature ejaculation when he ejaculates with minimal stimulation before, on, or shortly after penetration (i.e., brief ejaculatory latency of 2 minutes or less) and before he wishes it, and over which he has minimal or no voluntary control.

Pain Disorders

Dyspareunia. A woman is considered to have dyspareunia when she experiences pain with attempted or complete vaginal entry or penile vaginal intercourse.

Vaginismus. A woman is considered to have vaginismus when she experiences difficulties in vaginal entry of a penis or any object, despite her expressed wish to do so. There is often (phobic) avoidance, involuntary pelvic muscle contraction, and anticipation or fear or experience of pain. Structural or other physical abnormalities must be ruled out.

These sexual dysfunctions are relatively prevalent in both sexes, with estimates ranging from 10 percent to 52 percent of men and 25 percent to 63 percent of women. Figures for the prevalence of sexual dysfunctions vary from study to study due to differences in study populations, definitions, and measures. The most widely cited

survey showed that the most common sexual problem is premature ejaculation in men (28 to 32 percent, depending on age group) and a lack of interest in sex in women (27 to 32 percent, depending on age group). Although this survey is believed to provide some of the best estimates of sexual problems in the United States, it neither used the formal clinical diagnostic categories of sexual dysfunctions nor indicated the severity of the problem and related distress. Indeed, less than 20 percent of respondents in this survey had sought professional help for their sexual problems, implying that most people may have less severe problems, apparently unlikely to qualify for a clinical diagnosis. Of course, there may well be other reasons for not seeking professional help (e.g., embarrassment, ignorance, perceived ineffectiveness).

Causes and Treatment of Sexual Dysfunctions

The causes of sexual dysfunctions may be psychogenic (e.g., developmental, intrapersonal, interpersonal, environmental factors) or organic (e.g., illness, injury, drug effects). Some sexual dysfunctions (e.g., orgasmic disorders, premature ejaculation) are most commonly caused by psychogenic factors, whereas other dysfunctions (e.g., erectile dysfunction, painful intercourse) are more frequently caused by organic antecedents. In many cases, these factors tend to be intertwined because emotional and cognitive reactions (e.g., anxieties) to sexual dysfunctions of organic origin may further interfere with sexual functioning.

Physiologically, smooth functioning of the sexual response involves interaction between the nervous, endocrine, vascular, and musculoskeletal systems. Impairments in any of these systems may potentially cause sexual dysfunctions. Physical conditions that may cause or contribute to sexual difficulties include neurological disorders, disorders affecting blood vessels, and hormonal deficiencies, as well as fatigue, chronic pain, and mental health problems (e.g., anxiety, depression). Spinal cord injuries and complications of surgery of or near reproductive-urinary systems or abdomen (e.g., prostate surgery, hysterectomy) are other common causes of sexual dysfunctions. Side effects of certain medications, such as some birth

control pills, blood pressure medications, antidepressants, and antipsychotic and chemotherapy drugs, as well as adverse health habits (e.g., cigarette smoking, high alcohol consumption, substance abuse) may also interfere with sexual functioning.

Psychogenic factors that predispose the individual to developing sexual dysfunctions include prior learning (e.g., past negative sexual experiences, negative family attitudes toward sex), intrapersonal factors (e.g., poor body image, fears of intimacy), and contextual factors (e.g., stress related to job demands, children and parents care). Relationship discord and partner-related factors may also play a key role in developing or perpetuating sexual dysfunctions. These interpersonal causes commonly include unresolved relational conflicts, power struggles, partner's health problems, sexual difficulties, and unresponsiveness and feelings for the partner (e.g., lack of sexual attraction, anger, distrust).

Nevertheless, clinical evidence suggests that such predisposing factors do not necessarily lead to sexual difficulties (e.g., people who have a history of traumatic sexual encounters do not always develop sexual dysfunctions; some couples have turbulent relationships but good sex lives). To develop a sexual dysfunction one also has to translate these predisposing factors into immediate defense mechanisms that directly inhibit sexual responses. These mechanisms consist of anxieties (e.g., performance anxiety), cognitive interference (e.g., self-monitoring, judgmental thoughts), failure to engage in effective sexual stimulation, and lack of open communication. Although the translation of predisposing factors into immediate mechanisms explains how individuals with a particular combination of distal etiological factors may develop sexual dysfunctions, it remains unclear why these people employ such mechanisms, whereas other people, with a similar constellation of possible harmful factors, do not.

Because sexual functioning and related impairments are complexly determined by multiple psychogenic and organic antecedents, assessment of the dysfunction should involve gathering information on the history and context of the problem from both partners, as well as on personal and interpersonal issues, including sexual, relational, and medical histories. Psychological treatments

target psychophysiological responses and include sex education, cognitive-behavioral techniques (e.g., identifying and altering maladaptive cognitions and unrealistic expectations of performance, anxiety reduction), communication and sexual-skills training, and couple therapy. Medical treatments (e.g., estrogen therapy, topical anesthetics, and surgical treatment) aim to directly change physiological responses. Erectile dysfunction is unique among the sexual dysfunctions for the effectiveness of medications, no matter what its etiology. Typically, however, regardless of the cause of sexual dysfunction, emotional and relationship issues need to be addressed for treatment to be effective and enduring.

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See also Couple Therapy; Lust; Marriage and Sex; Sex and Love; Sex in Established Relationships; Sexual Communication Between Partners; Sexuality

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SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Modern social life is experienced in two overlapping spheres of relationships: a personal and a

professional sphere. The focus here is upon problem relationships that occur in the professional sphere. Specifically, this entry discusses the problem professional relationships that can constitute sexual harassment. Sexual harassment will be examined from both a legal and a social psychological perspective. Sexual harassment can occur in many relationship settings including the workplace, educational settings, and even relationships between landlords and tenants. The common stereotype of sexual harassment is one where a male supervisor makes sexual advances toward a female employee with the understanding that going along with his advances will result in a raise or promotion or that refusal will result in the employee's being fired or perhaps demoted. Although such a scenario certainly represents one form of sexual harassment, research consistently shows that such behavior is not the most common form of sexually harassing behavior that takes place in the workplace or other settings. The term *sexual harassment* was first coined in employment discrimination cases that were argued in U.S. Federal Courts. In U.S. law, sexual harassment is considered a form of illegal, gender-based discrimination. From a legal standpoint, the stereotypic sexually harassing behavior where a person in power uses his or her social position to sexually exploit an underling is called *quid pro quo* sexual harassment. Psychologists also refer to such behavior as sexual coercion. Though surveys show that experiences of sexual coercion are relatively rare, sexual coercion represents a socially significant form of sexual harassment because such experiences can be very psychologically stressful to those who are targeted.

Another form of legally recognized sexual harassment involves sexual or gender-related behavior that causes a hostile or offensive environment. In this form of sexual harassment, there is no necessary formal power imbalance between the perpetrator and the target of the behavior. Psychologists distinguish between two subtypes of hostile environment sexual harassment: unwanted sexual attention and gender harassment. Unwanted sexual attention is similar to sexual coercion except that the perpetrator does not attempt to tie going along with the behavior to any sort of reward or punishment. Nevertheless, the behavior in question is definitely sexual in nature and is unwelcome by the target of the behavior. Examples

include staring at a target's body, unsolicited sexual touching, and persistent requests for dates after rejection.

Gender harassment is another type of behavior that can contribute to a hostile environment. Unlike sexual coercion or unwanted sexual attention, gender harassment does not involve an aim to gain sexual access to a target. Instead the aim of gender harassment often seems to be to express hostility. Women who work in traditionally masculine jobs such as firefighting, police work, or the military often report experiencing this form of sexual harassment. Examples range from the posting of offensive pornography on computers where others can see it to comments or jokes that demean a person with gender-specific insults (e.g., calling a woman a bitch). A graphic example of gender harassment was once reported by a woman who was one of the first female firefighters in New York City. One day on the job, she opened her lunch box to find a used condom in her sandwich, presumably placed there by her male coworkers. Research has consistently shown that gender harassment is the most prevalent form of sexually harassing behavior across all relationship settings.

Sometimes people experience one of these different types of sexually harassing behavior and not the others, but often people experience them in combination. Gender harassment is most likely to occur without experiencing the other two types. Sexual coercion on the other hand is more likely to occur in relationship settings when people have also experienced gender harassment and/or unwanted sexual attention. It is important to understand that sexual harassment involves only unwanted sexual or gender-related behavior. For instance, an exchange of sexual jokes between two willing participants is not sexual harassment, unless of course it was witnessed by a third party who found the behavior offensive. People have legal protection from sexual harassment in work settings, in academic settings, and in housing. Although similar behaviors might occur in other settings, they would not be considered illegal under U.S. law. Although U.S. law recognizes that both men and women can be the targets of sexually harassing behavior, research consistently shows that it is more often experienced by women and that women find such experiences more stressful than do men. Similarly, U.S. law does not make

assumptions about the gender of perpetrators. However, the vast majority of perpetrators for both male and female targets are men.

Social psychologists have studied a variety of potential antecedents of sexually harassing behavior. Certain situational factors present more risk for sexually harassing behaviors than others. In work settings where men are numerically dominant and hold positions of organizational power, sexually harassing behavior is more likely to occur. Also, social norms play a role in the risk for sexually harassing behavior. In some work settings, there is sometimes an atmosphere of tolerance or indifference toward sexually harassing behavior—those in charge allow such behavior to happen or in worst cases participate in the behavior. Not surprisingly, such work places have a higher incidence of sexual harassment. Person factors also play a role in sexual harassment. Men who view sexuality and social power as going hand-in-hand are more likely to perform sexually harassing behavior. Men who hold sexist attitudes are more likely to sexually harass. Situational and person factors can be jointly important in producing sexually harassing behavior. People who have tendencies to sexually harass are more likely to act on these tendencies when social norms support such behavior.

What are the consequences of sexual harassment? Research conducted in many work settings has found that the occurrence of sexual harassment is related to diminished individual and work group productivity. People who are the targets of sexually harassing behavior are more likely to take sick leave or vacation time to escape the behavior. They are also more likely to seek a job transfer or simply quit their jobs. Psychologists suggest that sexual harassment on the job represents a form of work-related stress. Experiences of sexual harassment have been related to anxiety and depression and a variety of stress-related psychological and physical symptoms.

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See also Dark Side of Relationships; Sexual Aggression; Workplace Relationships

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SEXUAL INTENT, PERCEPTIONS OF

People's perceptions of sexual intent are their judgments that others are interested in them as sexual partners. The degree of interest people judge to exist may range from simple recognition (in which others merely notice their potential as partners) to avid pursuit (in which others' desires for them are blatant and conspicuous). Explicit invitations sometimes occur, but the cues that signal others' interest in them are more often both subtle and complex. People's own expectations and appetites also shape their judgments, and actions that seem sexually provocative in some settings may seem merely playful on other occasions.

Perceptions of sexual intent thus emerge from diverse influences in complex interactions, and mistakes can be made. Partners in an interaction may disagree with regard to the amount of sexual interest that is being communicated from one to the other, and misunderstanding, frustration, and conflict may result. In particular, men are more likely than women to perceive sexual intent in others when it does not exist. This entry delineates this difference between the sexes and describes some of the influences that lead people to make such mistakes. First, however, what behavioral cues are involved?

Signs of Seduction

When people wish to communicate sexual interest and desire to others, they smile more, look longer, lean closer, and touch more than they do when they are merely being friendly. They laugh frequently, use an intimate tone of voice, and lick, bite, and touch their lips. If they are alone in a bar, women who display all of these signals are quite likely to be approached by men.

Male Misperceptions

Once conversation begins, there are two types of mistakes people can make in judging another person's interest in them. They may fail to notice that the other is interested and available, or alternatively, they may judge the other to be interested and accessible when he or she is not. As it turns out, one of these errors is much more likely than the other. On average, when men engage in small talk with women, they typically perceive the women to be more promiscuous and more sexually attracted to them than the women say they are. On occasion, these judgments may occur because the women are unintentionally behaving more provocatively than they intend. However, male and female observers of these interactions come to the same conclusions: Men who merely watch a woman conduct an affable conversation with another man judge her to be more interested in him as a sexual partner than female observers do. Whether they are participating in the interactions or simply listening in, men perceive women to be more sexually available and responsive than the women wish to seem (and other women think them to be).

Men and women also tend to differ in their interpretations of videotapes and written vignettes portraying sociable interactions with the other sex. On average, men perceive heterosexual interactions to have more sexual overtones than women do.

Why does this occur? Theorists have considered several possibilities that may all be influential. An evolutionary perspective suggests that modern men are attuned to the sexual implications of their interactions with women because it was more costly, in terms of reproductive success, for prehistoric men to be sexually inattentive than for them to be constantly on the prowl. Social role and social learning perspectives point out that people expect men to initiate sexual interactions and that many men have benefitted, at least now and then, from being pushy and assuming that women often feign disinterest when they are actually available. Men also tend to experience more frequent sexual arousal than women do, so sex is simply more often on their minds.

Individual Differences and Situational Influences

Nevertheless, like other distinctions between the sexes, the differences in men's and women's perceptions of sexual intent should not be overstated. A majority of both women and men have encountered a situation in which someone of the other sex misjudged their intentions and overestimated their sexual interest. Women make these mistakes, too. Moreover, some men are more likely than others to misjudge a woman's interest in them. Nontraditional men who view women as equals are relatively unlikely to misperceive their intentions, whereas highly traditional, masculine men with more stereotyped views of the sexes often perceive sexual interest where it does not exist. Such misperceptions are also more frequent in men who hold rather hostile attitudes toward women, believing, for instance, that women often say no when they really mean yes. Men who avidly pursue casual, uncommitted sex with women also tend to be prone to these errors.

The circumstances matter, too. Alcohol is an important influence. When a woman drinks heavily, observers tend to assume that she is sexually available. Intoxication also robs people of their discernment, so misperceptions are more common when people have been drinking. The more attractive a woman is, the more often her friendliness is misunderstood, and any woman in revealing clothing runs the risk of seeming sexually interested to the men she meets.

Conclusions

These mistakes can be consequential; in particular, misperceptions of a woman's interest are often involved in cases of sexual assault. Seductive behavior does differ from friendly behavior, but the difference can be lost on callous or drunken observers. Thus, people should not naïvely assume that one's interests and intentions are always unambiguous to others. Instead, people should strive to assertively, consistently, and clearly communicate their wishes when the time is right.

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See also Communication, Nonverbal; Evolutionary Psychology and Human Relationships; Flirting; Lust; Sexual Aggression; Sexual Communication Between Partners

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SEXUAL INTERCOURSE, FIRST EXPERIENCE OF

Losing one's virginity, or first intercourse, traditionally has meant engaging in vaginal–penile penetration. However, younger individuals are much more likely to view virginity loss as including a range of sexual activities. Most scholarly research, including this entry, defines first intercourse as the first-ever vaginal–penile penetration. Engaging in first intercourse is often not the same as first sexual activity. Many young people who have not engaged in intercourse have engaged in other genital sexual activities with a partner such as genital touching or oral sex.

Age of First Sexual Intercourse

Most of the research focuses on the age when individuals first engage in vaginal–penile penetration. The average age of first intercourse is between 15 to 18 years old. Robert Michael and his colleagues report that more than 80 percent of 20 year olds in the United States have engaged in intercourse, and they argue that teenage sexual experiences tend to be episodic and less frequent compared to adult sexuality.

From the 1970s to the 1990s, the average age of first sexual intercourse declined, and although the decline in age is well documented, there is less consensus regarding why this is so. Explanations often include historical changes (such as the 1960s sexual revolution), an increase in the age of first marriage, and less parental supervision (due to an increase in parental divorce and to both parents working outside of the home) particularly in the afterschool hours. Scholars such as Barbara Risman and Pepper Schwartz have found that at the beginning of the 21st century, teens are slightly more sexually conservative and particularly for boys, may be delaying their first sexual intercourse.

Race, ethnicity, social class, and gender are some of the more powerful factors that consistently differentiate early from later debuts of sexual intercourse. Studies consistently find that African Americans compared to Whites or Latinos and that persons from lower social classes compared to those from higher income brackets are more likely to engage in sexual intercourse at a younger age. Regarding gender, males tend to report a younger age of first sexual intercourse than females; however, in the last decade, the gender gap is closing with boys' decreasing sexual activity.

Context of First Sexual Intercourse

The context of the first sexual intercourse typically occurs within a dating relationship and is described as a spontaneous event. Sexual debut, for men and for especially women, tends not to be a very satisfying emotional or physical experience. Both men and women report experiencing anxiety at the first sexual event. Compared to men, women tend to be much less likely to report having an orgasm, more likely to report feeling guilty (especially if a dating relationship is not established), and more likely to say retrospectively that they wish they had waited. Females experience less pleasant reactions to first coitus than do males; for example, they are more likely to be nervous, in pain, worried about pregnancy, and worried about possible negative outcomes of having intercourse. Women who were in late adolescence or young adulthood when they lost their virginity reported less negative reactions compared to those who were younger. The age of the

first sexual partner also impacts women's reactions, as sex with someone younger or the same age is often reported as more pleasurable than first-ever sex with an older partner. As for why people engage in first intercourse when they do, women are more likely to report they engaged in first sex to strengthen a relationship, while men are more likely to cite physical pleasure as the reason for engaging in first sex.

An increasing number of adolescents use contraception, with the condom reported as the most common method at first intercourse. The Allan Guttmacher Institute reports that contraception use has doubled since the 1970s, with nearly 80 percent of adolescents today using contraception at the first intercourse.

A later age of first sexual intercourse is correlated with women indicating that they wanted the sex to occur. About one quarter of women report that their first intercourse was voluntary, but not wanted. Wanting to engage in first intercourse is significant for quality of life factors; the meaning of sexuality in society is that it is a pleasurable event and not a chore that people choose to engage in. Additionally, women who are more likely to want the first sexual intercourse to take place are more likely to report using contraception.

Implications

Adolescent sexual behavior, especially for women, often carries a negative connotation. Researchers and policymakers often make the connection between a younger age of first sexual intercourse and increased risks of social problems such as unwanted teen pregnancy rates, increased risk of sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS, and juvenile delinquency. Early sexual debut is also associated with ineffective sex education programs, a harsher reputation to especially young women, and poor decision making of ignoring potential risks.

Research has found that persons who have sex at a younger age tend to have more nonvoluntary sex partners, to have more sex partners, to have more frequent intercourse, to be less likely to use effective contraception, and to be more likely to cite that they were too young to have sex. Many of these consequences are as a result of having more

opportunities for risk-producing behaviors (such as more chances of unwanted pregnancy). Several studies note that young teenagers are less likely to use contraception, not out of lack of knowledge, but out of greater perceived costs (economic, social stigma) as opposed to rewards (less likely to get a disease or pregnant). This may be because the costs are immediate, and the rewards may be delayed. Because adolescent sexuality is often viewed as a negative health risk, policymakers have tried to utilize various strategies, often argued to be ineffective, to delay teenagers' first sexual event. Tactics include relying on abstinence-based sex education programs or encouraging adolescents to sign virginity pledges.

Engaging in first sexual intercourse marks an important life experience for most youths. For good or bad, it is an event that most will remember throughout their lives. Examining the experience of first intercourse provides insights into how it impacts other behaviors and risks and how it influences future relationships.

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See also Adolescence, Romantic Relationships in;
Sexuality in Adolescent Relationships; Sexuality

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SEXUALITY

Human sexuality is the set of emotional, intellectual, behavioral, and physical experiences of humans related to their sexual nature. Sexual

nature involves the tendencies and responses that are characteristic of a person related to erotic bodily stimulation and contact; these tendencies are both physical and psychological and include degree of interest in sensual bodily contact and in relationships based on sensual bodily contact.

Sexuality is fundamentally based upon the system of the body responsible for reproduction of offspring. Yet sexual feelings, thoughts, and behaviors extend substantially beyond the behaviors and bodily organs directly related to procreation. Individuals are quite capable of interpreting and conceiving of a wide range of events and situations in erotic, sensual ways, even if the events are not viewed as related at all to sexuality by most people.

Sexuality for humans is strongly based on the individual's degree of subjective desire to experience sexual arousal and the degree of interest in expressing that desire. This means that it is an individual's understanding and interpretation that determines whether a particular situation is erotically arousing and whether sexual behavior, either by oneself or with another person, is desirable. It also means that individuals will be different from one another in how interested they are in sexual expression in general. For this reason, sexuality may be considered an aspect of human personality, in fact an important aspect. Human sexual nature involves not simply the functioning of the reproductive organs and related biological systems. It also involves characteristics based on learning, experience, thought processes, acquiring information, forming beliefs, intellectual maturation, the nature of relationships with peers and family members, romantic relationships, societal and cultural values, and religious background.

Importance of Involvement in an Intimate Relationship

For many people, sexuality is strongly linked to involvement in a romantic relationship. Most individuals are interested in becoming involved with a partner in a sexual relationship only when they believe they are in love and in a lasting intimate relationship with that partner. The need to be romantically and intimately involved is not true for everyone in all situations; some individuals engage in casual sex or in extramarital affairs. Yet

quite a bit of evidence suggests that in general most people believe not only that love and sexuality are strongly linked but also that they should be linked. Many believe that intense feelings of love, respect, and devotion must develop within a relationship before a couple engages in sexual behavior.

In fact, research on the way that people think about being in love and being in a romantic relationship indicates that sexual passion and physical intimacy are important aspects of romantic love. Yet sexuality does not rank at the top of the list of qualities involved in romantic relationships. In most people's minds, feelings of emotional closeness, being understood, and valued are the most important attributes of romantic love. Sexual passion and desire for physical closeness, however, distinguish romantic love from love for family and friends.

Given the close association between sexuality and love in common thinking, the strong connection between emotional intimacy and sexual behavior in actual relationships is not at all unexpected. Feelings of shared love and commitment are identified by college students as the most important factors weighing in their decision to engage in sexual intercourse. Research in fact confirms that many couples do not engage in sexual behavior until their relationship reaches substantial levels of emotional intimacy and commitment.

Yet women and men differ substantially in the threshold that justifies beginning sexual behavior in a romantic relationship. Among college students, men on average expect sex to occur after around 10 dates or 6 weeks of dating, while women consider 17 dates or 13 weeks of dating to be the point at which sexual involvement becomes more appropriate. Some couples engage in sex earlier in their relationship than do others, of course. However, those who do begin earlier report greater feelings of love at earlier stages in their relationship than couples who engage in sex later. Again, emotional closeness and commitment tend to run parallel to the tendency to begin a sexual relationship.

Likewise, an important factor influencing whether people believe they would engage in sexual behavior with their relationship partner is the partner behaving toward them in ways that convey feelings of affection and commitment. In particular, behavior that communicates a sense of value

for one's partner, a need for compassion for oneself, or a concern for the well-being of the partner all are associated with an estimation that individuals would engage in sexual behavior with their partner. This is true for both women and men. Being involved in a more serious, permanent relationship additionally strengthens people's belief that they would engage in sex.

Intimacy and love are important aspects of lesbian and gay relationships as well, although very little research has focused on the association of love and sexuality for these couples. Research has also found that lesbian couples engage in sexual behavior primarily following the development of intense closeness and commitment.

Frequency of Sexual Behavior

The frequency of sexual intercourse (i.e., penile-vaginal intercourse, penis in the vagina) varies by the type of relationship in which individuals are engaged. Married heterosexual couples on average engage in sexual intercourse two to three times a week, although heterosexual couples who cohabit (live together, but are not married) do so more frequently, even taking into account other factors such as age and having children. Gay male couples have the highest levels of genital sex; yet lesbian couples have the lowest frequency of all couples. On the other hand, lesbians may tend to engage in more nongenital sexual behavior, such as caressing, touching, kissing, and cuddling.

Frequency of sexual behavior decreases over time for all couples. This is most likely due to declines in physical and sexual functioning related to aging and to the effects of great familiarity and predictability on sexual desire for a relationship partner. One reason that familiarity reduces desire is related to a basic psychological principle called habituation; this is a type of learning in which a stimulus that is experienced repeatedly loses its stimulating properties because individuals become accustomed to it. Increasing familiarity decreases the novelty of a relationship partner, reducing the stimulating nature of sexual interaction with the partner. Another factor that contributes to declining frequency of sexual behavior for couples is the increasing level of demands and responsibilities typical of later adulthood. Lack of time and energy

resulting from tending to work, maintaining a household, and caring for children frequently interferes with time and energy available to many aspects of romantic relationships, including sexual interaction. By middle age, responsibilities may include care for aging parents, as well.

One of the highest quality large studies on sexuality, the National Health and Social Life Survey conducted by Edward Laumann and his colleagues, provides evidence on what sexual behavior women and men find to be most appealing; this study was based on a national probability sample of 3,432 U.S. adults between the ages of 18 and 59. The vast majority of heterosexual women and men of all age groups view penile-vaginal intercourse as the most appealing sexual behavior, with the second most appealing behavior being watching one's partner undress. Receiving and giving oral-genital sex are considered appealing by lower proportions of heterosexuals compared to their views of penile-vaginal intercourse, with men finding oral-genital sex more appealing than women. Nonetheless, on average, over 70 percent of men and women report having engaged in oral-genital sex, although the proportions vary by ethnicity, with White individuals more likely to have done so than Latino and Black individuals. Furthermore, research indicates that approximately 10 percent of heterosexual individuals have engaged in penile-anal intercourse (penis in the anus) in the last year; even greater proportions have engaged in penile-anal intercourse at least once in their lives, approximately 20 percent of both women and men, according to a number of studies, one of them the national survey described above.

A study of 161 married women who recorded all sexual behavior with their husbands over a 21-day period provides evidence about the types of sexual behavior in which married couples engage. When heterosexual couples engage in sexual behavior, it almost always involves penile-vaginal sex, approximately 46 percent of the time it involves fellatio (the man receiving oral-genital sex) and approximately 32 percent of the time it involves cunnilingus (the woman receiving oral-genital sex). Lesbian couples engage in a wide range of sexual behaviors, according to a large survey of the readers of a national magazine focused on lesbian and gay culture. Mutually stimulating genitals with fingers and inserting fingers into the vagina are, however, the

most prevalent. Oral-genital sex is the most common type of sexual behavior among gay male couples, followed by stroking and caressing the body and genitals, again based on another large survey of readers of the lesbian-gay culture magazine.

According to the study of 161 heterosexual women described above, their husbands experience orgasm virtually every time they engage in sexual behavior, whereas the women report that they experience orgasm only about a quarter of the time. A number of studies have found that penile-vaginal intercourse is associated with relatively low levels of orgasm for women, at least in part because it does not always provide the optimal type of stimulation necessary for orgasm. In contrast, women reported that they experience orgasm over 80 percent of the time when their husbands engaged in cunnilingus with them. Direct stimulation of the vulva (the external sexual organs of women), including the clitoris, with either the mouth and tongue or with fingers provides an optimal type of physical stimulation more often leading to orgasm. Sexual satisfaction for these women was related to the consistency with which they experienced orgasms when they engaged in sexual behavior with their husbands (the proportion of orgasms when they had sex) rather than the absolute number of times they experienced orgasm. In other words, it is more important to have good sex almost every time a person has sex rather than to have a lot of good sex. It is not the quantity; it is the quality.

Sexual Satisfaction

In general, frequency of sexual behavior does not seem to be extremely important in how satisfied individuals are with their sexual relationships. Even those who engage in sexual behavior with their spouse or partner infrequently report that they are sexually satisfied, according to the National Health and Social Life Survey by Edward Laumann and his colleagues described previously. The vast majority of people indicated that they are very satisfied with both the physical and the emotional aspects of their sexual relationship. Other research has suggested that the frequency of sexual behavior is at least somewhat related to how satisfied individuals are with their sexual relationship,

which in turn may affect how satisfied they are with their relationship overall. However, it is likely that the frequency of sexual behavior, sexual satisfaction, and overall relationship mutually affect one another.

One study found that husbands who are satisfied with either their sexual relationship or their relationship in general are more interested in engaging in sex with their partner. For wives, satisfaction with their relationship in general was related to greater interest in sex with their partner, although sexual satisfaction was not related. For women, then it is not the quality of the sexual relationship that determines sexual interest, it is how happy a woman is with all aspects of the marriage.

Sexuality is certainly important to the well-being of romantic and marital relationships. Sexual satisfaction is strongly associated with both general relationship satisfaction and with psychological well-being as well. In fact, sexual dissatisfaction has been found to relate to later relationship breakup, for both marriages and for dating relationships, according to a number of different studies.

Role of Personality in Sexuality

As noted at the beginning of this entry, sexuality is a function of the perceptions and interpretations individuals make of the situations they encounter or choose to enter, as well as their understanding of their own sexual nature. This is supported by research that suggests that people differ from one another in their motivation to experience erotic pleasure and in their reactions to sexual issues and situations.

One line of research in this regard has focused on a dimension called erotophobia-erotophilia, the tendency to respond more negatively or more positively to sex-related issues. Erotophobia is the tendency to experience negative emotional reactions (e.g., discomfort, nervousness, revulsion) toward sexual issues and situations. Erotophilia is the tendency to experience positive emotional reactions (e.g., pleasure, delight, interest) toward sexual issues and situations. Erotophobia and erotophilia are the two extremes of a range of possible reaction tendencies, and most people have more moderate or middle-of-the-road reactions to sexual stimulation and issues.

Individuals who have a positive view of sexuality—those who are more erotophilic—are much more likely to experience pleasure and gratification in the sexual behavior in which they engage. Individuals with negative reactions to sexuality—those who are more erotophobic—tend to have less sexual experience than those with more positive reactions to sexuality. During pregnancy, women with more negative reactions to sexuality express less sexual interest and are less interested in engaging in sexual behavior with their partner than women with more positive reactions. They also experience less sexual satisfaction. After the birth of their baby, women with negative reactions to sexuality delay resuming sexual intercourse with their partners longer. They are even less likely to breastfeed their newborn child. Erotophobic individuals also place themselves at greater risk for unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases because they tend to avoid learning about contraception methods, tend to rely on more ineffective methods, and underestimate the likelihood of becoming pregnant, further contributing to their tendency to avoid the use of sexual protection techniques.

Another notable personality characteristic that has been examined with respect to sexuality is sociosexuality or sociosexual orientation. This refers to the degree of interest in engaging in sexual behavior outside the context of an intimate, committed relationship. Individuals with a restricted sociosexual orientation express negative feelings toward sexual behavior occurring outside of committed relationship and tend not to engage in such behavior. Those with an unrestricted sociosexual orientation experience positive feelings toward sexual behavior outside of a committed relationship and are likely to have engaged in casual sex. Individuals with an unrestricted sociosexual orientation, relative to those with a restricted orientation, exhibit more non-verbal behaviors indicating interest in a potential partner early in the relationship process, base their selection of romantic partners more on the partners' physical and sexual attractiveness, and engage in sexual behavior earlier in their relationships. Unrestricted individuals characteristically feel less invested, express less love, and experience lower levels of commitment to their relationships.

Sexual Affairs

Sexual behavior with someone other than one's romantic partner while involved in a committed, monogamous relationship is known as extradyadic sex (or extramarital sex in the case of marriage). More commonly, this type of sexual involvement is called an affair. The vast majority of people in the United States consider adultery to be always wrong, and often, involvement in extradyadic relationships substantially destabilizes the primary committed relationship. According to the nationally representative survey by Laumann and his colleague discussed previously, 15 percent of women and 25 percent of men have engaged in extramarital sex at least once in their marriage. Factors related to likelihood of engaging in sexual affairs include unhappiness with the primary, committed relationship; lower sexual satisfaction in the committed relationship, especially for men; longer duration of involvement in a committed relationship; younger age of becoming involved in a committed relationship; and personal characteristics, such as greater interest in sex, more sexual partners before involvement in the committed relationship, liberal sexual attitudes, parental divorce, and preoccupied (anxious) attachment style.

Sexual Coercion

Being forced to engage in sexual behavior against one's will through intimidation, threat, or physical force is known as sexual coercion. According to one national survey, 7 percent of 17- to 23-year-old women have been sexually coerced or raped, and coercion is more likely for girls who first engaged in sexual intercourse before age 13. Between 15 and 25 percent of men have been coerced into unwanted sex, usually through psychological intimidation rather than physical force. One set of factors that may contribute to the likelihood of sexual coercion is the fact that expectations about heterosexual dating and relationships place women and men in different roles. Men are generally expected to take the lead in initiating and controlling relationships, placing them in a position of power that may undermine concerns about the wishes of the woman. Women are

expected to be the caretakers in the relationship, possibly leading them to try to keep the relationship going even in the face of forcefulness and lack of consideration on the part of the man. Other factors contributing to the possibility of sexual coercion are belief in rape myths (sexist attitudes that women want and deserve rape, particularly if they behave provocatively), belief that one's partner is inferior in some way (e.g., coming from an impoverished background), belief that being in a committed relationship privileges one to demand sex, and personal characteristics, such as poor control over one's impulses, inability to empathize with others, being socially dominant, and belief in traditional gender roles in which men have higher status than women.

Importance of Sexuality

Sexuality is an important factor in the psychological and physical well-being of individuals throughout their lives. Sexual satisfaction is very strongly associated with overall happiness with romantic relationships and with psychological well-being. Sexual dissatisfaction actually predicts the ending of relationships as much as 8 years later. Moreover, remaining sexually active into later years of life protects against declines typical of increasing age, as well as being associated with longer life. Sexuality is most certainly an integral component of human experience and quality of life.

Craig A. Hill

See also Casual Sex; Extradynamic Sex; Marriage and Sex; Sexual Aggression; Sociosexual Orientation

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SEXUALITY AND ATTACHMENT

Although sexual behavior can serve a variety of physical, emotional, instrumental, or relationship-centered needs, prominent among them are such attachment-related needs as love, acceptance, closeness, intimacy, physical or emotional comfort, and control of access to one's attachment figure. This entry discusses how such attachment-related goals and concerns can affect (a) whether one chooses to engage in sex at all, (b) the reasons one seeks or avoids sexual intimacy, (c) the strategies one chooses to enact these choices, and (d) the objective and subjective results of these choices, such as sexual or relationship satisfaction.

John Bowlby's Attachment Theory proposes that a person's attachment style begins to form during the first 1 1/2 years of life based on the nature of caregiver behaviors toward the infant. These experiences form the basis of expectations concerning the responsiveness and benevolence of others, and of oneself as lovable and deserving of support from others, that pervasively affect social thinking and behavior from the cradle to grave. These individual differences in "attachment style" are associated with differences in preferences for, and active pursuit of, closeness, intimacy, and interdependence with others versus suppression of attachment needs, distancing behaviors, independence, and self-reliance. Attachment style is also associated with self-esteem, confidence, worry, and

other expectations and emotions that affect the person's projections of how others are likely to react to him or her.

Because sexual behavior involves physical intimacy and can involve emotional intimacy, it can provide an important mechanism for regulating intimacy. As with any interpersonal behavior, sexual behaviors can affect one's reputation or relationships with others. Sexual attractiveness and performance are often central to the ability to attract and keep romantic partners, and therefore affect one's ability to satisfy needs for love, closeness, and intimacy. Partners may become more attracted and committed as a result of satisfying sexual interactions or disinterested as a result of less satisfying interactions. Sexual attractiveness can also be central to social status and to approval from others. For these reasons, sexual behavior can provide a mechanism for increasing love, closeness, and commitment from sexual partners; promoting positive reactions to oneself; self-esteem enhancement; and promotion of social status. Sexual behavior for these purposes is more likely among those who value such outcomes and who believe others are likely to react positively to them as sexual beings.

Attachment style fundamentally reflects differences in these feelings and motives. Secure persons are comfortable with intimacy, enjoy high self-esteem and self-confidence, and do not tend to worry about their ability to elicit positive regard from others. Anxious persons have great desire for intimacy, but experience low self-esteem and heightened worry over others' love, availability, and positive regard. These worries are central to anxious persons' thinking and provide a prominent motive for behavior (hyperactivation of attachment needs). Avoidant persons prefer to minimize intimacy and emphasize self-reliance, personal competence, and mastery (deactivation of attachment needs). These orientations are pervasively reflected in the way that persons with varying attachment styles think about sex and in their choices of whether, when, how, and with whom to have sex.

Sexual Desire and Engagement

To the extent that sex is associated with intimacy, anxious persons' hyperactivated attachment needs

can promote increased sexual motivation, whereas avoidant persons' deactivated attachment needs can undermine it. Although sexual behavior is more likely when sexual motivation is high, attachment-related concerns can simultaneously promote interest and undermine overt sexual behavior. Sexual anxiety and worry about performance are high among both anxious and avoidant persons. Anxious persons tend to view sexual behavior in terms of attachment-related implications (such as gaining a partner's love, acceptance, and commitment), whereas avoidant persons are more likely to view sex in terms of self-enhancing motives such as self-esteem or social status. Excessive worry over love, rejection, appearances, or social prestige can create anxiety about others' reactions, undermine self-confidence, discourage initiation of sexual activity, and interfere with physiological sexual arousal.

Secure persons, who are low in both anxiety and avoidance, can engage in sexuality relatively free from interference by attachment concerns, anxiety, or lack of sexual self-confidence. However, avoidant persons appear to experience a double whammy of dampening influences on sexuality. That is, their preference to minimize closeness and intimacy dampens the desire for physical and emotional closeness, and higher sexual anxiety and worry over performance interfere with arousal, performance, and enjoyment.

These influences are reflected in a variety of overt sexual behaviors. Avoidant attachment is associated with greater discomfort with touch, having first sex at a later age, less frequent sex (generally and also within the context of ongoing relationships), dissatisfaction with the frequency of sex (more sex than wanted, particularly for females), and reported efforts to avoid sex with existing partners. Despite this general avoidance of sex with partners, avoidant persons report more frequent masturbation.

In contrast, anxious persons experience contradictory influences on sexual motivation. Chronic worry about partners' continuing love and commitment fuels higher sexual desire as a way to achieve reassurance and enhance partner love and commitment; but attachment anxiety is also associated with worry over partners' potential reactions, lower sexual self-confidence, sexual anxiety, and other concerns that may inhibit overt efforts

to have sex—with somewhat different results for the two genders. Generally, attachment anxiety is associated with greater overall motivation to have sex and with less loss of sexual passion for relationship partners over time. Among females, anxiety is associated with having first intercourse at a younger age, greater likelihood of having sex during adolescence, and greater reported sexual motivation. Although anxious males also report greater sexual motivation, they tend to have less sex, and tend to report greater dissatisfaction with the frequency of sex (less than wanted).

Anxious persons' enhanced worry about others' reactions tends to lead them to defer to others' wishes, and they report greater tendencies to defer to their partners' sexual preferences. Overall, females prefer to defer sex until later in relationship development and prefer less frequent sex than males. Therefore, when anxious males defer to partners, they have sex later and less frequently than desired; and when they do have sex, it tends to be in more committed relationships. The reverse pattern occurs when anxious females defer to male partners.

Attachment Motives Are Reflected in Overt Sexual Behaviors

The core regulatory motives associated with attachment style, most prominently the regulation of closeness and intimacy, affect the motives underlying sexual behavior, as well as the context and manner in which sexuality occurs.

Motives for Having Sex

Reported reasons for having sex prominently include expressing and receiving love, reassurance of a partner's love and commitment, emotional closeness, and maintaining access to a partner. Such motives tend to be exaggerated among anxious persons and suppressed among avoidant persons. Instead, avoidant persons tend to report self-enhancing motives of fitting in, impressing others or gaining peer acceptance, or motives to control a partner or to manage distress. Even motives for cheating on one's partner reflect attachment concerns. Anxious persons tend to report cheating to achieve closeness and to feel

loved, whereas avoidant persons tend to report cheating to gain freedom or distance from a primary partner.

Relationship Contexts for Sex

Attachment motives are reflected in the contexts for sex. Secure persons tend to prefer having sex within committed romantic relationships and report less casual sex with strangers or acquaintances. Anxious persons also express desire for long-term relationships, but nevertheless engage in more uncommitted forms of sex than secure persons do. This occurs in part because their enhanced desire for closeness and intimacy leads to more rapid infatuation with potential partners and in part due to their deference to partners' preferences. For anxious women, deference to partners can promote earlier sexual engagement in less committed relationships, but can result in the opposite pattern for anxious men.

Avoidant persons' distancing motives tend to lead them to view casual or emotionless sex positively, and to engage in sex in a variety of less intimate uncommitted contexts, such as with strangers or casual acquaintances. They express less interest in long-term commitments and are more likely to cheat on their own relationship partners and to poach those of others.

Choice of Sexual Activities

Because specific sexual activities vary in physical and/or emotional intimacy, it is not surprising that intimacy regulation motives affect the choice of specific sexual activities. Both anxious and avoidant persons have a more restricted approach to sexuality and are less prone to (nondeviant) sexual experimentation. Further, whereas anxious persons appear to enjoy affectionate intimate behaviors such as kissing and cuddling more than genital sex, avoidant persons eschew such behaviors in favor of strictly genital sex and tend to lose their virginity with less experience of noncoital foreplay than persons of other attachment styles.

Attachment motives also affect "safe-sex" practices. For example, insistence on condom use may interrupt the flow of sexual activities, risking disengagement or partner disapproval. Anxious persons' greater concern with pleasing partners and

avoiding rejection can inhibit condom use for these reasons. Condoms may be viewed as a barrier to intimacy, interfering with complete physical closeness and intimacy; in some persons, a conscious or subconscious desire to conceive may interfere with use of protection. The desire for a baby may derive from attachment needs to love and be loved and is more characteristic of anxious persons, particularly women. Reflecting these concerns, anxious attachment is associated with more negative attitudes toward and less use of condoms, less discussion of safe sex with partners, and greater rates of unplanned pregnancy; whereas avoidant attachment is associated with more discussions of safe sex and positive attitudes toward and greater use of condoms.

Strategies of Goal Pursuit Affect Sexual Behavior

Ideally, sex is pursued through open, effective communication with potential partners and mutual expression, negotiation, and satisfaction of both persons' needs. However, both forms of insecurity are associated with deficits that affect the way sexual goals are pursued, including lower sexual self-confidence, more negative appraisals of partners and their behaviors, greater difficulties controlling emotions, use of drugs or alcohol in sexual contexts (to manage sex-related worries), inhibited and ineffective sexual communication with partners, lesser mutuality, and less effective and more coercive strategies for negotiating sexual encounters. Extreme deficits in these areas may underlie the relationship of attachment insecurity to sexual offender status. Although the exact nature and magnitude of these deficits differ sometimes for anxious versus avoidant persons, attachment insecurity is related to sexually coercive behaviors among nonoffender populations.

Subjective Sexual Experiences and Outcomes

Secure attachment is presumed to underlie positive attitudes toward self and others and is crucial to the formation of mutually satisfactory close relationships. Therefore, it is not surprising that attachment is related to feelings about sex,

sexual partners, and oneself as a sexual being. Secure persons report more positive and less negative emotions in sexual relationships, more enjoyment of sex, and more positive appraisals of sexual aspects of themselves than insecure persons.

As with relationships in general, both anxious and avoidant persons report more dissatisfaction with sex, in part, as a result of enhanced sexual anxiety and performance concerns that can interfere with relaxation and enjoyment. However, reflecting attachment needs, anxious persons report dissatisfaction with the romantic, affectionate aspects of sex, whereas avoidant persons report dissatisfaction with the physical aspects of sex, and both report dissatisfaction with the control of sexual activities.

Attachment can affect the link between these reactions to sexual activities and feelings about romantic partners. Because anxious persons tend to use sexual activities to satisfy needs for intimacy and confidence in being loved, and tend to interpret sexual interest as a sign of love and approval, sexual experiences more strongly affect overall relationship satisfaction for anxious persons than for avoidant or secure persons. Also, because worries over love and acceptance can translate into worries and anxieties during sex, positive and negative relationship experiences exert greater influence on sexual experiences among anxious persons.

Conclusion

This entry has discussed how attachment concerns influence sexual motivation, sexual behavior, and feelings about sexual activities and partners. However, it should also be noted that the relationship between attachment and sexuality is bidirectional. Infatuation, sexual attraction, and sexual behavior can initiate and facilitate consolidation of the attachment bond, and problems with sex can undermine existing attachment bonds.

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See also Adult Attachment, Individual Differences; Attachment Theory; Attraction, Sexual; Sexual Communication Between Partners; Sexuality; Sexual Motives

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SEXUALITY IN ADOLESCENT RELATIONSHIPS

A normative aspect of the adolescent period is sexual exploration and associated decision making regarding how “far to go” sexually. Transitioning from being a virgin to a sexually active teen is meaningful in terms of both personal and social identity. Teenagers may view sex with a boyfriend or girlfriend as a step toward greater commitment and intimacy in their relationship. It also represents a developmental marker toward adulthood and sets the groundwork for later adult sexual relationships. At the same time, teenage sexual intercourse is a public issue in part because of health concerns stemming from sexually transmitted infections, involuntary sex, and teenage pregnancy.

Sexuality is a broad concept and can refer to many types of sexual behaviors, attitudes, and desires, not just sexual intercourse. Recently, researchers have paid more attention to sexual activities besides sexual intercourse, such as oral sex. Oral sex among adolescents is of interest because of sexual health risks associated with oral sex and the notion that oral sex is a way to satisfy sexual desires and maintain virginity and avoid pregnancy. There is a sense that oral sex is the precursor to sexual intercourse. Although it is important to consider a full range of sexual behaviors (e.g., masturbation, genital stimulation, anal sex, oral sex), this entry focuses on sexual intercourse. This approach could result in excluding sexual minority youth, so they are showcased later in the entry.

Trends

The context of teenage sexuality has changed. In 1950, the median age at marriage for women was 20, so a considerable proportion of teenage sex occurred within the confines of marriage. Today, the average age at marriage is 25.5 for women; as a result, most teenage sex occurs outside of marriage.

Despite the media and public concerns, there has been a slight decline in the proportion of teens who report that they have had sexual intercourse. In 1995, 53 percent of high school students reported having had sex, and in 2005, 47 percent did so. Thus, a considerable proportion of teenagers have not had sexual intercourse prior to graduation. Further, most teens did not recently have sex; only about one third of high school students report having had sexual intercourse in the last 3 months. When studying the sexual behavior of adolescents, it is important to consider their specific ages because the proportion of sexually active youth increases by age, suggesting an important developmental trend. For example, according to the 2002 National Survey of Family Growth, 13 percent of 15-year-olds have had sexual intercourse, but about half of 18-year-olds and 70 percent of 19-year-olds report ever having had sexual intercourse.

Sexual Initiation

Decisions about initiating sexual intercourse include a range of motivations, such as social factors including parental or peer approval/disapproval, opportunities for sexual activity, romantic relationship dynamics, religious beliefs, and perceptions of health beliefs and pregnancy risks. Recent longitudinal analyses, which have included all of these factors, suggest that peer social network behavior and relationship dynamics—being in love, religious beliefs, and opportunity—are significantly related to whether teens initiate sex. Furthermore, situational context factors such as alcohol and drug use have been found to influence sexual initiation. Some research focuses on the voluntary nature of sexual activity and finds that alcohol and drugs are tied to regrettable or involuntary sexual experiences. Thus, the decision

to initiate sexual activity is complex and involves multiple perceptual, social, and interactional domains.

Considerable research attention has been focused on the age in which teens first engage in sexual intercourse. Concerns exist about teens engaging in sexual activity too young based, in part, on empirical evidence that earlier sex is associated with involuntary sex, greater numbers of lifetime sexual partners, and lower and inconsistent contraceptive use. Although the average age at first sex is 17 in the United States, a small subgroup of teens report having had sex at a relatively early age. In 2002, about 14 percent of girls reported having sex prior to age 15; this represents a decline from 20 percent in 1995. Race/ethnicity differences in age at first intercourse exist, with a greater percentage of African-American youth having had sexual intercourse at earlier ages than White or Hispanic youth. Adolescent males are more likely to initiate sexual intercourse at younger ages than adolescent females. Alcohol use is cited by some young teens as a factor associated with initiating consensual sexual intercourse. The vast majority of teenagers' first sexual experiences are with a boyfriend or girlfriend or within the confines of a dating relationship.

Research on very young ages at sexual initiation has focused on statutory rape and involuntary sex. The age at consent differs according to state (most often age 16) and often includes a provision for a legal age gap between partners. Controversy centers around the inconsistent enforcement of these laws. Estimates vary, but nearly one fifth of girls who had sex before age 14 or younger reported it was involuntary.

Sexual Experience

Although nearly half of teens report having had sex prior to age 18, the regularity/frequency of sex and the number of sex partners, on average, are not high. In 2002, the median number of lifetime sexual partners among sexually active 15- to 19-year-old girls and boys was two to three. An indicator of the irregularity of sexual activity is that only about one quarter of sexually active teens had sex during the month prior to being interviewed. Yet among those who did have sex in

the last month, about 60 percent of girls and 50 percent of boys had sex four or more times.

Although most teenagers initiate sex with a boyfriend or girlfriend, they may go on later to have sex with someone outside of a dating relationship context. About 60 percent of sexually active teens have had sex at some point with someone they were not dating. However, these nondating sexual relationships are often with friends or ex-boyfriends and girlfriends, and about one third would like to be romantically involved with the sexual partner. Moreover, most teens agree it is best to have sex with someone they love.

Not all teenage sexual relationships share the same norms of fidelity associated with formal adult relationships, such as marriage. Most sexually active teens are monogamous, but to assess cheating behavior, the focus needs to be on teens who have had sex with more than one sexual partner. Two fifths (40 percent) of teens with two or more sexual partners in the 18 months prior to the Longitudinal Survey of Adolescent Health (national survey of 18,924 teens in 1994–1995) had concurrent (overlapping partners), and 60 percent had sequential partnerships. Indeed, some teens in dating relationships report it is okay to see others, and approximately one fifth of dating teens reported their partner was not sexually exclusive.

Correlates

Parents are a key socializing agent and have been found to influence adolescent sexual activity. Nontraditional family structure, lack of supervision, perceived parental approval of teenage sexual behavior, and lower parental attachment are associated with an earlier age of sexual onset. Attachment styles developed with parents are associated with sexual activity initiation, with more securely attached teens having later and more positive experiences.

During adolescence, teens shift away from their family as the primary source of influence, and peers become an important socializing influence, especially in the area of sexual exploration. Studies find that having sexually active friends (or the perception that one's friends are sexually active) and peers with liberal attitudes are related to earlier onset of sexual intercourse. Ethnographic and

qualitative research by Elijah Anderson as well as Donna Eder has shown how peer interactions influence views about romance and sexuality, specifically how peer socialization results in distinctively gendered meanings about romance and sexuality, with boys viewing romance as a competitive game where sex is the prize and girls valuing romance and the development of intimacy.

Not surprisingly, having a boyfriend/girlfriend is associated with sexual initiation and activity. H. Harrington Cleveland has accounted for both partners' characteristics and finds that sexual experience of both partners' delinquency and drinking is related to the odds that sex occurred. More attention to characteristics of teenage relationships by Peggy Giordano and colleagues indicates that intimate self-disclosure, caring, and other forms of emotional engagement are positively related to the likelihood of sexual behavior in dating relationships. Healthy or prosocial relationship dynamics are significant predictors of sexual intercourse, and the evidence suggests that boys as well as girls are influenced in their sexual decisions by relationship-centered processes and dynamics.

Research highlighting some of the prosocial characteristics of relationships associated with sexual initiation is important because much prior research has viewed adolescent sexuality through a problem behavior lens, linking sexual behaviors to delinquency, drug and alcohol use, violence, depressive symptoms, smoking and school dropout, or poor academic performance. Researchers have begun to uncover how these problem behaviors are tied together and have recognized that not all teenage sexual behavior is part of a package of high-risk behaviors.

Douglas Kirby's recent review of sex education programs shows that programs which educate teens about contraception as well as encourage abstinence are positively related to delaying sexual and using contraception. To date, programs with an abstinence-only message are not associated with changes in adolescent sexual behavior. One effort to encourage sexual initiation delay that has had some reported success are virginity pledges, which are an effort to provide a community of adolescents who vow to wait to marry before having sex. Peter Bearman and colleagues find that virginity pledges matter for certain teens between ages 14 and 16, but notably are also related to

lower contraceptive use when youths who have taken such pledges do have sex.

Social scientists are beginning to connect how social factors are interlinked with biology in influencing sexual behavior. Adolescents are undergoing biological changes in terms of puberty and hormonal shifts, which have consequences for their physical appearance and sexual desires. Currently, puberty for girls occurs around age 12, suggesting a decline in the age of puberty. New data collections, which include biomarker data, will provide opportunities for innovative studies of the intersection of biology and social indicators on adolescent sexual behavior.

Sexual Minority Youth

Most of the research on adolescent sexual behavior focuses on opposite sex sexual behavior and has ignored sexual minority (gay and lesbian) youth. Attention to sexual minority youth and sexuality often centers on concerns about sexual health, specifically HIV. Measurement challenges persist in identifying gay and lesbian teens, in part, because sexual identity in adolescence may be more fluid than in adulthood as teens struggle to understand their sexual orientation. New work has shown that gay and lesbian teens often engage in heterosexual relationships and have had sex with the opposite sex. At the same time, some teens who identify as heterosexual also have had same-sex sexual relationships in adolescence. Lisa Diamond, Rich Savin-Williams, and Stephen Russell's research has been important groundwork on the sexuality of gay and lesbian teens. It is sometimes difficult for teens who are developing same-sex attractions to deal with potential stigma and lack of norms about how to proceed in relationships, especially during a time when conformity is stressed. Much has been written about depression and alcohol use of sexual minority teens, but additional work should focus on those who successfully explore their sexuality.

Consequences

There has been much attention focused on the negative consequences of teenage sexual activity. Most often the health consequences of adolescent

sexual intercourse are highlighted. For instance, recent statistics indicate that 1 in 10 teens has a sexually transmitted infection, about one fifth of young adults reported their first sex was unintended, 750,000 teens get pregnant each year, 82 percent of teen pregnancies were unplanned, and 23 percent of children born out of wedlock were born to teen mothers. More recent research has evaluated the psychological consequences of sexual intercourse, stressing the potential effects on depression. Initiating of sexual activity is associated with increases in depressive symptoms even when accounting for depressive symptoms prior to sexual initiation. To best understand the implications of teenage sex requires sophisticated modeling and longitudinal designs that attempt to address causality and selection issues. Furthermore, it is important to move away from just deficit or problem-centered approaches and incorporate perspectives that acknowledge the potentially healthy and appropriate ways that sexual activity may be integrated into adolescent lives.

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See also Adolescence, Romantic Relationships in; Sexual Intercourse, First Experience of; Sexuality; Virginity and Virginity Loss

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SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES AND RELATIONSHIPS

Sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), which are also referred to as sexually transmitted infections (STIs), are illnesses that have a significant probability of transmission in humans through sexual contact, including penile–vaginal intercourse, oral–genital contact, oral–anal contact, and penile–anal sex. Some STDs can also be spread via skin-to-skin contact such as rubbing or petting, childbirth, breastfeeding, and sharing needles. STDs have been in existence for hundreds of years.

There are several types of STDs, including bacterial, viral, fungal, protozoal, parasitic, and enteric infections. The incidence rates of STDs remain high in most of the world; however, proper therapeutic treatment can cure most of these. The widespread dissemination of antibiotics for a number of bacterial infections has resulted in mutations in some bacterial forms of STDs, producing strains

that are resistant to traditional drug therapies. These strains often require more aggressive treatments with potent antibiotics and are typically more costly than traditional treatments. Many STDs, particularly in women, do not cause symptoms. Therefore, asymptomatic individuals may unknowingly transmit an STD to their sexual partner(s).

In the United States, chlamydia is the most frequently reported bacterial sexually transmitted disease. In 2006, for example, 1,030,911 chlamydial infections were reported to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) from 50 states and the District of Columbia. Gonorrhea is the second most commonly reported STD. The CDC estimates that more than 700,000 persons in the United States get new gonorrheal infections each year. Only about half of these infections are reported to CDC. In 2006, for instance, 358,366 cases of gonorrhea were reported to CDC. Other STDs, including the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), are less common but still prevalent within the United States. According to the CDC, adolescents and young adults under the age of 25 years are most likely to be infected with STDs, although there has been a rise in prevalence among older adults in recent years. Many scientists believe that the increased rates of STD, including HIV, among older adults are related to the prevalence of divorce and the increase in life expectancy. Older adults may be more likely than ever before to be dating and having sex with new partners. However, these same individuals may be less likely to use condoms or be tested for STDs because they came of age in generations prior to the HIV pandemic and STD education and prevention campaigns.

Although the proper and consistent use of male latex condoms has proved to greatly reduce the likelihood of STD transmission, condom usage rates remain low. Among individuals who do use condoms, condom use errors may result in failures that place individuals at risk for disease exposure and transmission. Common condom errors identified in research include condom breakage, slippage, and using the same condom for multiple sexual behaviors within a sexual event (e.g., vaginal and anal intercourse). One explanation for the lack of condom use is attributed to condom negotiation skills. In new relationships, individuals may be embarrassed to explicitly discuss sexual behaviors,

which may make it unlikely that condom use will be negotiated. Individuals also report that discussing condom use decreases the spontaneity of a sexual event—they ruin the mood. Further, many men and women do not like to use condoms because of the way that they feel. For example, some men find it more difficult to maintain an erection when using condoms, while women often report that condoms dry out natural vaginal lubrication, making sex uncomfortable.

Research has demonstrated that, even among couples who use condoms consistently at the beginning of a relationship, people are less likely to do so as the relationships progresses. As a relationship develops, couples often stop using condoms because they feel they are no longer necessary. In heterosexual relationships, this is often attributed to the use of hormonal contraception by the woman. Individuals assume that they are in committed relationships, thus when pregnancy and disease are no longer thought to be issues, condom use declines drastically. In addition, many people believe that condoms act as barriers to intimacy and trust—if you trust your partner is monogamous, there is no need to use condoms.

Even in relationships that are thought to be exclusive or monogamous, extrarelational sex may occur. Although the rates of infidelity are difficult to estimate due to the sensitive nature of the topic, conservative estimates place rates of extramarital relationships at one in three. Among unmarried couples, rates are even more difficult to gauge; however, it is likely that they may be similar to those of married couples. Among individuals who are exclusive and monogamous in their relationships, serial monogamy or multiple exclusive relationships may make it likely that a person could accrue a high number of sexual partners over time. Whether through extrarelational sex or serial monogamy, an individual may be exposed to an STD while he or she is engaged in what is believed to be a committed relationship. Commonly, individuals who contract an STD within the context of a relationship will experience a range of emotions, ranging from betrayal to anger. Some may feel that their partner knowingly “gave” them an STD; however, in some cases, their partner may not be aware that he or she is infected.

In most cases, it is likely that a person does not knowingly infect his or her partner with an STD.

Aside from not knowing that he or she is infected, a person may not disclose his or her STD status because he or she fears rejection, retribution, or accusations of infidelity. If the relationship is of a casual nature or a “one-night stand,” contacting a partner to notify them may be difficult. In established relationships, it is common for partners to reinfect one another with STDs. Reinfection can occur for a number of reasons, although typically it results from one or both partners not completing their treatment or resuming sexual contact before the disease/infection has cleared the body.

STDs not only affect an individual’s physical health, but they can have a major impact on psychological functioning. STDs can also have a number of implications for the quality and endurance of sexual relationships. For these reasons, it is important that those entering new sexual relationships be screened for STDs prior to having sexual contact with their new partner. It is also important to use condoms consistently and correctly. Perhaps the most important methods of prevention of STDs within both new and established relationships is open and honest communication between partners, which includes disclosing STD status.

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See also Aging Processes and Relationships; Casual Sex; Communication Skills; Extradyadic Sex; Marital Satisfaction and Quality; Safe Sex

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SEXUAL MOTIVES

The term *sexual motives* refers to the underlying reasons for, or purposes served by, sexual behavior. Typically assessed through self-report, motives or reasons represent a person’s own understanding of *why* he or she has sex and thus provide an important window onto the meaning that individuals ascribe to their sexual experiences. According to this perspective, sexual behavior motivated by different needs or goals should be triggered by unique antecedents, characterized by qualitatively different styles of behavior and emotions, and ultimately result in distinct consequences. This entry (a) distinguishes sexual motives from related feelings, desires, and thoughts and then identifies the most important goals thought to underlie and drive sexual behavior; (b) describes patterns of endorsement; and (c) reviews research linking these motives to unique patterns of sexual behavior and outcomes.

How Are Sexual Motives Different From Other Sexual Feelings and Thoughts?

Sexual desire or lust is experienced as an interest in sexual activities, a drive to seek out sexual objects, or a wish, need, or craving for sexual contact. Sexual thoughts refer to cognitive representations of sexual activity, such as fantasies, whereas sexual emotions include specific emotions experienced in connection with sex, such as jealousy, joy, and passion, as well as more general emotional responses to sexual stimuli, known as *erotophilia* (a positive emotional response) and *erotophobia* (a negative emotional response). Although sexual desire, thoughts, and emotions typically co-occur with sexual motives, they are readily distinguishable. For example, an individual may desire and fantasize about having sex with her partner because she wants to strengthen an emotional bond or because she wants to experience specific physical sensations. In both cases, the intensity or frequency of sexual desire and fantasy may be similar, but the needs or goals the person hopes to satisfy differ. Similarly, an individual may experience positive emotions in connection with a sexual experience regardless of whether the sexual

experience was primarily motivated by a need to connect with one's partner, bolster one's self-esteem, or have a physically exciting sexual encounter.

Motives are typically measured by asking individuals to rate the relative importance of different reasons for having sex (e.g., In general, how important is expressing love for your partner?) or to report the frequency with which they have sex for different reasons (e.g., How often do you have sex to avoid a fight or hassle with your partner?). Dispositional or trait-like measures that focus on usual or typical reasons for having sex have been used, as well as more specific measures that assess reasons for having sex on a particular occasion (e.g., at last sex) or with a particular partner.

Why Do People Have Sex?

Having sex to promote intimacy and to enhance one's physical or emotional pleasure are the most common reasons for having sex. Other less commonly reported motives for sex that nonetheless have important consequences for sexual experience include: to cope with negative emotions (coping motives) or affirm one's self-worth (affirmation motives); to please or appease one's partner (partner approval motives) or alternatively, to dominate or control him or her (power motives); and, finally, to fit in with, or avoid censure by, peers (peer approval motives). Although procreation is clearly an important motive in an evolutionary sense, research shows that only a small percentage of all intercourse occasions is motivated by a desire to conceive and, moreover, that people actively try not to conceive in the vast majority of instances. Thus, an explicit desire to procreate cannot account for most day-to-day sexual experiences.

As discussed, intimacy and enhancement motives are the two most common reasons for having sex, and this is true for men and women, Blacks and Whites, adolescents and college students, as well as single individuals and their coupled counterparts. Interestingly, however, which of these two motives is more important is less consistent. In young, predominantly White samples, men more strongly endorse enhancement (than intimacy) motives, whereas women more strongly endorse intimacy (than enhancement) motives. In contrast, in the

only study ever conducted among middle-age adults, the reverse pattern was found (women more strongly endorsed enhancement, men intimacy), and in the only study to examine this issue among Blacks, no gender difference in the strength of endorsement of the two motives was found. Finally, patterns of endorsement have also been shown to differ as a function of relationship status. Compared with unattached individuals, people in committed relationships reported higher levels of intimacy motives and lower levels of all other motives, except for enhancement, which did not differ.

The Underlying Structure of Motives

Past research characterizes sexual motives along two dimensions: (1) approach versus avoidance and (2) self-focus versus other focus. The approach-avoidance dimension distinguishes behaviors that involve the pursuit of positive or pleasurable experiences (approach or appetitive behaviors) from those that involve the avoidance of, or escape from, negative or painful ones (avoidance or aversive behaviors). Behaviors motivated by approach goals are thought to be rooted in the behavioral activation system, a complex, biologically based system that controls reward-seeking behaviors (e.g., adventure seeking) and the experience of positive emotions, whereas behaviors motivated by avoidance goals are thought to be rooted in the behavioral inhibition system, a similarly complex biological system that controls responses to threat and punishment (e.g., fearful behavior) and the experience of negative emotions. The second dimension distinguishes behaviors that are primarily internally, self-focused, self-directed, and self-controlled from those that are primarily externally or socially focused and controlled. Behaviors motivated by self-focused goals are thought to serve agentic, identity, or autonomy/competence needs, whereas behaviors motivated by other-focused goals are thought to serve attachment or communal needs.

Both theoretical and empirical considerations indicate that intimacy is high on approach and other focus, whereas enhancement is high on approach and self-focus. In contrast, all of the less commonly endorsed reasons for having sex are high on avoidance, although some are primarily

self-focused (e.g., having sex to prove your attractiveness) and others are primarily other focused (e.g., having sex to avoid angering your partner). Conceptualizing motives in terms of these dimensions provides a useful framework for thinking about the meaning and consequences of sexual experience motivated by different needs or goals.

Approach Motives for Sex: Consequences and Correlates

People who have sex for approach reasons, by definition, seek a positive or rewarding outcome, be it a closer connection with their partner or a physically enjoyable experience. Accordingly, sexual behavior among such individuals should be seen as a way to obtain benefits and achieve important life goals. Consistent with this expectation, both intimacy and enhancement motives have been strongly associated with more frequent intercourse, positive feelings about sex, and higher levels of sexual satisfaction. At the same time, the contexts in which sexual experiences occur should differ for people who have sex to build intimacy versus to enhance. Consistent with this idea, high-intimacy-motive individuals endorse a stronger general need for intimacy and have fewer, less risky, and better-known sexual partners than their low-motive counterparts, whereas high-enhancement individuals report stronger thrill and adventure-seeking needs, more permissive attitudes toward casual, uncommitted, more sex partners (especially casual ones), and more risky sex practices. Overall, then, the data suggest that individuals high in intimacy motives gravitate toward environments conducive to the satisfaction of these needs (*viz.*, committed relationship contexts), whereas those primarily high in enhancement gravitate toward environments better suited to the satisfaction of their particular needs (*viz.*, casual or novel sexual contexts).

Avoidance Motives for Sex: Consequences and Correlates

People who have sex for avoidance reasons, by definition, have sex to escape from, minimize, or avoid aversive states or anticipated negative outcomes, such as negative moods, fear of inadequacy,

or rejection by others. In turn, this negative orientation or focus is thought to evoke processes that undermine the quality of sexual interactions and the development of intimate bonds, including negatively biased perceptions (e.g., assuming the worst about one's partner's intentions), attention (e.g., focusing on negative partner qualities), memories (e.g., remembering hurtful experiences), emotions (e.g., fearing one's partner), and behaviors (e.g., turning a cold shoulder). Not surprisingly, then, avoidance motives for sex have been consistently associated with erotophobic responses to sex and low levels of sexual satisfaction. Interestingly, however, two avoidance motives—coping and affirmation—have also been associated with higher sexual desire and erotophilic responses to sex, thus suggesting an ambivalent, or approach–avoidant, orientation toward sex among individuals high in these motives.

Finally, the focus on negative experiences or possibilities thought to characterize avoidance goal pursuit not only generates anxiety, distress, and dissatisfaction, but also interferes with clear thinking and constructive action. Accordingly, sexual behaviors motivated by avoidance concerns should also be riskier. This expectation has been most strongly supported for partner approval motives, with individuals high in partner approval reporting greater involvement in risky sexual practices, less birth-control use, and higher rates of unplanned pregnancies presumably because they are reluctant to assert themselves and risk partner disapproval. Also consistent with this interpretation, both women and their sexual partners report higher levels of sexual coercion by the male partner when the female partner is high in partner approval motives.

Individuals high in avoidant coping motives show an interesting “promiscuous-but-safe” pattern: They report more casual sex partners, but better birth-control use and fewer unplanned pregnancies. High avoidance-coping individuals also report more frequent masturbation, and both they and their partners report fewer displays of romantic affection. Together, these findings suggest a calculated, impersonal quality to the sexual experiences of high avoidance-coping individuals, an interpretation that fits with the greater self- (vs. other) focus thought to underlie this motive.

Are Motive Effects Similar For Men and Women and Across Relationship Contexts?

Although only a few studies have addressed these issues, their results nevertheless indicate that both gender and relationship context matter in important ways. First, motives predict sexual behavior more strongly among single individuals than among their coupled counterparts, thus suggesting that sexual behavior is more strongly shaped by the partner's needs and desires in close, committed relationships than in casual ones, where each individual is freer to pursue his or her own needs. Second, whereas the effects of avoidance motives appear to be largely harmful regardless of relationship context, the effects of approach motives are more conditional. For example, enhancement motives have been associated with increased protective behaviors (e.g., condom use) among single individuals, but with decreased protective behaviors in close relationships, whereas the reverse pattern was found for intimacy motives and protective behaviors. Third, in the only study of motives to use couples (as opposed to individuals), both one's own and one's partner's motives were found to shape the male partner's sexual experience, but not the female partner's experience. Finally, this same study also found strong evidence that both partners' motives combine in a synergistic fashion or interact to shape the couple's sexual experience. For example, male enhancement motives were found to interact with female partner approval motives to predict intercourse frequency (as reported by both the male and female partner) such that male enhancement more strongly predicted the frequency of sexual relations when the woman was high versus low in partner approval motive. This pattern was observed across multiple sexual outcomes, thus providing strong evidence that women who have sex primarily to appease their partner do in fact conform more to their partner's preferences. The same pattern was not, however, found among men high in partner approval motives.

Concluding Remarks

In short, the reasons that people have sex matters. People who have sex for approach reasons

consistently report more positive and rewarding sexual experiences, whereas those who have sex for avoidance reasons report more unpleasant and dissatisfying ones. Behavior patterns associated with specific motives do not, however, reduce to a simple approach-adaptive versus avoidant-maladaptive distinction, but also appear to be selectively channeled to more impersonal versus intimate relational contexts, respectively, by the extent to which one is focused internally on one's own needs or externally on more communal or social needs. Thus, it is the unique combination of both underlying dimensions—approach versus avoidance and self versus other—that shapes how sexuality is expressed. Finally, despite a limited empirical base, current evidence strongly suggests that both gender and relationship context profoundly affect how sexual motives are expressed and, consequently, how they shape sexual behavior.

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See also Approach and Avoidance Orientations; Self-Regulation in Relationships; Sexual Communication Between Partners; Sexuality and Attachment

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SEXUAL PREJUDICE

Sexual prejudice refers to negative or hostile attitudes against an individual or group based on the latter's sexual orientation. Such prejudice can potentially be directed at anyone regardless of whether they are heterosexual, homosexual, or bisexual. Viewed within its broader cultural context, however, sexual prejudice is best understood as the individual expression of *sexual stigma*, the inferior status that society collectively accords to same-sex sexual desire, homosexual behavior, nonheterosexual intimate relationships, and sexual minority identities and communities. Insofar as it is the internalization of sexual stigma, sexual prejudice represents an individual's endorsement of an ideological system that disempowers sexual minorities, creates institutional barriers to their full participation in society, and fosters enactments of stigma against them, including extreme violence. Thus, as used here, sexual prejudice refers specifically to heterosexuals' negative attitudes toward sexual minorities and toward nonheterosexual desires, behaviors, identities, relationships, and communities. This entry describes sexual prejudice and other phenomena associated with sexual stigma; discusses some of their demographic, social, and psychological correlates; and explains some of the ways that sexual prejudice and stigma affect interpersonal relationships.

Sexual Prejudice and "Homophobia"

Sexual prejudice has come to be recognized as a socially significant phenomenon worthy of scientific research only recently as a consequence of shifts in cultural constructions of human sexuality, gender, and minority rights. Sexual stigma has long been manifested in religion, the law, and other social institutions whose ideologies and practices work to the disadvantage of sexual minority groups. This structural stigma—also referred to as *heterosexism*—operates even in the absence of individual prejudice or discrimination. It functions to make nonheterosexuals largely invisible, and, when they become visible, it promotes the assumption that they are inferior to heterosexuals and deserve ostracism, discrimination, and even violence.

The legitimacy of sexual stigma went largely unquestioned for much of the 20th century. In the 1960s, however, the tenets of heterosexism began to be challenged by an emerging political movement of sexual minorities and their heterosexual allies. One such ally was psychologist George Weinberg. In his psychoanalytic training, he had been taught that homosexuality was a form of mental illness. Based on personal experiences with gay friends, however, Weinberg questioned the validity of this assumption. Moreover, he observed strongly negative reactions among professional colleagues when they encountered homosexual persons outside their therapy practices. He ultimately labeled those reactions *homophobia*, which he defined as the dread of being in close quarters with homosexuals. His 1972 book, *Society and the Healthy Homosexual*, provided the first extensive discussion of homophobia as it is manifested among both heterosexual and nonheterosexual individuals. Thus, Weinberg challenged the conventional wisdom of his time, arguing that what was then typically framed as the "problem" of homosexuality was actually rooted in heterosexuals' unwarranted negative reactions to homosexuality and to gay people.

Although the significance of Weinberg's contribution was substantial, it is important to note that *homophobia* is a problematic term mainly because it suggests that heterosexuals' negative reactions to homosexuals are based on irrational fears (i.e., that they are phobias). There is little empirical evidence to support this assumption. Indeed, data indicate that antigay attitudes have multiple sources and are often based on religious and political values or conformity to social norms, rather than irrational fears. In recognition of homophobia's limitations, social scientists have begun to refer to the phenomenon described by Weinberg as *sexual prejudice*, a term that does not convey any particular theoretical assumptions about the nature or origins of heterosexuals' negative reactions to sexual minorities.

Sexual prejudice also has the advantage of linking this phenomenon with other intergroup prejudices, such as those based on race, ethnicity, and religion. Nevertheless, although the psychological dynamics of the various forms of prejudice have much in common, it is also important to recognize at least two distinct features of sexual prejudice.

First, in contrast to social norms that condemn racial, ethnic, and religious prejudice, there is currently no broad societal consensus that sexual prejudice is inappropriate or undesirable. Indeed, U.S. public opinion surveys show that negative attitudes toward homosexuality remain widespread. A second difference is that, because sexual orientation is usually a concealable characteristic, anyone can potentially be labeled as *nonheterosexual*. Consequently, heterosexuals may feel impelled to publicly assert their sexual orientation to avoid being mistakenly perceived as gay, lesbian, or bisexual. They may even do so by overtly expressing sexual prejudice.

Correlates of Sexual Prejudice

Like many other forms of prejudice, sexual prejudice is reliably correlated with a variety of demographic variables. It is more likely to be observed among men than among women, especially in attitudes toward gay men. In the aggregate, heterosexual men's attitudes toward gay men are generally more negative than their attitudes toward lesbians or than heterosexual women's attitudes toward sexual minorities of either gender. Sexual prejudice is positively correlated with age and negatively correlated with educational level and income: Heterosexuals tend to be more prejudiced to the extent that they are older, have less formal schooling, and earn a lower income. Sexual prejudice is also more common among residents of regions where socially conservative attitudes prevail. In the United States, for example, it is stronger in rural areas than in cities and suburbs and in the Midwest and South than in the Northeast or on the Pacific Coast.

Sexual prejudice also has several consistent social and psychological correlates. Reflecting ideological divides within society, it is more common among political conservatives than among self-described moderates and liberals. It is also more often observed among religious fundamentalists, persons holding orthodox religious beliefs, and members of conservative religious denominations than among the nonreligious and members of historically liberal denominations. Sexual prejudice is also more likely to be manifested by heterosexuals to the extent that they have a high level of

psychological authoritarianism, subscribe to traditional gender roles, and hold traditional beliefs about sexuality (e.g., that sexual behavior is permissible only between heterosexual spouses).

In addition, heterosexuals with high levels of sexual prejudice are more likely than their non-prejudiced counterparts to hold stereotypical beliefs about sexual minorities (e.g., that the latter are sexual predators or are mentally ill). In the United States, sexual prejudice has also been found to be reliably correlated with beliefs about the origins of sexual orientation: Heterosexuals with high levels of sexual prejudice tend to believe that being gay or lesbian is a matter of individual choice, whereas those with low levels of prejudice tend to believe it is something over which an individual can exert little or no control. Finally, one of the most consistent correlates of sexual prejudice is the extent to which heterosexuals have had personal contact with sexual minorities. Those who personally know a lesbian or gay man tend to display less sexual prejudice than others, especially if that individual is a close friend or immediate family member.

Related Phenomena

In addition to being manifested in sexual prejudice, sexual stigma is also overtly expressed through individual actions such as the use of anti-gay epithets, shunning and ostracism of sexual minority individuals, and explicit discrimination and violence. For example, substantial numbers of sexual minority adults report having experienced verbal abuse because of their sexual orientation, and many have been the target of discrimination or violence. In addition to inflicting physical harm, violence against sexual minorities appears to create greater psychological trauma for victims than other kinds of violent crime. Behavioral enactments of sexual stigma also target heterosexuals, including the friends, family, and associates of sexual minorities. Moreover, because of sexual orientation's concealable nature, any heterosexual can be mistakenly labeled homosexual or bisexual and is thus potentially vulnerable to enactments of sexual stigma.

Although behavioral expressions of sexual stigma are often motivated by an individual's sexual prejudice, they can occur even in the absence of

a high level of prejudice on the perpetrator's part. This is the case, for example, when a heterosexual person engages in antigay actions to avoid being mistakenly perceived as homosexual (and, consequently, becoming a target of ostracism or attack). The desire to avoid such victimization also motivates many heterosexuals to modify their own behavior in other ways. For example, they may display extreme conformity to traditional gender roles or avoid physical contact with friends of their same sex—all in an effort to avoid being labeled homosexual. This awareness of the existence of sexual stigma and the desire to avoid being its target has been referred to as *felt stigma*. Felt stigma is also experienced by sexual minorities, and it can lead them to avoid situations in which stigma enactments are possible. For example, they may try to pass as heterosexual, a strategy that can reduce their risk for discrimination and attack but can also disrupt their lives, restrict their options, and limit their opportunities for receiving social support. Indeed, concealing one's sexual minority identity has been linked to psychological distress and health problems.

Effects on Interpersonal Relationships

Sexual prejudice and the related phenomena discussed previously have important consequences for interpersonal relationships. Not only does prejudice create impediments to relationships between heterosexuals and nonheterosexuals, but it also has important consequences for relationships between individuals within each sexual orientation category. Sexual prejudice and, more broadly, sexual stigma impose negative sanctions—both interpersonal and institutional—on individuals who are in a same-sex relationship (e.g., they restrict the extent to which such relationships are accorded legal recognition and often limit the amount of social support that such individuals receive for their relationship). Felt stigma motivates many sexual minority individuals to conceal their sexual orientation, which can create stress in their intimate relationships.

Sexual prejudice and stigma also create difficulties for many heterosexuals. As with sexual minority individuals, felt stigma often leads heterosexuals to constrict their own range of behaviors to avoid being

mistakenly perceived as gay. This can include self-imposed limitations on emotional or physical intimacy with same-sex friends. In addition, lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals are less likely to voluntarily disclose their sexual orientation to a heterosexual whom they perceive to be highly prejudiced, even if the latter is a family member or close friend.

Although sexual prejudice can create interpersonal barriers between heterosexuals and sexual minority individuals, it is also the case that close personal relationships have considerable potential for reducing a heterosexual person's prejudice. As noted, heterosexuals who personally know a lesbian or gay man tend to display less sexual prejudice than others. Sexual prejudice tends to be even lower to the extent that a heterosexual has multiple relationships with lesbians and gay men and has directly discussed the friend or relative's sexual orientation with her or him. Thus, encouraging the formation and nurturing of close, open relationships between heterosexuals and nonheterosexuals may be one of the most potent strategies available for eventually eradicating sexual prejudice.

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See also Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Relationships; Prejudice; Public Policy and Relationships; Sex-Role Orientation

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SEXUAL STANDARDS

Sexual standards are attitudes about appropriate sexual behaviors. They are typically measured by asking people to agree or disagree with statements about the acceptability of particular kinds of behaviors, for each gender, at different stages of a relationship. In 1964, Ira Reiss published a widely used scale that asked about kissing, petting, and full sexual relations for an unmarried male and for an unmarried female when engaged to be married, when in love, when feels strong affection, and even if does not feel strong affection for the partner. Acceptability was found to be lower for more intimate behaviors, but greater at later stages of a relationship.

In 1988, Susan Sprecher and her colleagues updated the scale by changing the behaviors to be more specific: heavy petting (defined as touching of genitals), sexual intercourse, and oral-genital sex. The stages of relationship were changed to the mutually exclusive categories of first date, casually dating, seriously dating, pre-engaged and engagement. They also asked about different ages: 16, 21, and 26 years. They found that the biggest differences were between casually dating and seriously dating, and between ages 16 and 21, with less approval for casually dating and for teenagers. Other researchers have simplified the measurement by asking only about sexual intercourse when in a casual relationship and when in love.

Research on predictors of sexual attitudes has examined gender, religiosity, social class, culture, parents, and peers.

A major concern has been to examine whether a sexual double standard exists. Traditionally, women have been expected to remain virgins until marriage, whereas men are supposed to be ready to have sex whenever possible. When a child is born, it is obvious who the mother is, but there may be uncertainty about the father; hence, men have traditionally tried to control women's premarital and extramarital sexual behavior to ensure their own paternity. Sometimes respondents have rated premarital sex as more acceptable for men than for women and at other times as equally acceptable for men and women. More consistent has been higher acceptability ratings by men than by women. Since birth-control pills and legal abortion have become available, the risk of pregnancy has been reduced, and the gender gap in ratings of permissibility has narrowed. But a double standard still persists to some degree. In particular, women who have many sexual partners are still viewed more negatively than men.

Religiosity is often related to sexual attitudes. The ancient Hebrews had a marginal subsistence and emphasized procreation for group survival, condemning any sexual activity that did not lead to reproduction in the family. This prohibition was passed down to modern Jews and Muslims, who both trace their ancestry to sons of Abraham, as well as to the Catholic Church, which extended the ban to modern birth control and abortion. As a result, many people feel guilty about sexual arousal and any sexual activities, and this can lead to negative sexual attitudes even in marriage.

In the past, lower socioeconomic groups were more favorable to premarital sexual intercourse, but less favorable toward masturbation and oral sex. These differences have decreased as sexual behaviors have generally become more acceptable since the 1970s. Immigrant groups often express more negative attitudes about sexual behaviors, whereas later generations are more permissive. Cross-cultural studies have found more permissive attitudes in cultures that are more economically advanced. This may be related to education; women who are better educated generally want fewer children and are more likely to use birth control.

Parental values are sometimes predictive of sexual attitudes, as are attitudes of peers. In research on dating couples, Anne Peplau and her colleagues found some matching on sexual attitudes, although men were generally more permissive. The couple members exhibited three patterns of attitudes about sex and love. Sexual traditionalists viewed premarital sex as wrong, and men expressed their love by refraining from pressuring their partner to have sex. Sexual moderates felt that premarital sex was acceptable at a certain stage of relationship and viewed sex as a way of expressing their love. Sexual liberals felt that casual sex was acceptable and may be used as a means of increasing emotional intimacy.

Similar predictors apply to attitudes about extramarital sex. Although national surveys indicate that at least three fourths of U.S. adults feel that extramarital sex is always wrong, those with more permissive attitudes are more likely to be male, less religious, and better educated. They also tend to be younger and live in urban areas.

Although most research on sexual attitudes has focused on heterosexual relationships, additional research has examined attitudes about homosexuality. Several homophobia scales have been developed, although the attitudes may involve feelings of anger and disgust as well as fear. More homophobia is associated with more conservative heterosexual attitudes, sexual guilt, religiosity, racism, and geography (higher in the South, Midwest, rural areas, and small towns). It is strongly correlated with rigid sex roles and gender stereotyping. Men often have more negative attitudes about homosexuality than women and more negative attitudes about gay men than about lesbians. Adams and his colleagues found that men who were more homophobic were much more likely to be sexually aroused by a male–male sexual video. But younger adults are generally more accepting than older adults.

In addition to research on predictors of sexual attitudes, much more research has studied sexual attitudes as predictors of sexual behaviors and their consequences. For example, research by Peplau and her colleagues on dating couples has found that women's attitudes and experience are more predictive of couple sexual behavior than men's attitudes and experience. With the discovery of AIDS, there has also been much research on

attitudes about condom use and risky sexual behaviors.

Charles T. Hill

See also Abortion; Birth Control, Relational Aspects; Double Standard in Relationships; Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Relationships; Sex and Love; Sex Differences in Relationships; Sexuality; Sexuality and Attachment; Sexual Prejudice; Virginity and Virginity Loss

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SHARED ACTIVITIES

Spending time and sharing activities with loved ones are among the most basic ingredients of romantic relationships. The goal is for shared activities to be rewarding and enjoyable for both partners. This entry describes how and why companionship develops in romantic relationships and some of the difficulties associated with it.

Companionship in Dating

Companionship is particularly important in the early stages of dating because it is a means by which partners discover each other's personality and their mutual interests. Research indicates that it is important for partners to have similar preferences for the same activities so that sharing activities will be mutually rewarding. If, for example, Jack thoroughly enjoys snow camping, whereas Jill prefers opera and the theater, it may be difficult for them to find mutually rewarding ways of spending time together, at least during the winter months.

The degree of involvement in dating also helps to determine the amount of companionship. Research shows that, as partners get more seriously involved, they increase the amount of shared activities. Early in relationships, partners continue to spend independent time with friends and family, but as partners become more seriously involved, they withdraw somewhat from interaction with friends and kin. This withdrawal is more intense from friends than from family because one of the important features of many committed dating relationships is the integration of the partner into one's family. Thus, as daters become more serious, they spend more time doing activities as a couple in the presence of family and friends.

Companionship as a Source of Tension in Dating

Although these changes occur naturally as daters become more committed, shared activities and time are a common source of tension. Individuals' own explanations for turning points in their dating relationships indicate that the partners' demands for each other's time frequently conflict with demands for time from family and friends. Such demands then interfere with and create conflicts within the relationship. Similarly, research on married couples shows that the more partners spend separate time with friends, the less satisfied they are with their marriages. Working out the tensions between time with romantic partners and time with social others is likely to be a prerequisite for moving toward more deeply committed and satisfying relationships.

Companionship in Marriage

Research clearly shows that once partners marry, pursuit of shared activities is generally beneficial to the marriage. It is well documented that the more time spouses spend together, the greater their marital satisfaction. It may be that happy spouses seek out each other's company, that sharing activities fuels satisfaction, or some combination of the two. In marriage, as in dating, the impact of shared activities also seems to be affected by each spouse's enjoyment of the activity. Wives become more dissatisfied with their marriages if they continue to engage in activities that their husbands like but they do not enjoy.

When Companionship Is Difficult

Although the evidence is unequivocal that sharing rewarding activities is beneficial for close relationships, there are qualifications. Research shows, for example, that participation in joint activities is more central to the health of relationships for men than for women in both dating and marriage. Whereas men seem to evaluate the quality of their relationships on the basis of doing activities and having a companion, women seem to evaluate quality more in terms of talking about relationships. The nature of the activity also is important. Particularly satisfying to spouses is involvement in intensely interactive activities, such as eating out, as compared to passive or parallel activities (e.g., watching television). Participation in leisure activities that spouses find exciting also has a positive effect on satisfaction perhaps because it diminishes boredom in relationships. For both dating and marriage, the more partners participate in and prefer competitive sports and games, the less satisfied they are, possibly because competitive activities fuel power imbalances in relationships or violate traditional norms for what men and women prefer to do. In addition, the amount of communication during joint leisure time is related to marital satisfaction. When communication is high during joint leisure, marital satisfaction is greater. Thus, the benefit of joint activities seems to stem, in part, from the opportunities they provide for interaction.

The effects of participation in shared activities also vary with the environment surrounding

marriage. Wives who have high stress, for example, seem to benefit more from joint participation in leisure than those who have low stress. Once partners bear children, shared activities change. New parents participate in as many activities as couples without children, but new parents often spend more time together doing household tasks and child care instead of leisure and recreation. Over time, as wives return to work, participation in shared leisure increases, but it does not return to its prenatal levels. Research suggests that shared leisure time also may act as a buffer against the strains of parenting. Spouses who spent more time together in shared leisure are more satisfied with their relationships, more in love, and report less conflict after the child's first birthday. Findings such as these bolster the popular advice that spouses need to make time to do things as a couple throughout their marriage.

Synchronizing Activities and Interests

It is unrealistic to think that coupled partners will do all of their activities together. Part of the dance of close relationships is the way in which partners synchronize their separate and together activities. According to theories of interdependent relationships, relationship success is measured, in part, in terms of how well partners coordinate their activities separately and together in a mutually enjoyable way.

Likewise, it is unrealistic to think that coupled partners have so much in common that each of them derives pleasure from all of the same activities. One of the most interesting questions that remains to be studied is: What do partners do when their preferences for an activity do not match? One theory proposes that partners' differing preferences for activities gives them opportunities to show how much they care for each other. If Jill decides to go snow camping with Jack even though she does not like it much, Jack will see her action as an indication of her caring for him. Jill also benefits from being altruistic toward a loved one. What may be most central to successful relationships is the balance between similar and dissimilar preferences and how partners negotiate their differences.

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See also Compatibility; Connectedness, Tension With Autonomy; Cooperation and Competition; Fun in Relationships; Interdependence Theory; Leisure Activity; Similarity in Ongoing Relationships

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SHYNESS

Shyness is the term most often used to label feelings of anxiety and inhibition in social situations. Common synonyms include *bashfulness*, *timidity*, *self-consciousness*, and *reticence*. Ratings of shyness-eliciting situations reveal that interactions with strangers, especially those of the opposite sex or in positions of authority, encounters requiring assertive behavior, and explicitly evaluative settings such as job interviews or first dates provoke the strongest feelings of social anxiety. The tendency to be shy can create barriers to achieving life satisfaction in love, work, play, and friendship. This entry defines *shyness* as a personality trait and discusses how shy people tend to be more lonely and less satisfied with their relationships than those who are not shy.

Emotional State and Personality Trait

The experience of shyness typically involves three components. Global feelings of emotional arousal and specific physiological complaints, such as upset stomach, pounding heart, sweating, or blushing, define the somatic anxiety component of shyness. Acute public self-consciousness, self-critical

thoughts, and worries about being evaluated negatively by others constitute the second, cognitive component of shyness. The third component includes observable behavior such as quietness, cautiousness, awkward body language, avoidance of eye contact, and social withdrawal. From an evolutionary perspective on emotional development, a moderate amount of wariness, concern, and caution regarding strangers and unfamiliar or unpredictable situations has considerable adaptive value. In addition, anticipatory social anxiety is functional when it motivates preparation and rehearsal for important interpersonal events, and shyness also helps to facilitate cooperative group living by inhibiting individual behavior that is socially unacceptable.

Situational shyness as a transitory emotional state appears to be a normal aspect of human development and everyday adult life. For some people, however, shyness is more than a temporary situational response; it occurs with sufficient frequency and intensity to be considered a personality trait. About 30 to 40 percent of adults in the United States label themselves as dispositionally shy persons. Three quarters of the shy respondents said that they did not like being so shy, and two thirds of them considered their shyness to be a personal problem. Almost half of shy adults report that they have been shy since early childhood. For those with early developing shyness, genetic and physiological factors play a significant role in personality development. Research studies of identical and fraternal twins indicate that the temperamental predisposition for shyness has the highest heritability in the normal range of individual differences in personality traits. Infants with this highly reactive temperament in the first year of life are more likely to be wary or fearful of strangers at the end of the second year, and they are also more likely to be described as shy by their kindergarten teachers than are children with an opposite, behaviorally uninhibited temperament. Retrospective reports indicate that 75 percent of young adults who say they were shy in early childhood continue to identify themselves as shy persons.

Slightly more than half of shy adults report that they first became troubled by shyness between the ages of 8 and 14, and they do not appear to have the temperamental predisposition for becoming shy and inhibited. Instead, late-developing shyness

is caused by the adjustment problems of social development normally encountered in the transition from childhood to adolescence. The bodily changes of puberty, the newly acquired cognitive ability to think abstractly about the self and other people, and the new demands and opportunities resulting from changing social roles combine to make adolescents feel intensely self-conscious and socially awkward. The developmental peak for shyness occurs around age 14 when two thirds of the girls and more than half of the boys identify themselves as shy. Late-developing shyness, however, seems to be less likely to endure than the early developing temperamental predisposition. Adolescent self-consciousness gradually declines after age 14, and less than 50 percent of survey respondents who first became shy during later childhood and early adolescence still consider themselves to be shy by age 21.

In the United States, the prevalence of labeling oneself as a shy person is higher for females than males in most age groups, although samples of college students do not show this gender difference. College men rate shyness as more undesirable than women do, and both genders agree that shyness is less socially desirable for a man than for a woman. Indeed, raters of both actual and hypothetical individuals regard a shy male as less likable than a shy female. Some research findings suggest the interpretation, consistent with traditional sex-role stereotypes, that the burden of shyness as a problem of self-concept disturbance may be greater for females in American culture, whereas behavioral problems related to taking the initiative in social encounters may be more salient for shy males.

Some people prefer to spend time alone rather than with others, but also feel comfortable when they are in social settings. Such people are nonanxious introverts, who may be unsociable, but are not shy. The opposite of shyness is social self-confidence, not extraversion. The problem for truly shy people is that their anxiety prevents them from participating in social life when they want or need to.

Shyness, Self-Concept, and Self-Presentation

One way to approach the distinction between shy people and those who are not shy is simply quantitative: Dispositionally shy people experience

physical tension, worry, and behavioral inhibition more frequently, more intensely, and in a wider range of situations than do people who do not label themselves as being shy. There are also significant qualitative differences in psychological processes. For example, shy people perceive various social situations as inherently less intimate and more evaluative, they expect that their social behavior will be inadequate and will be evaluated negatively by others, and they perceive the same interpersonal feedback as more evaluatively negative, compared with those who are not shy. When they encounter social difficulties, shy people also tend to make more self-blaming causal attributions and to remember more negative details than do people who are not shy. Moreover, shy individuals more readily accept negative feedback than positive feedback, and they tend to resist, and to doubt the accuracy of, positive evaluations.

These habitual self-concept processes appear to make it difficult for shy people to conduct successful social interactions and to develop relationships with others. Part of the problem is that shy individuals tend to focus too much of their attention on themselves and not enough on other people. For example, in one laboratory study of the getting acquainted process, shy college women reported spending 33 percent of a 5-minute social interaction engaged in self-focus, compared with about 20 percent of the time for those who were not shy. Moreover, the content of their self-focusing was dominated by negative thoughts about being tense and making a poor impression, as would be expected by the conceptualization of shyness as a propensity for engaging in anxious self-preoccupation. Not surprisingly, shyness is related to poor performance on a measure of sensitivity to the verbal and non-verbal communications of other people.

The tendency to be anxiously self-preoccupied has a pervasive influence on social behavior. Shy people typically adopt a cautiously conservative or protective style of self-presentation, seeking to get along with others rather than to get ahead. For example, they tend to conform to majority opinion, to change their personal attitude toward the position advocated by an authority figure, and to avoid disclosing much personal information about themselves. When faced with a situation in which others hold high expectations of them, shy individuals

may even fail strategically as a means of creating lower and safer standards of evaluation. Those who are not shy are more likely to pursue an acquisitive self-presentation style by actively seeking to obtain social rewards.

Relationships and Interpersonal Styles

The typical pattern of social life for shy children is poor relationships with peers, but positive interactions at home, especially with their mothers. So the home environment appears to be a decisive factor for developmental outcomes of shyness. A growing body of literature demonstrates a relationship between increased shyness and measures of both inhibition of emotional expressiveness in the family environment and a perceived lack of parental support, which has been found in studies from infancy through college age. Of course, positive experiences with peers at an early age help to develop social skills, but such experiences are not easily available for the shy child. Shy children and their friends report lower friendship quality in elementary school compared with those who are not shy, and the shy children tend to be passive or avoidant when facing social challenges. Elementary school teachers may not be likely to help the shy child much because they tend to appreciate the passive compliance of such a child while their energy is focused on problem children who act out aggressively.

Cultural differences in the prevalence of shyness may reflect the impact of socialization practices. In Israel, children tend to be praised for being self-confident and often are included in adult conversations, two factors that may account for the low level of shyness reported by Israelis. In Japan, in contrast, the incidence of shyness is much higher than in the United States. Japanese culture values harmony and tends to encourage dependency and quiet loyalty to one's superiors. Talkative or assertive individuals risk being considered immature or insincere, and there is a high level of concern about avoiding the shame of failure. All of these values may promote shyness, yet also make it a somewhat less socially undesirable personality trait. In contrast, American cultural values that emphasize competition, individual achievement, and material success appear to create an environment in which

it is particularly difficult for the shy person to feel secure and worthwhile. Recent research in China further illustrates how broader cultural values influence the extent to which shyness is perceived to be a problem. Chinese teachers tend to see shyness as a favorable trait in children, and among Chinese children, shyness is not associated with loneliness, unlike in the United States or Canada.

Research conducted in North America and Europe consistently finds that loneliness is the most obvious undesirable consequence of shyness. Shy children have fewer playmates, shy teenagers date less often, and shy adults are less satisfied with the quality of their social relationships, compared with those who are not shy. Several longitudinal studies show that when shy children grow up, they are likely to experience delayed social transitions, with shy males marrying or forming their first stable partnership, becoming fathers, and getting established in a stable occupational career several years later than those who were not shy. Once in a relationship, shy people may become too dependent on their partner, silencing the self in favor of pleasing the other, and missing out on authentic mutuality. These qualities of relationship dynamics are important because for shy people excessive dependency (also called unmitigated communion) is a risk factor for depression, as is loneliness.

Love-Shyness and the Internet

The term *love-shyness* was introduced to isolate specifically sexual issues from other intrapsychic and interpersonal issues that are involved in the psychology of shyness. Shy college men identify problems with dating and lack of sexual experience as troubling personal issues, and among extremely shy middle-age men, there are some who say that they live unhappy lives of enforced virginity due to their love-shyness. Surveys of college women find that shyness is not correlated with attitudes about or quantity of sexual experience, but it is associated with lower quality of sexual relationships and lower levels of sexual self-esteem. Shy college women report that their dating relationships are characterized by a protective self-presentation style and a validation-seeking interpersonal orientation, whereas those

who are not shy report a growth-seeking interpersonal orientation in their dating relationships. The newest research topic in shyness and relationships involves use of the Internet for developing online relationships that might lead to face-to-face interactions. Initial studies indicate that, in contrast to offline social interactions, the online communications of shy people showed more self-disclosure, less protective self-presentation, and lower levels of inhibition and rejection sensitivity. These encouraging findings suggest that use of the Internet may become a worthwhile addition to traditional treatment programs of social skills training, practice dating, and cognitive therapy for helping shy people who are experiencing relationship problems.

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See also Embarrassment; Internet Dating; Interpersonal Dependency; Loneliness; Rejection Sensitivity; Social Anxiety

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SIBLING RELATIONSHIPS

A sibling relationship is a relationship one has with a sister or brother who have one or both parents in common. The relationship between siblings is enduring, lasting from birth to old age, and is longer than the relationship with parents, spouses, or children. In the United States, approximately 80 percent of children have at least one sibling, and children spend most of their time with siblings (33 percent) as opposed to time spent alone (12 percent), with peers (13 percent), or parents (23 percent mothers, 19 percent fathers). Sisters and brothers spend a great deal of time together and serve as each other's first companions and playmates. The sibling relationship may be considered a relationship that affords children the opportunity to learn and develop socially, emotionally, and cognitively. This entry focuses on several aspects of multifaceted and complex relationship between siblings. The entry begins with a discussion of positive and negative sibling relationships, sibling rivalry, and how families might be able to manage sibling conflict. It then reviews research and theory on parental favoritism, as well as different family forms, and concludes by considering the benefits of sibling relationships.

Positive Sibling Relationships

There is considerable variability in sibling relationships; some are filled with warmth, affection, and involvement, whereas others are riddled with conflict, hostility, and rivalry. How well siblings get along can have an important impact on a child's development. As siblings interact with one another, some develop a relationship characterized by prosocial interactions and nurturance, whereas others may be more antisocial. Prosocial behavior occurs when someone acts to help another person, particularly when they have no goal other than to help that person. Children with warm and caring sibling relationships are generally friendlier and share more with their sisters and brothers in childhood, and as they age and mature, they can become competent teachers for younger siblings. Older siblings can provide support to younger siblings when they are sad or

hurt. They can utilize social control over younger siblings and encourage prosocial behaviors. Social control refers to societal mechanisms regulating behavior that leads to conformity and/or compliance.

Many children today live in households where both parents work outside the home, sometimes leaving siblings home alone to fend for themselves. Older siblings often assume a nurturing role and take on the responsibility of teacher, manager, and helper for their younger siblings. Teaching a younger sibling to express feelings and communicate emotions can help siblings develop a positive relationship with one another. Each sibling influences the development of the other and vice versa through social interchanges. In these ways, older siblings can help shape the social and emotional development of a younger sibling.

Negative Sibling Relationships and Rivalry

Sibling conflict and rivalry are two different concepts, and the motivations behind each differ considerably. Conflict is a normal aspect of social relationships and is defined by the exchanges or mutual opposition between two individuals, whereas rivalry reflects more of the competitiveness for limited resources such as attention, time, love, and approval. Sibling conflict is not unusual, and high levels of conflict can set a negative tone to family life. Sibling violence is the most frequently occurring type of family violence, affecting about 70 percent of homes in the United States. Sibling relationships that are typically filled with intense hatred toward one another or those that are aggressive and destructive can have devastating consequences for the children involved. Children and adolescents in such hostile and aggressive relationships risk not only physical harm, but there are also serious psychological consequences such as low self-esteem, poor academic achievement, poorer peer relationships, conduct problems, feelings of loneliness, and sometimes even depression. There are two basic types of conflict. First, there is destructive conflict, which is characterized by high levels of negative affect and aggression. Destructive conflict can weaken and damage the sibling relationship. Second, there is constructive conflict, where siblings display low

levels of negative affect and utilize conflict management skills to solve the problem at hand. Constructive conflict offers siblings opportunities to develop good problem-solving and conflict management skills that they can use in any relationship, including their sibling relationship. Sibling conflict also offers children and adolescents opportunities to learn to tolerate and regulate negative emotions. In this sense, we can look at sibling conflict as helpful because it has the potential to teach sisters and brothers how to manage conflict and how to regulate emotions in aversive situations.

Rivalry in the sibling relationship manifests as competitiveness and jealousy between sisters and brothers. Problems with rivalry usually begin at the birth of the second child, when the attention of caregivers is no longer focused on the only child, and can persist throughout childhood and adolescence. There are several factors that contribute to sibling rivalry, such as age and position of the child in the family. For example, older siblings may have to care for younger ones, and younger siblings may feel inferior to their older counterparts. Gender also can be a factor in sibling rivalry. For instance, a father may treat a daughter more tenderly than a son or a daughter may want to throw a ball with her dad like her brother gets to do. Developmental stages of children can also play a role in sibling rivalry. Young children are more egocentric and may not be able to share. School-age children are more aware of what is fair and may not understand parental favoritism toward a younger sibling or why they may receive more parental discipline and less warmth than their younger counterparts. Finally, adolescents may resent not being able to exercise their independence because they have to care for a younger sibling or engage in household chores. As children's evolving needs change, so do the ways in which they fight with one another. Rivalry and friendly competition between siblings can also help promote academic achievement and encourage children to set higher personal goals and to persist in meeting those goals when dealt with in constructive ways. Therefore, it is important for parents to try and minimize sibling rivalry by not making comparisons between children, not playing favorites, and promoting cooperation and perspective taking between siblings.

Dealing With Sibling Conflict

Coping with sibling conflict is something that many family members must do when emotions are highly charged. *Coping* is defined as a deliberate behavioral and cognitive effort to modify and manage stressful life demands. Children need to learn to cope with frustrating feelings, compromise, negotiate, and value other perspectives in order for them to control aggressiveness with a sibling.

Parents must manage sibling conflict to help sisters and brothers negotiate their relationship. There are several different ways that parents may help (or hinder) children in managing relationships. First, they can choose to do nothing and let the siblings try to work it out themselves. This is helpful if children possess good conflict management skills and are able to resolve disagreements, otherwise conflict and rivalry may be perpetuated. Second, they may choose to punish aggressive acts. Physical punishment is not recommended, but giving timeouts or other forms of punishment that are constructive and promote learning and problem solving can help parents manage conflict. Punishment alone may cause resentment toward the parent as well as toward the sibling. Third, they can reinforce behaviors (i.e., positive or negative) by responding consistently (or inconsistently to promote negative sibling behaviors). Positive reinforcement encourages prosocial behaviors, whereas reinforcing negative behaviors perpetuates the conflict. Fourth, they can separate the children and not allow them to work things out. Oftentimes separation leads to avoidance, and if siblings are not brought back together once they are calm to resolve issues, agonistic behaviors will rule, and involvement and warmth in the sibling relationship will be minimal if at all. Fifth, they can help children learn to resolve conflict by teaching them to talk to one another and express their thoughts and feelings about these situations. Conflictual moments are opportunities for teaching children conflict management skills. Often parents want sibling conflict to stop, so they ask the older child to defer to the younger child in order to end the dispute, which can create resentment on the part of the older child. In a conflict situation, it is important for parents to allow children to express their feelings about one another

without violence, name-calling, or yelling. Parents can teach children how to do things fairly, compromise, and respect each other.

Parental Differential Treatment

Parental socialization practices and how parents treat their children can vary greatly within a family. Parental differential treatment or parental favoritism can occur in families and has been linked to poor emotional and behavioral functioning in children and adolescents. Differential treatment refers to whether parents direct more or less discipline and less warmth toward one sibling than the other sibling. Children who see parental favoritism as being unjustified are more likely to develop psychological and behavioral problems than children and adolescents who view differential treatment as justified. As a result, siblings who view parental favoritism as unfair may feel worthless and demonstrate behavioral problems such as intense rivalry, aggression, and avoidance of one another.

Different Family Forms

Increased divorce rates in the United States have led to greater numbers of children with stepsiblings and half-siblings. Stepsiblings are not biologically related, but become siblings when one of each of their parents marries. Half-siblings are where two children share one biological parent and the second parent is from a previous marriage. Also, one child may come from a previous marriage, but the other child is the product of the current marriage. When stepfamilies are formed, parents often worry about how stepchildren will embrace the new marriage and how stepsiblings will get along with one another. They may also worry whether a newborn half-sibling will be accepted by an older sibling. More conflict and rivalry has been reported between stepsiblings in remarried families than between siblings in intact (or nondivorced) families or half-siblings. How parents manage life with their children and adolescents during the remarriage can play a role in how well step- and half-siblings will get along.

Benefits of Sibling Relationships

Early positive childhood experiences in the family have been shown to contribute to higher self-esteem and competent intimate relationships with others outside the family environment. Self-esteem is constructed throughout childhood, continuing into adulthood, and is derived from the love, support, and protection a child feels from parents and siblings. When children feel they are being treated equally by both parents and have prosocial sibling interactions, they have a better sense of self and more competent romantic relationships. Sibling relationships change as people become adults. Rivalry usually decreases and closeness increases in adult sibling relationships. Adult siblings can provide social support, companionship, and emotional support for each other as they age. Health and well-being in old age has been attributed in part to having a close, supportive sibling relationship, whereby elderly sisters and brothers who share a life history and childhood memories are able to provide emotional, psychological, and instrumental support during times of stress. Sibling relationships, in general, from birth through old age can play a beneficial role in the development and maintenance of social interactions that last a lifetime.

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See also Conflict, Family; Discipline in Families; Family Communication; Family Functioning; Family Relationships in Adolescence; Family Relationships in Childhood; Family Relationships in Late Adulthood; Family Relationships in Middle Adulthood; Family Relationships in Young Adulthood; Stepfamilies

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SIMILARITY IN ONGOING RELATIONSHIPS

The tendency for people in a relationship to be similar can affect the quality of the relationship, the nature of partners' interactions, and the likelihood that a relationship will continue. Although most research on similarity in relationships has studied dating or married couples, the same principles and processes apply to many different types of relationships, including family, friends, and coworkers. This entry reviews how similarity is measured, how relationship partners are alike, how partners may become more alike or converge over time, and how similarity and convergence affect relationship quality.

Definition and Measurement

Similarity in an ongoing relationship is how alike two relationship partners are at one point in time. Romantic partners and friends are generally the most similar on demographic characteristics such as age, education level, and socioeconomic status, as well as intelligence and cognitive abilities. To a lesser extent, partners are similar across behavioral and psychological characteristics, including personality, attitudes, emotional tendencies, interests, psychopathology, and sexual experience. This tendency of partners being alike is also known as *homogamy*. There is extensive evidence for *homogamy* and less evidence for *heterogamy*, or the tendency for long-term partners to be dissimilar to each other.

Researchers measure similarity in a variety of ways. The first is a *discrepancy score*. The absolute difference of two partners' scores is used to measure how similar two partners are on a given characteristic with lower scores indicating similarity. Often, absolute differences across a number of different questions measuring the same characteristic are averaged together. Discrepancy scores have some important limitations. First, greater scores indicate greater dissimilarity; however, there is no set point for when an individual stops being similar and starts being dissimilar. Second, discrepancy scores can be confounded with each partner's individual score. If an individual scores a 5 out of 10 on an agreeableness scale, he or she can have a maximum discrepancy of 5 from a partner, whereas if an individual scores a 10, he or she can have a maximum discrepancy of 9.

A second way of measuring similarity is a *variable-centered* correlation, where partners' scores are correlated on the same characteristic (height, extraversion, intelligence). This is a correlation between one partner's score with the other partner's score on the same characteristic across a sample of dyads. Higher correlations indicate greater similarity. This approach also has limitations. First, this approach can only estimate similarity one characteristic at a time and cannot show how similar couples are across multiple characteristics. Second, a variable-centered correlation shows levels of similarity across an entire sample and cannot estimate the similarity for one specific couple.

A third way of measuring similarity is by computing a *couple-centered* correlation. Here, a profile correlation of two partners' responses is computed. This is a correlation between one partner's responses on a number of items with the other partner's scores on those same items within the same dyad. This approach addresses some of the limitations of the other methods of computing similarity. It can be an index of when couples are similar (positive correlations) or dissimilar (negative correlations). It can also be used to measure similarity across a single characteristic, such as extraversion, or multiple characteristics, such as an overall measure of personality. However, computing this correlation requires that there be multiple items assessing the characteristic, so it cannot be used when the characteristic is measured by a single item, such as

height and age. Thus, although this method of computing similarity has the fewest limitations, it cannot be used for all characteristics.

Finally, some research has investigated perceived similarity by asking partners how much they believe they are similar to their partner. However, perceived similarity can be discrepant from more direct and objective measures of similarity.

Each of these methods of determining similarity has another important limitation. A pair of individuals may appear to be similar, but they might be no more similar than a typical pair of strangers. For example, if asked what they prefer—to win \$1,000,000 or \$10—it is likely that a married couple will appear as similar as a pair of strangers in preferring more money to less money. This is known as *stereotype similarity*. For any given characteristic, belief, or attitude, there may be a baseline level of similarity in a population that is significantly greater than zero. To show that partners are more similar to each other than expected by chance, the partners must be more similar to each other than they are to strangers on that same characteristic. This latter limitation of stereotype similarity has been overlooked in much of the work on partner similarity.

One can also relate these indices of similarity to other relationship attributes. For example, each couple can be assigned an absolute difference score or a standardized profile (i.e., couple-centered) correlation. These can be related to relationship satisfaction, amount of conflict, or other relationship-relevant constructs. One can also measure how much couples converge by measuring the change in similarity between two time points on absolute difference or standardized profile correlation scores.

Reasons That Relationship Partners Are Similar

Relationship partners are similar to each other for a number of reasons. The first reason is *assortative mating*. This is the tendency for individuals to depart from selecting a partner at random or *panmixia*. Although there are several types of assortative mating, the primary type is positive assortment, where people select partners who are similar to themselves. In contrast, in negative assortment, people select partners who are opposite to

themselves. Partners are much more likely to display positive assortment than negative assortment. There is also passive and active assortment, where individuals have different levels of personal control over the assortative mating process; these are explained in more detail next.

Passive Assortment

Passive assortment occurs when individuals are forced to choose one type of partner because their environment constrains the choices they have for a relationship partner. One constraint is propinquity. Individuals are more likely to meet those who live in close physical proximity and can only start relationships with those whom they meet. It has been shown that the likelihood of marrying someone drops significantly for each city block farther away he or she lives. People who live close to each other are also more likely to be from similar ethnicities, socioeconomic classes, religions, and education levels. Thus, individuals tend to grow up in environments of similar others and are therefore more likely to start relationships with people who share the same demographic characteristics. Moreover, similar individuals will often choose the same environment. Individuals with similar cognitive abilities, family backgrounds, or political ideologies are more likely to go to the same university, work in the same industry, and/or move to the same geographic area. This makes it more likely that an individual will meet and form a relationship with a similar other.

There are sometimes social constraints for the type of partner an individual can choose. Some religions prohibit or look unfavorably on a marriage to an individual of another faith. Similarly, couples from different ethnic, socioeconomic, and educational backgrounds are more likely to elicit disapproval and less support from others relative to couples that share the same ethnic, socioeconomic, and educational backgrounds. Violating these social rules can be met with frowns of disapproval, being ostracized by one's family or community, or even being killed for marrying an individual from another religious faith or ethnic background.

Finally, the tendency for partners to be similar may be a byproduct of individuals having strong

preferences for highly attractive prospective partners. These preferences alter how much choice people have in selecting their partners by making it more likely that more attractive individuals will pair off and restrict the choice of less attractive individuals. The most attractive individuals have the most power and greatest freedom to select their partners and will likely choose a partner who is also highly attractive. This removes the most attractive individuals from the pool of potential partners for everyone else. The next most attractive individuals in the pool of potential partners will then have the most power to pair with those who are of similar attractiveness. This process will continue until all individuals have mated, resulting in couples that are ordered in attractiveness.

Active Assortment

Individuals can also actively search for and select partners who are similar to themselves. This is a process known as *active assortment*. Unlike passive assortment, active assortment involves the individuals choosing their partners based on some criteria. Active assortment is likely to result in couples where the partners are similar to each other because individuals are attracted to, and prefer, others who are similar to themselves across a variety of characteristics. This can happen for a number of reasons.

First, people find those who hold similar attitudes validating. Individuals like to believe that their own attitudes are correct, and one way that individuals confirm the truth of their attitudes is by assessing the attitudes of others. If they share the same attitudes, it validates those attitudes as correct. Because this process of validation is rewarding, individuals tend to like those who share the same attitudes.

Second, individuals who are similar tend to construe the world and react to the same situation in the same way. Therefore, similar couples are more likely to have coordinated and smooth social interactions because each partner is better able to anticipate and respond appropriately to his or her partner's behavior. By making social situations easier to negotiate, similarity reduces the likelihood of conflict or stress that may undermine the quality and duration of the relationship.

Third, it is easier to interpret and understand the thoughts and feelings of someone who is similar relative to someone who is different. Because similar partners share experiences, attitudes, and personality traits, they have a natural reference point to understand each other, their own experiences, attitudes, and personality traits. Thus, both partners are more likely to be accurate in perceiving and interpreting the internal thoughts and feelings when they are similar to each other. For example, individuals are more accurate at interpreting sympathy from an individual who has similar levels of dysphoria relative to one who differs on his or her level of dysphoria.

Finally, people enjoy interacting with similar others more than dissimilar others. Similar others are more likely to share interests and attitudes, which is likely to lead to smoother and more pleasant interactions. Moreover, dissimilar others are more likely to spark disagreement and conflict because they have different attitudes and interests. Because validation, understanding, and enjoyable interactions are the building blocks of intimacy, the more similar partners are to each other, the more likely they are to keep the relationship intact.

Tendency for Individuals to Converge Across Time

Another reason that individuals in relationships tend to be similar to each other is that they converge or become more similar over time. New college roommates will become more alike in the emotions they experience, romantic couples will adopt each other's attitudes and interests, and married couples tend to look more alike over time.

There are several reasons that partners converge across some characteristics. First, individuals find adopting a new partner's interests, attitudes, and beliefs exciting and rewarding and are therefore highly motivated to integrate aspects of the partner into their own self-identity. For example, new partners will often cultivate similar interests by trying out the interests of each other. Second, partners share some of the same environment. To the extent that the environment shapes an individual's beliefs, personality, interests, and behaviors, partners will become more similar the longer they share the same environment. It has been shown that married

individuals become or remain similar depending, in part, on how much overlap they have in their environment. Third, being dissimilar to a partner in attitudes or beliefs can cause an individual discomfort because this is a signal that the attitude or belief is wrong. Because of this, individuals are highly motivated to balance their attitudes and will often align their attitudes with their partner to reduce this discomfort.

Genetic Consequences of Similarity

There can be substantial genetic consequences when individuals select partners who are similar to themselves. When individuals select a similar mate on a heritable characteristic, it ensures that there will be greater variance in that characteristic in the next generation. For example, if partners sort on height, then very tall people will tend to mate with other very tall people, and their children will be more likely to be very tall. However, if people do not sort on height, then a very tall person will be more likely to mate with someone who is shorter (because most of their potential mates will be shorter), and their children's height will be more likely closer to the average. Thus, in a given population, assortative mating maintains greater genetic variance in the next generation.

When people mate with genetically similar others, it also means that more of an individual's own genes will be passed to his or her children and that the children of that couple will be more similar to each other. Because people tend to be more altruistic toward those with whom they share genes, this may cause families that are genetically more similar to help each other more often. However, when inbreeding (i.e., mating between two related individuals) occurs, it increases the occurrence of rare disorders caused by recessive genes in the offspring of that couple, making those offspring less healthy and more likely to die.

Relationship Consequences of Similarity

Partners who are similar to each other tend to be more satisfied with their relationship and less likely to end their relationship, although the relationship between similarity and relationship quality varies from characteristic to characteristic. For

example, similarity in overall personality has been related to higher levels of marital satisfaction, but some individual personality domains do not relate to relationship satisfaction as consistently, such as neuroticism and extraversion. Although a few studies have shown no relationship between similarity and relationship quality, only rarely do studies show that complementarity predicts higher relationship quality. There is also evidence that partners who become more alike over time will be more satisfied with their relationship than partners who become less alike. Finally, even the perception that a partner is similar relates to greater relationship satisfaction.

There are several reasons that similarity and convergence relate to higher relationship quality. First, similarity can facilitate partners feeling validated and understood, and thus will build intimacy in a relationship. Being dissimilar can lead to increased disagreement, misunderstanding, and conflict. Second, similarity can smooth daily social interactions between partners by facilitating and understanding of each other's emotions, attitudes, and beliefs. Third, similarity in personality and interests can lead to more shared activity and interests in a relationship. Finally, others outside the relationship are likely to assume similar partners are in a relationship, while dissimilar others are not, and treat each type of couple differently. For example, they may ask similar partners about the history of their relationship, reinforcing partners' positive perception of their relationship. But if they believe that dissimilar couples are not an actual couple, they may ask whether they are dating other people, undermining the partners' perception of themselves as a couple.

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See also Assortative Mating; Complementarity; Dyadic Data Analysis; Intimacy; Mate Selection; Proximity and Attraction; Satisfaction in Relationships; Similarity Principle of Attraction

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SIMILARITY PRINCIPLE OF ATTRACTION

Many individuals hold beliefs about the importance of similarity for attraction. These beliefs can be expressed in sayings such as “Birds of a feather flock together” and “Opposites attract.” This entry focuses on beliefs expressed by the first of these sayings—that individuals prefer others who are similar to themselves. One of the most basic

principles of interpersonal attraction is that individuals form relationships with people who are similar to themselves and dissolve relationships because of a loss of similarity. This has been referred to as the *similarity-attraction hypothesis*. These effects are found across relationship types from interactions among strangers to friendships and romantic relationships. Therefore, attraction in this context refers to a variety of variables from liking or willingness to interact with a stranger to loving or relationship quality in a marriage. Research on this topic has been conducted in a number of areas, such as whether similarity leads to attraction or whether attraction leads to similarity, whether it is actual or perceived similarity that is related to attraction, and why similarity is important. This entry examines each of these topics.

Similarity Leads to Attraction

Beginning with Aristotle’s essay on friendship in 330 BCE, the idea that similarity increases interpersonal attraction has permeated our beliefs. Near the end of the 19th century, Sir Francis Galton provided empirical verification of this belief when he found that spouses were similar in many attributes. However, his findings could not address the cause-and-effect relation between similarity and attraction. In the 1950s and 1960s, Theodore Newcomb conducted one of the earliest studies examining the influence of similarity on attraction at the University of Michigan. He examined friendship formation among male housemates who were initially strangers. At first, men’s friendships were influenced mostly by *perceived similarity*, but as the semester continued and the men learned more about their housemates, these friendships were influenced mostly by *actual similarity*. In both cases, however, higher similarity was associated with higher attraction. This research suggested that similarity leads to attraction, but the naturalistic setting and lack of experimental manipulation and control still raised questions about cause and effect.

To examine the cause-and-effect relation in the similarity-attraction hypothesis, Donn Byrne and his colleagues conducted a series of studies using the “bogus stranger paradigm.” In the bogus stranger paradigm, a participant is led to believe that there is

another individual in the study. However, the other individual does not actually exist—hence, the “bogus stranger.” In these types of studies, attitudinal similarity of the bogus stranger to the participant is experimentally manipulated to determine its effects on attraction. Attraction in these studies is typically measured by a question about how much the participant liked the stranger or how willing the participant would be to work with the stranger on a future task. These studies, then, asked whether an individual would be more likely to express a desire to work with an unknown stranger (attraction) the more similar the stranger’s attitudes were to one’s own attitudes (similarity). Supporting the cause-and-effect relation, individuals who were randomly assigned to the experimental condition in which the bogus other was presented as being similar to the individual were more attracted to the person than individuals who were randomly assigned to condition where the bogus other was presented as being dissimilar. These findings are robust, with the importance of similarity on attraction extending from interactions with strangers to marital relationships.

Arthur Bochner and Michael Sunnafrank have criticized the similarity-attraction research, mostly that of Donn Byrne’s early work, indicating that this research deals with stranger or bogus-stranger relationships, those with unilateral awareness and no interdependence, and confuses the timing of learning about someone’s attitude and meeting the person. Therefore, they criticized whether the attraction-similarity findings can be generalized to the initiation and development of interpersonal relationships. However, research examining whether actual or perceived similarity is the important predictor of attraction supports the similarity-attraction relation in real, interdependent relationships. This issue is discussed in more detail later. Although in real life we may not know another person’s attitudes before we meet them, we tend to meet people in situations that allow us to infer these attitudes, such as through our involvement in school, work, social clubs, or church. Sharing similar interests in these activities (e.g., a social club) implies that the two individuals will also share other beliefs or interests. That is, we can infer similarities in a number of domains based on similarities in one domain. As is discussed next, these inferences may or may not be accurate.

Despite that Donn Byrne’s research indicated a linear relation between similarity and attraction, this relation depends on a variety of other factors, including the kinds of similarity being shared and the perceiver’s personality. In terms of the types of similarity being shared, attitude similarity is more important than personality similarity, and value similarity is more important than demographic similarity for attraction. The effects of similarity on attraction are also stronger for central than peripheral attitudes. Central attitudes refer to issues that are important to an individual’s self-view or self-concept, whereas peripheral attitudes would have little or no importance to the self. The similarity-attraction relation is also greater for attitudes with high, as opposed to low, heritability and for personality traits that are more important (e.g., caring, jealous) compared with less important (e.g., quiet, cold) for the relationship. Finally, the similarity effect is stronger for positive traits than for negative traits.

Personality characteristics also influence preferences for the type of similarity important to attraction. For example, low self-monitors prefer attitudinal similarity over activity similarity, whereas high self-monitors prefer activity similarity over attitudinal similarity. Individuals high in social anxiety indicate greater attraction to agreeing strangers and lower attraction to disagreeing strangers than do individuals low in social anxiety. Similarly, individuals with a positive self-concept, as measured by the self-assurance scale, prefer similar to dissimilar others, whereas individuals with a negative self-concept do not show this preference for similarity.

Attraction Leads to Similarity

Although the similarity-attraction research indicates that these variables are related and among strangers similarity leads to attraction, in ongoing relationships, the direction of influence may differ. Arthur Bochner notes that relational partners assume that they should have a variety of things in common and communicate to foster this impression. In fact, he argues that one purpose of communication is to foster perceptions of similarity and create an impression of being an interesting person. Supporting this role of communication,

attitude alignment or changing one's own attitude to match the attitude of a partner is found when individuals are aware of an attitudinal discrepancy (the individuals have discussed it), when the issue is central to the partner (they know what each other believes and what is important to them), and when the interactions are among dating partners rather than strangers.

Perceptions of similarity in ongoing relationships may also occur because individuals assume similarity and, therefore, project themselves onto their partners. Although we believe we hold accurate impressions of our friends and romantic partners, partner impressions are affected by a variety of factors; for instance, observer's own behaviors and attitudes influence their ratings of others' behaviors and attitudes. Thus, we are attracted to people who are similar to us, the similarity-attraction hypothesis, but may also perceive similarities that may not be there. Marian Morry and her colleagues have referred to this latter aspect as the *attraction-similarity hypothesis* and suggest that an ongoing relationship attraction to another person may lead individuals to perceive self-other similarities. Supporting the attraction-similarity hypothesis, Marian Morry and her colleagues have found that asking individuals to write about the most positive or negative event in their relationship caused these individuals to rate their relationship satisfaction (a measure of attraction) as higher or lower, respectively. These changes in attraction then caused changes in perceived similarity in both friendships and dating relationships. That is, increasing ratings of attraction increased ratings of perceived similarity and decreasing ratings of attraction decreased ratings of perceived similarity. In summary, it appears that in ongoing relationships, attraction influences perceived similarity.

Actual or Perceived Similarity

Having found that similarity is important to attraction, and vice versa, researchers are also interested in whether actual similarity is necessary or whether perceived similarity is sufficient. Supporting the effects of actual similarity, a number of studies found evidence of assortative mating or the tendency of like to marry like (e.g., sharing the same religion). In fact, most individuals become

friends with or marry people who are similar to the self. Evidence for assortative mating has been found for intelligence, social class, religion, race, sensation seeking, and attachment styles, among others. Close relationship partners exhibit greater than chance similarity on these variables, and this actual similarity is positively associated with attraction and the continuation of the relationship. Because most of these variables predate the onset of a relationship, these findings indicate that in interdependent relationships, actual similarity leads to attraction.

Considerable discrepancies, however, exist between self and peer ratings of attitudes, values, beliefs, and personality, suggesting that perceptions and reality are not the same. For example, individuals perceive their partners to be more similar to themselves than the partner self-rates in terms of personality traits such as extraversion, neuroticism, openness, agreeableness, and conscientiousness, and interpersonal traits such as being kind, affectionate, controlling, or dominant. These perceptions of similarity then may impact the similarity-attraction relation. For example, perceived, not actual, value similarity predicts liking among college roommates. In romantic relationships, perceived not actual similarity of coping styles is the best predictor of satisfaction.

In the context of ongoing relationships, the question of actual or perceived similarity refers to whether one is accurate in one's perception of the partner. That is, does Peter's perception of Sue match Sue's self-ratings? To test for actual or perceived similarity, researchers ask both individuals to rate themselves and their partner on a variety of traits, opinions, behaviors, and so on. It is then possible to test whether there is actual similarity. Peter and Sue rate themselves the same; a perception of similarity, Peter rates Sue as being similar to his own self-ratings, but Sue does not rate herself similar to how Peter rates himself; or a combination of the two, some similarity in self-ratings and Peter rates Sue as being more similar to himself than is warranted. A variety of research studies indicates that, although somewhat accurate in their perceptions of friends, dating partners, and spouses, individuals tend to perceive greater similarity than warranted. That is, although there is some actual similarity, individuals project themselves onto their intimate others and perceive

similarities that are not there to the same degree. This tendency to perceive greater similarity than warranted has been found for attitudes, personality characteristics, attachment styles, behaviors, and so on. In addition, these perceptions of similarity are found across a variety of relationships from friendships to dating relationships to marriages. As noted earlier, in ongoing relationships, experimental changes in relationship satisfaction, by writing about a positive or negative event in the relationship, caused changes in perceived similarity. These results also support the importance of perceived rather than actual similarity.

Explanations for Why Similarity and Attraction Are Related

Another area of research in the similarity principle of attraction domain is why these variables are related. Explanations have included rewards of interacting, balance theory, and general expectations. The first explanation, rewards of interacting, indicates that individuals are motivated to be logical and accurate in interpreting their environment. Similarity with others validates their view of the world and confirms that they are correct in their thinking. In addition, an interaction with someone who shares your attitudes, beliefs, or values results in fewer disagreements and conflicts, which should foster a sense of safety. Similarity can also facilitate interaction as each individual can predict the other's responses.

Fritz Heider's balance theory has also been proposed as an explanation for the relation between similarity and attraction. According to this theory, individuals prefer relationships that are balanced. For example, the participant (P) likes his or her friend (O), and the participant has a particular attitude, behavior, or trait (X). With two positive relations (PO and PX), the third relation should also be positive (e.g., the friend should have or be perceived to have X) to achieve a balanced relationship. Supporting the current application of balance theory, people perceive similarities between themselves and intimate others based on projections of the self. Theodore Newcomb hypothesized that increases in attraction (PO) or of the relevance of the characteristic (PX) to the relationship would motivate individuals to change the relationship

into a balanced one. Consistent with his reasoning, manipulations of attraction influence perceptions of similarity, individuals overestimate attitude similarity more in close relationships such as marriage than in the stranger paradigm, and similarity effects on attraction are stronger for central than peripheral attitudes and for moderate compared with low relationship-relevant traits.

Another explanation for the relation between similarity and attraction is that individuals expect similar others to like them. That is, similarity implies liking, and we are attracted to individuals who like us (i.e., reciprocity of liking). In line with this reasoning, John Condon and William Crano manipulated both how positive a stranger evaluated the participant and similarity of the stranger to the participant. To manipulate the stranger's evaluation, they indicated that the stranger thought that the participant was above average in a number of ways and expected to like him or her and wanted to work with him or her or provided no such information. Both positivity and similarity affected the participant's attraction to the stranger. In addition, similarity led to inferred positive evaluations by the stranger, and these inferred evaluations then led to attraction. This expectation of liking explanation is also consistent with the role of communication in developing relationships. More specifically, individuals tend to reciprocate the level of disclosure. Disclosure provides the opportunity to learn about similarities, which implies the other likes the self, and increases liking for the other.

Current and Future Directions

Current research continues to look at the types of similarity important for attraction, the direction of influence between similarity and attraction, and the reasons that similarity and attraction are related. For example, Eva Klohnen and her colleagues examined attitudes and personality traits and found substantial actual similarity on attitudes, but not on personality characteristics. However, greater perceived similarity on personality characteristics, and especially attachment styles, was the best predictor of relationship satisfaction (attraction). In addition, this perceived similarity-satisfaction relation continued even

when actual similarity was controlled for. Together these results suggest that the type of similarity being examined is important and that perceived similarity may be more important to attraction than actual similarity.

Research on the similarity principle of attraction can also be enhanced by using more diverse research methods. For example, research on the direction of influence can be enhanced with techniques from speed-dating research. For instance, in speed-dating research, it would be possible to test whether initial actual similarities in the interaction leads to later liking or whether liking at the end of the speed-dating session leads to later perceived similarity. Longitudinal research could also be used to determine when the effects of similarity on attraction among strangers become the effects of attraction on perceived similarity in ongoing relationships.

Finally, research is still needed to explore the reasons for the similarity and attraction relation. As noted earlier, these explanations involve rewards of interacting, balance theory, and expectations. The motivational and cognitive underpinnings of these explanations, however, need to be explored. Such questions could include: How do individuals develop expectations of similarity? Do these expectations vary across relationship types (friendships, marriages)? Do they change over time or with experience?

Summary

Although there are a variety of variables that are important for interpersonal attraction, one such variable that has captured the attention of both lay people and researchers is similarity. A number of studies have indicated a positive, linear relation between similarity and attraction. The strength of this relation varies based on the importance of the characteristics, one's personality traits, and so on. In addition, both perceived similarity and actual similarity are important correlates of attraction. The direction of influence also seems to vary based on the closeness of the relationship, with actual or perceived similarity leading to attraction among strangers, but attraction leading to perceived similarity in ongoing relationship.

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See also Assortative Mating; Complementarity; Matching Hypothesis; Similarity in Ongoing Relationships

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SINGLEHOOD

Although research on human relationships covers relationships with friends, siblings, parents, children, neighbors, colleagues, mentors, and others,

most scholarship has been devoted to relationships with romantic partners or spouses. Little research has explicitly focused on the implications of being single. *Singlehood* can be defined in legal or social terms. Adults who are not currently married are legally single. They are socially single if they are not in a mutually acknowledged romantic relationship. Therefore, the only defining characteristic of people who are single is that they do not have a spouse or romantic partner. Because marriage and romantic relationships are valued so highly in our culture and many assume that marriage is a sign of maturity and a harbinger of happiness, the lives of singles are often assumed to be lacking in important ways—a presumption that is explored in this entry. Also to be discussed are the trends that have made legal singlehood more common in the Western world over the past several decades. The relationships that are important to singles are discussed, and research on the happiness and health of singles is reviewed. Finally, many commonly held misperceptions and stereotypes about singles are addressed, and ways in which singles are targets of discrimination are noted.

Singlehood: An Increasingly Common Status

Over the past 35 years, the number of people who are legally single has increased markedly. In 1970, people who were single—whether divorced, widowed, or always single—accounted for only 28.3 percent of the U.S. adult population (18 and older). As of 2006, singles comprised 44.1 percent of the adult population (including 4 percent of the legally single population who cohabit with opposite-sex partners). One of the reasons that there are so many more singles is that the age at which people first marry (for those who do marry) has been increasing. The median age of first marriages in 1970 was 23 for men and 21 for women; by 2005, the ages were 27 and 25, respectively. The divorce rate increased for a number of years and has remained at a high level. Singlehood is also common for older women, who tend to outlive their partners and remarry less frequently than do men. All of these changes add up to a new demographic reality: On average, Americans now spend more of their adult years single than married. The median age of first marriage has also increased in other parts of the

world, including most countries in Western and Eastern Europe and parts of Africa and Asia.

The Lives of Singles: Relationships, Happiness, and Health

Although singles are typically defined as lacking a spouse or serious romantic partner, singles do not lack meaningful and fulfilling social relationships. Having positive relationships with others is an important part of any person's life, and singles often have such relationships with their friends, siblings, relatives, and coworkers. Recognizing the importance of these relationships may help to explain a finding that some might find counterintuitive. Although many people assume that marriage increases happiness, reviews of past research reveal that there is actually little difference in the happiness levels of people who are married and those who have always been single. This finding suggests that always singles meet their interpersonal needs through other important relationships in their lives. In fact, people who have always been single tend to have closer relationships and greater contact with their parents, siblings, friends, and neighbors than do their married peers.

When comparing the happiness of married people to singles, researchers often group the always singles together with the divorced and widowed, resulting in a misleading conclusion that married people are happier. However, divorced and widowed people are generally less happy than people who have always been single; the always singles are more similar to married people.

When people who are single are compared with people who are married at just one point in time, any differences that emerge may not be about marital status at all. For example, people who stay single and people who eventually marry may already differ in happiness even before anyone marries. One way to see whether marriage matters is to follow people over time and see whether, for example, they become happier when they marry than they had been when they were single. A large study showed that when people married, they became slightly happier around the year of the wedding. Then they went back to being about as happy as they were when they were single. Not all people who married experienced that small

increment in happiness around the time of the marriage; people who married and later divorced did not become any happier early on in their marriage. The same study showed that people who became divorced or widowed became less happy than they were before the loss of their spouse, but even they recouped much of their happiness over time.

The findings for health generally follow the same pattern as those for happiness. Although people who have experienced a loss of a marriage, either through divorce or widowhood, often experience poorer health outcomes than people who remain married, there is little difference between the health outcomes of people who have always been single and those who remain married.

Singlehood as Stigma: Negative Stereotypes and Discrimination

Stereotypes of Singles

Despite research showing that people who have always been single are just as happy as those who are married (and when there are differences, they are quite small), people tend to assume that singles are different from married and coupled people along many dimensions. Research on stereotypes of singles has shown that, in comparison with married people, singles are thought to be more socially immature, self-centered, poorly adjusted, unattractive, asocial, and disagreeable and to have lower self-esteem. The only ways in which singles are perceived more positively than married or coupled people is that singles are seen as more independent and career oriented.

Why might people hold predominantly negative stereotypes about singles? First, although singlehood is increasingly common, marriage is still considered the norm. Most people report wanting to marry, and about 90 percent do marry at some point in their lives. Because marriage is considered highly desirable and normative, people may feel the need to explain the lives of singles simply because they are counternormative. The stereotypes that people hold of singles may have developed to serve this purpose—to provide an explanation for why singles have not married (e.g., perhaps they are too independent, immature, or disagreeable). The stereotypes of singles may also follow from assumptions that people make about

the consequences of not marrying (e.g., perhaps singles have become more independent career-oriented or have experienced a decline in self-esteem in response to not having a romantic partner). However, as noted earlier, there is no research indicating that these stereotypes are accurate.

Because adults marry later in life than they once did, it is no longer so unusual to be single in early adulthood. Consistent with the counternormative explanation, then, one might expect that the stereotypes of singles would be stronger for older than younger adults. Research offers some support for this prediction: People perceive larger differences between 40-year-old single and married people than they do between 25-year-old single and married people. Still, younger singles are not exempt from the negative stereotypes. Even college students are perceived more negatively if they are not in a romantic relationship or have not demonstrated past romantic relationship experience. These findings suggest that the need to explain counternormative behavior is unlikely to be the sole explanation for stereotypes of singles.

The predominantly negative stereotypes of singles may also be a consequence of how highly valued marriage and romantic relationships are in our culture today. Not only is marriage seen as a signifier of adulthood, it is also considered to be the most important and fulfilling adult relationship. Contemporary adults often believe in “soul mates.” They look to one special person to fulfill all of their social and emotional needs, often expecting that if they find and marry the right romantic partner, they really will live happily ever after. From a historical perspective, this is quite unusual. In earlier times, marriage was valued for more practical reasons, such as protecting and expanding property and power or increasing the number of people who would be allies rather than strangers. Many people in addition to a spouse had important places in adults’ lives. Now, however, when so many hopes and dreams are invested into just one person—a romantic partner—people who do not have such a partner may be presumed to be unhappy or incomplete.

Some have argued that the increasing number of singles may be perceived as a threat to the highly valued institution of marriage. When people feel that an important belief or institution is threatened, they tend to derogate those who do not live

according to the same beliefs. The negative stereotypes of singles may serve to maintain the importance of marriage by reinforcing negative misconceptions about singlehood.

Finally, from an evolutionary perspective, the negative ways that humans respond to singles may be a vestige of our ancestral past. Back then, people who were unpartnered—particularly women of reproductive age—may have had what evolutionary psychologists call “lower mate value.” Our perceptions have not caught up with our current realities, in which people who are single may be just as likely as people who are married to be healthy and engaged in positive pursuits.

Discrimination Against Singles

The stereotypes that singles are less mature and conscientious than married people can lead to various forms of discrimination. Several studies have found that single men make less money and earn less frequent promotions than married men even when they are the same age, have the same level of seniority, and have demonstrated similar performance on the job. The stereotype that singles are more career oriented can have a negative impact on the way they are treated in the workplace. Singles report being asked to work overtime and during holidays more often than their married peers.

Singles also face discrimination in the rental market. Landlords prefer leasing properties to married couples over singles even when their ages and finances are identical. Even long-term, committed (but unmarried) romantic relationship partners are discriminated against in favor of married couples. People tend to regard discrimination based on marital status as more justifiable and acceptable than discrimination based on race, gender, sexual orientation, or weight. Many commonly accepted and institutionalized policies favor married couples over singles; they include employer-sponsored benefits for spouses, tax advantages for married people, insurance policies that are costlier for singles than for married couples, and two-for-one discounts for consumer products.

Research focusing on singles is fairly recent, and many unanswered questions remain. For example, are there benefits to being single, such as increased autonomy and solitude? Are there adaptive advantages to meeting one's social and

emotional needs through a number of important relationships, rather than investing predominantly in a single romantic partner? Are there unique challenges that single parents face? Might the experiences and stereotypes of singles vary cross-culturally depending on whether marriages are arranged or freely chosen and the differing cultural expectations for marriage as a path to economic security or emotional fulfillment? Perhaps these questions will be explored in the future.

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See also Beliefs About Relationships; Change in Romantic Relationships Over Time; Happiness and Relationships; Marriage, Expectations About; Single-Parent Families; Social Networks, Dyad Effects on; Social Networks, Effects on Developed Relationships; Social Networks, Role in Relationship Initiation

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SINGLE-PARENT FAMILIES

Single-parent families are comprised of one parent raising children without the other parent living in

the same household. Many factors have contributed to an increase in the proportion of single-parent households, including divorce, cohabitation, unwed births, teenage pregnancy, death of a spouse, or the decision to have or adopt a child without another parent or partner. Single-parent families are found throughout society and are not limited to particular social groups. Factors such as ethnicity, race, and social class can assist in our understanding of single-parent families. Changing societal attitudes toward single-parent families also help explain the greater acceptance of these households. This entry describes common types of single-parent families and explores the causes and consequences of these family arrangements for individuals and for society.

Description and Types of Single-Parent Families

Although the concept of a single-parent family is not new, there has been growth in such families since World War II. According to the U.S. Census, in the year 2000, 9 percent of households were headed by a single parent and 1 out of 10 children in the United States lived in a single-parent family. Children in single-parent households usually live in mother-only families, although the number of children living in father-only families has also increased. According to estimates, more than half of U.S. children will spend some or all of their childhood in a single-parent household.

In 2005, 9.9 million families in the United States were headed by single mothers, and more than 2 million were headed by single fathers. Part of the growth of single-parent households is due to increased numbers of children born to unmarried parents. By 2000, about one third of U.S. births occurred outside of marriage.

Overall, children in single-parent families are more likely to live in female-headed households. They are also more likely to live in poverty than are children in two-parent or father-only families. Although the fastest growing category of single mothers is comprised of White women, Black and Hispanic children living in single-parent, female-headed households are even more likely to live in poverty. Not only are children in single-parent families more likely to be poor, they also have a greater chance of becoming involved in criminal

activity, having health-related problems, and attaining lesser educational levels. They are less likely to experience consistent parental supervision and more likely to have disagreements with their parent. Children growing up in single-parent households tend to develop less stable family relationships as adults, are more likely to themselves divorce, and attain lower occupational status. Whether these outcomes are a result of being raised in a single-parent household or due to other factors, especially socioeconomic ones, are questions that are fiercely debated by researchers and policymakers.

Research shows that unmarried mothers and their children confront many obstacles. This is especially the case for children born to teenage mothers. Although teen birth rates have declined somewhat in the United States over the past 15 years, they remain high, especially when compared with other industrialized Western countries. About half of all nonmarital births occurred to women under the age of 20 in 1970, whereas less than one third of all nonmarital births were to teens by 1999. Still, the majority of teens who give birth are not married, and their children are more likely to grow up in single-parent families. These children are also more likely to experience multiple living arrangements during childhood, living in what is sometimes called subfamilies. *Subfamilies* are defined as single parents living within other households, often including other adult relatives such as parents. Estimates are that in the United States about one in five single parents (and their children) currently live in subfamily arrangements. Unmarried teens are also more likely to keep their babies, and fewer are getting married than in the past. Teen mothers are also more likely to have subsequent births outside of marriage, have lower educational levels, and be poor. Teen mothers are also likely to be sexually involved with men over the age of 20, who generally do not marry these teen mothers and often do not financially support their children.

Another significant change affecting the rise in single-parent families is related to increased divorce rates since the 1950s. In the United States, current estimates are that more than half of all divorces involve children under the age of 18, and approximately 4 out of every 10 children will experience parental divorce. By the year 2000, in the United States, the majority of single mothers (55 percent)

were either divorced or separated. The impact of divorce on families differs, but generally single-parent families headed by females do not do as well financially as their married counterparts. When noncustodial parents pay child support and have regular visits, the overall well-being of their children improves. The extent to which divorce brings emotional relief to conflict-ridden families is unclear. Stressful divorces can have lasting negative impacts on some children.

Divorce results in the formation of a single-parent family, at least for a period of time. Although there has been much debate on whether divorce causes damage to children, the alternative, staying in a bad marriage, may not be any more acceptable. Increased awareness on the part of many spouses that they have alternatives to marriage and greater societal acceptance of divorce are reasons for the rise in the number of single-parent families. Other reasons include later age at first marriage and increased societal acceptance of cohabitation and out-of-wedlock births. Although death of a spouse also results in single-parent families, increased life expectancy rates make it increasingly unlikely that children will be raised in single-parent households through parental death. For example, in 2000, only 4 percent of single mothers in the United States were widowed.

In the United States, cohabitation rates have been increasing, and estimates are that more than half of nonmarital births currently occur within cohabiting relationships. Cohabiting couples and their families may not experience the same financial and resource challenges as single-parent households. However, although many cohabiting couples expect to eventually marry, these relationships tend to be less stable and disproportionately result in dissolution compared to marriage. Estimates are that less than half of cohabiting relationships last 5 years or more.

The availability of new reproductive technologies and greater acceptance of premarital sex and single-parent adoptions may also influence the decision to become a single-parent family. Estimates are currently that about one third of children adopted from foster homes are adopted by single parents. Some adults choose to become single parents, rejecting the need to be in a committed relationship, but embracing parenthood and family life. For women who delay both marriage and childbearing,

single parenting may be seen as a reasonable option. When former Vice President Dan Quayle criticized the television show *Murphy Brown* for glamorizing single motherhood, he was accused of misunderstanding the plight of single mothers and underestimating the degree to which American society supported the right of single women to choose motherhood over marriage. Gay and lesbian single parenting has also become more common. Many states now allow single gay men and lesbians to be foster parents and to adopt children.

Racial and Ethnic Differences

In the mid-1960s, the *Moynihan Report* cited three features of Black family life: (1) almost one quarter of urban Black marriages were dissolved, (2) almost one quarter of Black births were to unmarried mothers, and (3) almost one fourth of Black families were headed by females. Although this report was criticized, 15 years later, out-of-wedlock birthrates among Blacks had more than doubled to 56 percent. By 2005, 65 percent of Black children were born to single mothers. Recent research on Black families continues to show higher proportions of unwed mothers, single-parent families, and poor single-parent households. Many factors contribute to racial and ethnic differences in single-parent households. Black children in the United States are more likely to live in single-parent families (65 percent) than are Hispanic children (34 percent), non-Hispanic White children (24 percent), and Asian children (16 percent). Although there has been an overall decline in the proportion of teen births in recent years, the percentage of births to Hispanic teens is growing rapidly.

Census figures show increases in the number of single-parent, female-headed households across all racial and ethnic groups. Single-mother households headed by Whites are more likely to be the result of divorce, whereas Black and Hispanic single-mother households are more likely to be the result of having never married. However, there is variation among Latino subgroups in terms of rates and types of female-headed households. Estimates are that more than 25 percent of American Indian families are single-parent, female-headed households.

Psychological Impacts

The psychological effects of growing up in a single-parent family vary. Single parents and their children can share some psychological outcomes, including loneliness, anxiety, fear, and feelings of abandonment. Single parents are more likely to suffer from higher levels of stress partly because they must take on the role of both parents even if they are uncertain about what the other role entails. Financial strains experienced by single-parent households add to psychological stress, as does the lack of emotional support experienced by many single parents.

Single-parent families often face especially high levels of stress. Compared with two-parent families, single-parent households experience more major life events, including job changes, decreases in income, moves, and illness. Single mothers in particular report lower levels of psychological support, higher amounts of depression, lower self-esteem, and greater pessimism.

The psychological impacts on children of single-parent families can be numerous. Children in single-parent families are often given more responsibilities than those from two-parent homes, and many report having social lives that differ from their peers raised in two-parent families. Often children in single-parent families feel as if they had to grow up more quickly and assume more responsibilities. They often report emotional strains related to being overloaded with responsibilities, tasks, and expectations. The absence of fathers in the lives of many female-headed households may deny children the opportunity for access to a male role model.

Finally, children of divorce who are subsequently raised in single-parent households may experience psychological effects even years after the divorce of their parents. Although some studies report that these children are more worried, angry, underachieving, and less likely to enter into healthy adult relationships, there is no agreement on this issue. Others suggest that children raised in single-parent divorced households are more resilient and adjust well.

Sociological Consequences

Children raised in single-parent families may experience lower educational achievement, increased

chances of dropping out of high school, and increased chances of drug or alcohol use and of committing delinquent acts compared with their peers from intact families. They also tend to experience greater difficulties in future occupational success. If they marry, they are more likely to do so earlier and to have children earlier. They are also more likely to divorce.

Although single-parent families are more accepted today, many single parents feel that their lifestyles are negatively labeled. Single parenthood and divorce are still seen by many as “failed familial life cycle stages.” Many family policies tend to favor two-parent families, and single-parent families are often seen as burdens to the state. In American society, a weak social welfare system, inadequate affordable child-care and health care options, and the erosion of strong extended families result in many single-parent families reporting high degrees of social isolation. Single-parent families in countries that place less emphasis on individualism as a social value do not report similar levels of isolation.

Due to financial strains, many single-parent families live in low-income areas and send their children to low-performing schools. They more often live in neighborhoods with high crime, unemployment, and poverty rates. Another significant concern for many single-parent families is health care because many single parents work in jobs that do not provide these benefits. Child care is another issue for many single-parent households, especially for those with lower incomes. Single parents often find themselves relying on family, friends, neighbors, and older siblings for child-care services. Children in single-parent households are less likely to have as much parental supervision. Single parents tend to be less involved with their children’s educational activities and are less likely to monitor their children’s friends and leisure activities.

Randi L. Miller and Michele Hamrick

See also Cohabitation; Divorce, Children and; Families, Demographic Trends; Postdivorce Relationships; Singlehood

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SOCIAL ALLERGIES

A social allergy is an individual's tendency to experience a disproportionately intense emotional reaction in response to a social allergen. A social allergen is a behavior or situation that seems unpleasant or uncivil to onlookers, but may not warrant as intense a reaction as the individual displayed. Individuals who experience social allergies may recognize that their reactions are excessive, but describe the stimulus as something that "grates on my nerves," "rubs me the wrong way," "has gotten under my skin," "is making me sick," "is driving me crazy," or "is a pet peeve." Social allergens commonly produce annoyance or disgust, although rage, anxiety, or sadness also may occur.

Mechanisms of Social Allergies

A social allergy affects an individual emotionally in a manner that resembles how physical allergies function immunologically. The first experience with poison ivy generally produces a small negative reaction. With repeated contact with poison ivy, however, sensitivity tends to increase, and the negative response becomes stronger. The same repetition-sensitization response can occur in response to a lover or coworker's unpleasant behavior. Many unpleasant behaviors that occur occasionally are gracefully tolerated and quickly forgotten. But, through periodic exposure at regular intervals or through extreme or prolonged initial exposure, a social allergen may produce escalating sensitivity. Each instance of the unpleasant actions may

increase the recipients' socially allergic emotional response. Respondents recognize changes in their reaction over time by saying that they have become "tired of" or "fed up with" a social allergen.

The repetition-sensitization process may be based on the same learning dynamics that are responsible for Pavlovian conditioning and reinforcement learning, and it shares some features with post-traumatic stress disorder. Cognitive processes can accelerate the process. Negative emotions can be accelerated if the individual perceives that the perpetrator is uncivil due to indifference and does not care about causing unpleasantness or hurt feelings. Emotions can be further inflamed if the recipient has politely asked the perpetrator to curtail the unpleasant actions and they continue nonetheless. The escalating reaction may be adaptive to motivate further action to escape or suppress the allergen.

Types of Social Allergens

When university students were asked to specify people who caused social allergic reactions and drove them crazy without necessarily intending to do so, every respondent was able to name at least one person who got under his or her skin. The average was one relative and three nonrelatives. Based on studies conducted with undergraduate students in romantic relationships and a study of employees responding about work relationships, allergenic behaviors were divided into four categories. The categories differed in terms of whether the initiation of the action was intentional (even if the consequences may not have been), as opposed to being performed habitually, accidentally, or mindlessly. The factors also differed in terms of whether the behaviors were personally directed toward the individual or performed by the partner without focusing on the individual (although the partner might be offended or hurt). Examples of behaviors from love and work are offered.

Uncouth habits are behaviors that are unpleasant, but are not intentional or personally directed. A romantic partner could behave aversively through excessive informality, such as by noisily belching, showing a lack of concern for being clean, expressing a lot of profanity, or wearing old, tattered clothing. An uncouth coworker displays

poor grooming, frequently leaves things in others' work spaces, fails to share work information, or uses jargon that is difficult to understand.

Inconsiderate acts involve behaviors that are relatively unintentional, but nonetheless create a personal imposition. Romantic partners who are prone to inconsiderate acts demand attention by frequently asking for feedback about their appearance, take too many things when traveling (which require help), keep the individual out shopping too long, or express excessive needs for emotional support (which require pep talks). An inconsiderate coworker does not offer help when the individual needs it, often complains about mundane things, is vague and indecisive on task, or does not work hard on shared projects. Inconsiderate acts were the most frequent allergens among coworkers and had the greatest emotional impact.

Intrusive behaviors are actions that are both intentional and personally imposing. They include a romantic partner demanding that the individual do things, complaining about actions that caused disappointment or anger in the distant past, or being rude, insulting, impolite, or disrespectful to the individual. An intrusive coworker is critical, giving commands without having legitimate authority, does not allow the individual to take a turn in the conversation, or imposes his or her thoughts and opinion on the individual. Intrusive behaviors caused the strongest social allergies in romantic relationships.

Norm violations are behaviors that are intentional, but not personally directed. This includes a romantic partner who does not work hard at job or school, gambles excessively, goes out with friends instead of the individual, or flirts with members of the opposite sex. Norm violation also describes the actions of a coworker who does unethical things to get ahead, lies to other people, creates obstacles for more successful people, or criticizes people who are in a position of authority.

In research examining social allergies among dating couples, it was found that the longer a couple had been dating, the more that the individual perceived the partner to display uncouth habits, inconsiderate acts, and intrusive behaviors. The change in perception of negative behavior was not due simply to the loss of romantic illusions. The individual's increased perception of negative partner behaviors was related to the partner's own

self-reports of decreased effort to be proper, increased efforts to control the individual, and decreased disclosure to the individual.

Social Allergy Outcomes

A social allergy can develop whenever a partner or coworker repetitively performs an obnoxiously vulgar, insensitive, pushy, or proscribed behavior that adversely affects the personal boundary, comfort, dignity, or propriety needs of the individual. The frequency of occurrence of an allergen and the intensity of the emotion that it elicits both influence the impact of social allergies on the individual's life.

Personally focused allergens, such as inconsiderate acts and intrusive behaviors, have adverse effects on romantic relationship satisfaction, whereas intentional allergens, such as intrusive and norm-violating behaviors, predict relationship termination. In the office, the frequency with which a coworker performed each type of social allergen is associated with dissatisfaction with the social environment of work, which is correlated with turnover intention. Social allergens are stressors that may have an adverse impact on the immune system. They are related to an increased likelihood of illnesses.

Coping With Social Allergies

Individuals cope with social allergies in a variety of ways. In a study conducted by Michael Cunningham and colleagues, about half of people who experienced a social allergy spoke to the perpetrator, but most did not obtain relief. Perpetrators differ in their capacity and inclination to modify their allergenic behavior, especially the unintentional.

Individuals tried to cope by avoiding the perpetrator of social allergens. Due to the contact demands of work and relationships, this was seldom successful. Many people dealt with their social allergies by seeking support and advice from other people. This seemed to reduce some of the adverse impact, but did not neutralize the effect of social allergies on job or relationship satisfaction.

Accepting advice to adjust to certain social allergens, rather than resent them, may aid some people. But individuals who are neurotic and easily

upset may find it difficult to acclimate to social allergens, and some social allergens are simply intolerable. Systematic desensitization therapy may help in such cases. Strategies to alleviate social allergies may be an important part of an individual's emotional, relational, and physical health.

Michael R. Cunningham

See also Accommodation; Fatal Attraction; Hurt Feelings; Neuroticism, Effects on Relationships; Transgressions

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SOCIAL ANXIETY

Social anxiety is a fear of being evaluated negatively, embarrassed, or judged by others. It is a construct that overlaps significantly with the personality trait of shyness. When a person's social anxiety is associated with life interference or significant personal distress, he or she is diagnosed with social anxiety disorder (or social phobia, as listed in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fourth Edition, Text Revision* [2000]). It is important to acknowledge that nearly everyone experiences some degree of social anxiety in certain social or evaluative situations. Social anxiety is regarded as problematic when it is associated with avoidance of these situations and/or decreased life satisfaction.

According to the Self-Presentation Theory of social anxiety, described by Mark Leary and his colleagues, socially anxious individuals would like to make a favorable impression on others, but they

doubt their ability to do so. As a result, they behave in a submissive, conciliatory manner to avoid rejection. Unfortunately, this strategy often prevents them from achieving the pleasurable rewards that most people obtain from social engagement. Research has documented many deleterious interpersonal consequences of social anxiety. For example, data from large epidemiological studies indicate that people with social anxiety disorder experience mild to moderate impairment in their close relationships, and they are less likely to be married than people without this disorder. Other studies have demonstrated that socially anxious individuals report higher levels of loneliness, fewer friends, less dating experience, and fewer daily social interactions than nonanxious individuals. Some socially anxious people are unsatisfied with their social networks and the social support they receive from close others.

This entry discusses some of the specific cognitive, behavioral, and interpersonal deficits experienced by socially anxious individuals that have been identified in published research. It also describes psychosocial and pharmacological interventions that can be used to treat the symptoms of social anxiety that exacerbate these deficits. However, this entry also considers the manner in which social anxiety can be adaptive in forming and maintaining relationships.

Cognitive Deficits

Cognition refers to the manner in which people think about, judge, and interpret events in their environment, as well as the manner in which they process incoming stimuli. Socially anxious individuals experience more negative and fewer positive thoughts when they interact with others. Contrary to ratings by objective observers, they believe that they have performed poorly in social situations. Even when they judge that a social interaction has gone well, they continue to experience anxiety because they believe that others will increase their expectations for them. When a social error occurs, they perceive it as being costly or intolerable. After they have engaged in social interaction, they ruminate over their performance, a phenomenon called postevent processing.

Socially anxious individuals are quick to detect any indicators of poor social performance, such as

a frown from a member of the audience. Furthermore, they interpret neutral behaviors by others (e.g., an inadvertent yawn) as evidence that they are being rejected. Socially anxious individuals also exhibit self-focused attention, which is defined as excessive attention on internally generated information, such as emotions or physiological sensations. When they focus their attention inwardly during social interaction, they become consumed with indicators of anxiety and miss important social cues that would enhance their performance. As a result, they have difficulty remembering the information that is shared with them by others. Thus, socially anxious individuals have pessimistic beliefs about their ability to engage successfully in social interaction, and their style of information processing during social interaction puts them at risk for realizing their negative predictions.

Behavioral Deficits

Social skills are behaviors that enable people to be successful in social interaction and include verbal, nonverbal, and emotional expressions. A great deal of research designed to examine social skills in socially anxious individuals was conducted in the 1970s and 1980s; a typical study required socially anxious and nonanxious individuals to have conversations with standardized conversation partners (i.e., confederates who were part of the experiment), and their social skills were coded by objective raters. Surprisingly, this research suggested that socially anxious individuals tend to be as adept as nonanxious individuals in many types of molecular social skills, or skills that capture specific behaviors such as head nods and gestures. When socially anxious individuals were rated on the overall impression that they made on others during social interaction, they fared more poorly than nonanxious individuals, although ratings often indicated that they performed in the adequate range. Many scholars suggested that the degree to which socially anxious individuals demonstrate impaired social skills varies as a function of the circumstances surrounding the interaction. According to this explanation, socially anxious individuals are most likely to demonstrate social skills deficits in situations involving evaluation or

ambiguity and are least likely to demonstrate social skills deficits in situations in which they are comfortable, such as friendly interactions with close friends and family members.

More recent research has adopted the same type of experimental methodology, but in addition to coding observable social skills, it obtains ratings on the subjective impressions that socially anxious and nonanxious individuals make during their interactions. Findings from this line of research suggest that people who interact with socially anxious individuals report that they have difficulty forming a meaningful connection with them. Relative to their conversation partners, socially anxious individuals disclose less about themselves and speak for less time. As a result, conversation partners perceive that socially anxious individuals are dissimilar and uninterested in them. People who interact with socially anxious individuals do not experience the expected increase in positive affect by the end of the conversation and, at times, even express irritation toward them. After the conversation, conversation partners rate the quality of the interaction as low and indicate that they would not particularly look forward to future interactions with them. Although this summary paints a bleak picture of the impression that socially anxious individuals make on strangers, it should be noted that interactions between two socially anxious partners are associated with higher levels of closeness than interactions between one socially anxious and one nonanxious person, suggesting that characteristics of the conversation partner play a role in the amount and type of information that socially anxious individuals disclose.

Most of the research on the association between social anxiety and social skills deficits has examined skills in the context of meeting people for the first time. However, there is some evidence that socially anxious individuals demonstrate impaired skills in their partner relationships. When talking with their partner about a problem in their relationship, their communication style often escalates conflict, rather than resolves it. They often communicate defensiveness and a sense that they do not understand their partner's point of view. In addition, compared with nonanxious individuals, socially anxious individuals report a lower frequency of sexual activity with a partner, less sexual satisfaction, more apprehension about sex, and a

higher incidence of sexual dysfunctions, such as premature ejaculation (if male).

Interpersonal Style

Adult attachment style is defined as a cognitive, emotional, and behavioral way of responding in close relationships that stems from significant childhood relationships, especially the caregiver–infant relationship. Socially anxious individuals are more likely than nonanxious individuals to be characterized by both a fearful adult attachment style (i.e., discomfort with being close with others) and a preoccupied adult attachment style (i.e., anxiety about not being able to obtain a satisfying relationship). Socially anxious individuals characterized by a fearful style would be expected to avoid close relationships or approach them in a guarded, defensive manner, whereas socially anxious individuals characterized by a preoccupied attachment style would be expected to be submissive and dependent in their close relationships. Other work examining interpersonal styles associated with social anxiety has supported the notion that there is heterogeneity in the manner in which socially anxious individuals approach their relationships, with some socially anxious individuals presenting as friendly but unassertive and other socially anxious individuals presenting as hostile and mistrustful. Some research shows that the latter group of socially anxious individuals is particularly likely to experience other types of psychological distress and demonstrate a resistance to treatment.

Intervention

The most extensively evaluated psychosocial interventions for social anxiety fall in the broad category of cognitive behavioral treatments, which include interventions designed to help patients develop strategies to evaluate maladaptive beliefs about themselves and the world and/or develop behavioral strategies for managing social anxiety (e.g., relaxation, social skills, exposure to feared situations). In addition, some serotonin-reuptake inhibitors (e.g., paroxetine [Paxil]), monoamine oxidase inhibitors (e.g., phenelzine [Nardil]), and benzodiazepines (e.g., clonazepam [Klonopin])

are more effective than placebo in treating social anxiety. Research shows that both pharmacological and cognitive behavioral treatment approaches are equally efficacious in reducing symptoms of social anxiety. Although pharmacotherapy exerts its effects more quickly, patients who receive cognitive behavioral therapies are less likely to relapse. To date, most clinical trials that evaluate interventions for social anxiety focus on reductions in anxious symptoms as an outcome, rather than improvements in interpersonal functioning. However, there is preliminary evidence that cognitive behavioral approaches to treating social anxiety are associated with improvements in self-reported social functioning and social skills rated by objective judges.

Adaptive Significance

According to evolutionary theory, social anxiety inhibits people from behaving in ways that would threaten dominant others, which in turn ensure their place in a group. This was adaptive for our ancestors because it was nearly impossible for them to survive outside of a group and handle the multitude of environmental threats that they faced on a regular basis. In contemporary society, excessive social anxiety is unnecessary because the same threats no longer exist (or exist to a much lesser degree), and it often interferes with attaining interpersonal goals that many people aspire to achieve. As is evidenced in this entry, the majority of the theory and research on interpersonal functioning and social anxiety is geared toward identifying specific deficits that cause such life interference and developing strategies for modifying those deficits.

However, it is important to acknowledge that not all socially anxious individuals are dissatisfied with their interpersonal functioning. Many socially anxious individuals have a small, intimate circle of family and friends to whom they feel close. Socially anxious individuals are likely to be perceived by others as modest, agreeable, and polite, and they are unlikely to be perceived by others as arrogant and brash. It is possible for socially anxious individuals to learn to capitalize on these traits in their interpersonal functioning. There is also evidence that socially anxious individuals perceive their

mate value to be lower than nonanxious individuals, and they report that they would be less likely to pursue relationships with physically attractive people and more likely to pursue relationships with unattractive people. Although these findings sound like additional deficits associated with social anxiety, in actuality, this tendency could be adaptive because socially anxious individuals would not squander their resources on unattainable partners. Thus, there is no doubt that social anxiety is associated with interpersonal distress, but there are many avenues for socially anxious individuals to attain healthy close relationships.

Amy Wenzel

See also Neuroticism, Effects on Relationships; Self-Esteem, Effects on Relationships; Shyness; Social Skills, Adults

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SOCIAL CAPITAL

Social capital is the social ties and the norms of trust and reciprocity that underlie them. These ties

represent an often overlooked yet crucial asset for individuals and communities. In principle, this form of capital is as valuable to the productivity and well-being of individuals and communities as their financial assets, as well as their education and training. Like financial capital and human capital, social capital is a resource used to maintain and improve quality of life. It is a key unlocking a world of greater possibility. Indeed, it is through friends, colleagues, and acquaintances that individuals and groups receive opportunities to use larger pools of financial and human capital. This entry reviews the benefits of social capital, as well as some of the problems confronting social science in measuring and conceptualizing the value of these assets.

Like financial and human capital, the possessor of such ties must not just simply invest in them and build them over time to be beneficial; they must “spend” them as well. At a personal level, such ties give access to information, opportunities, and resources available only to the friends and acquaintances in our networks. With some personal effort, they can help us get a job, a loan, information, or just plain good advice. The community can benefit from social capital as well. A multiplier effect is realized when groups share their talents and resources. Partnerships have the potential to be stronger, more resilient, and more creative than their partners.

Functions of Social Capital

Social capital benefits individuals and groups in two ways. It *bonds* a collection of similar individuals together, producing “strong ties” between them. A strongly bonded group offers entrée to a community of persons with similar characteristics, influence, and resources. In contrast, social ties *bridge* or link differing groups of people, unlocking a wider array of resources and a wider span of influence. Bonding ties allow people with limited resources to maintain their current circumstances and lifestyles better than they might on their own. Bridging ties, in contrast, allow these same people to achieve a better way of life by providing admittance to groups with a greater variety of resources and power. These ties are sometimes referred to as “weak ties” because they represent the larger

acquaintance structure of individuals. Weak ties can help people and communities overcome structural barriers to advancement. For both individuals and groups, they offer chances for innovation and change by offering exposure to a range of new ideas, new resources, and diverse populations.

This understanding of the “value” contained in our social ties has led to research concluding that social capital has significant benefits for people’s physical and mental health and their overall sense of well-being. Life satisfaction, suicide ideation, depression, colds, heart disease, strokes, cancer, and premature deaths have been linked to reduced social capital, although the mechanisms connected with these relationships remain unclear. Indeed, although the concept of social capital has promoted interest in topics as diverse as the social causes of disease, work productivity, school performance, and the significance of civil society, the concept of social capital is not without its critics.

Problems of Measurement

Perhaps the most serious problem yet to be overcome is the challenge of measuring social capital. Too often social capital is assessed arbitrarily in social science research. Measures have included distinct forms: political, civic, and religious participation; workplace ties; informal social ties; Internet-based connections; volunteering and philanthropy; social support; and attitudes of reciprocity and trust. This scatter-shot approach to the concept of social capital has led to too many indices with no agreed-on scale, and that has made for confusion and overwrought claims of relevance. No agreement exists yet in the social sciences over what constitutes social capital, leaving the concept open to the critique that it is a catch-all term for a variety of social connections and normative circumstances. Substantial work, therefore, needs to be done to refine the measurement of social capital before much can be said definitively about its impact on quality of life. Perhaps the best example of this lies in the debate over whether social capital is declining in the United States. The answer appears to depend on how social capital is measured. When social capital is assessed by looking at more traditional social connections like voluntary associations, friendships, social supports, acquaintances,

religious participation, and so on, a good case can be made that social capital has declined in the United States since the late 1970s. However, when use of the Internet is factored into the equation, it is apparent that the ties that bind us together may have actually increased steadily with the use of blogs, Web pages, e-mail, online support groups, and so on.

Social Capital as a Fix

Social capital is also controversial because the concept implicitly suggests that it can fix deep-seated social problems. In essence, the term has both empirical and normative content—describing what is as well as what should be. Local problems are often blamed on shrinking social capital, rather than government inattention or an unjust social structure. Implicit in some writings on social capital is the idea that as voluntarism and group participation decline so goes the community and the society. There are two hidden assumptions in this approach to social capital:

1. This asset has the same uniform spending power as physical and human capital. Hence, possessing a unit of social capital tends to have the same consequences regardless of the individual’s position in the social structure. From this perspective, both the individual’s and the community’s capacity for problem solving must be reassessed because all fungible and measurable assets have not been counted.
2. Individuals and communities have the capacity to pull themselves out of poverty and dramatically improve their quality of life if they just invest in and spend their social resources wisely. In essence, social capital is capital, whoever has it and wherever it is located.

There is a serious problem with these assumptions. Social capital’s value for individuals and communities depends on resources embedded in social networks, hence not all social asset units are equal because the resources embedded in them vary by social position. The social position of the asset holder affects the value of his or her social capital. Social capital doesn’t spend the same way in every social position. People in poor, segregated communities, with fewer fiscal and human capital

assets, often find their social ties becoming obligations instead of resources.

Social capital offers a promising concept for thinking about how social networks can improve individuals' quality of life. Much work, theoretically and methodologically, still needs to be done before the field fully understands how to measure the "value" of these assets for individuals and communities.

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See also Affiliation; Community Involvement; Health and Relationships; Social Networks, Dyad Effects on; Social Support, Nature of; Social Support and Health

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SOCIAL COMPARISON, EFFECTS ON RELATIONSHIPS

Imagine a couple, Tony and Maria. Tony and Maria spend lots of time together, as many couples do, doing things together and sharing their victories and disappointments. But how do Tony and Maria affect each other's self-concepts? How will Tony feel when Maria wins a dance competition they both entered? Similarly, will it affect Maria's self-concept when Tony loses a fight? Self-concept shifts due to social comparison can either be contrastive (people's views of themselves become less similar to their views of the salient other; e.g., Tony compares himself to Maria and feels like a worse dancer because she is so good) or assimilative (people's views of themselves

become more similar to the salient others; e.g., Tony feels like a better dancer when he thinks about how his girlfriend is a great dancer). In addition, they can either have positive effects (improved feelings about the self and/or about a relationship) or negative effects (diminished feelings about the self and/or a relationship). For example, if Maria is attractive, Tony can either compare himself to Maria and feel less attractive (a contrast effect with negative implications for the self) or incorporate her attractiveness to himself and feel more attractive (an assimilation effect with positive implications for the self). Similarly, if Maria is a bad dancer, Tony can either compare himself to Maria and feel like a better dancer (a contrast effect with positive implications for the self) or incorporate her dancing to himself and feel like a worse dancer (an assimilation effect with negative implications for the self). Factors that influence the directions and effects of social comparisons within close relationships are discussed in this entry. The broader implications of social comparison within and between close relationships are also discussed.

Direction and Effects of Social Comparisons in Close Relationships

Relationship Closeness

Within close relationships, a key variable influencing whether assimilation or contrast effects occur is the closeness of the relationship between the perceiver and the target. When the perceiver has a close, intimate relationship with the target, assimilation effects are likely; when the target is not close to the perceiver, contrast effects become more likely. For example, when evaluating their own performance on a novel task, people tend to assimilate the performance of a close friend, but contrast the performance of an acquaintance. Similarly, the self-concept of the perceiver can moderate these effects. When thinking about the self as interdependent or connected to others (e.g., I am a mom, a sister, a friend, a teammate), people tend to assimilate relationship partners. Conversely, when thinking about the self as independent or unique and different from others (e.g., I am smart, funny, unique, different from other people), people tend to contrast relationship partners.

Attachment Style

Although all people form relationships, they differ in their desire to pursue closeness within those relationships. Attachment theory accounts for these differences by asserting that individuals enter relationships with well-developed cognitive representations of the self and others. One dimension of the attachment behavioral system is avoidance. Individuals who are low in avoidance (hereafter referred to as *nonavoidant*) are comfortable with closeness and seek it in their relationships. Conversely, avoidant individuals are not comfortable with closeness and try to create mental and physical distance between themselves and their relationship partners. In addition, avoidant individuals are often involved in relationships that are low in interdependence and commitment. Thus, avoidant and nonavoidant individuals differ in their desire for, and comfort with, closeness in their relationships.

These principles, together with social comparison research, suggest that nonavoidant individuals may be more likely than avoidant individuals to assimilate the characteristics of relationship partners into their self-concepts because of their greater comfort with closeness. However, avoidant individuals may be more likely than nonavoidant individuals to contrast their self-concepts away from the characteristics of relationship partners because of the mental and physical distance between themselves and their relationship partners. A priming study conducted by Shira Gabriel and her colleagues found that individuals with nonavoidant attachment styles define themselves as more similar to a friend (assimilation effect), whereas individuals with avoidant attachment styles define themselves as less similar to a friend (contrast effect). Priming refers to an experimental procedure that activates mental images of a particular concept or person. For example, thinking about a funny and extroverted friend led nonavoidant participants to describe themselves as more funny and extroverted than when not thinking about the friend. Conversely, thinking about a funny and extroverted friend led avoidant individuals to see themselves as less funny and extroverted than they normally would. Gabriel and her colleagues also found behavioral effects of thinking about friends. Thinking about a smart friend led nonavoidant

individuals to perform better on an ostensible intelligence task, whereas avoidant individuals trended to perform worse. The same effects have been found with romantic partners. Thinking about the ways in which a romantic partner is intelligent led nonavoidant participants to do well in an ostensible intelligence task, whereas thinking about the ways in which their romantic partner is stupid led avoidant participants to do better on the same task.

Relevance of Domain to the Self

Contrast and assimilation effects are also influenced by the relevance of the domain of comparison to the self (self-relevance). Abraham Tesser's Self-Evaluation Maintenance (SEM) model proposes that within close relationships contrast effects are likely within self-relevant domains, whereas assimilation effects are likely within domains of low self-relevance. For example, if singing is important to Maria's self-concept, then she is likely to contrast her singing to Tony's and feel threatened if Tony is a better singer. However, if singing is not central to Maria's self-concept, Maria is more likely to assimilate Tony's singing skills and feel proud of him and good about herself even when Tony outsings her. Thus, one implication of the SEM model is that the performance of a partner who shares the same interests can be threatening to the self, in particular when the partner excels in that area.

Thankfully, for all people who fall in love at work or in graduate school, there are exceptions to this corollary. Close relationships may serve as a buffer against negative social comparisons. For example, people in close relationships can moderate the negative impact of upward social comparisons (i.e., comparison to others who perform better than the self) by focusing on the strength of their relationship, rather than their own bruised egos. Furthermore, interdependently oriented individuals tend not to demonstrate contrast effects in close relationships, even on self-relevant traits. Rather, people who think of relationships as part of the self, either dispositionally or situationally, tend not to feel threatened by the good performance of a close friend; instead, the friend's success may be cause for celebration, rather than a blow to self-esteem.

Extensions of the SEM model have accounted for individual differences in close relationship quality. Married people, who tend to have a more interdependent or communal orientation and distinguish less between benefits to the self and to the partner, respond to outperforming (or being outperformed by) a partner by considering the partner's response to being outperformed by (or to outperforming) oneself. This may attenuate the standard responses. In other words, although Tony outsings her, Maria may feel happy because Tony has succeeded.

Broader Implications of Social Comparisons Within and Between Close Relationships

Implications of Attachment Style

Social comparisons have implications for self-esteem and partner preferences. The self-concept contains both positive components (liked and ideal attributes) and negative components (disliked and feared attributes). Because nonavoidants assimilate the characteristics of salient relationship partners into their self-concepts, relationship partners who embody liked and ideal aspects of the self-concept may lead nonavoidants to feel better about themselves by activating the more positive aspects of self. However, because avoidants contrast themselves to relationship partners, they benefit from having relationship partners whom they perceive as embodying more of their negative traits (i.e., their disliked and feared attributes). Comparing themselves to more negatively viewed relationship partners makes avoidants feel less similar to their feared and disliked aspects of self, which in turn helps avoidants feel better about themselves. Avoidants and nonavoidants also strategically favor different relationship partners when their self-esteem is threatened as a means of bolstering their self-esteem. After a self-esteem threat, non-avoidant participants favor relationship partners who are viewed as more similar to positive aspects of self. Conversely, avoidant participants favor relationship partners who are more similar to negative aspects of self.

Implications of the SEM Model

The social comparison processes involved in SEM also have implications for relationship processes. To

avoid the potentially painful consequences inherent in SEM, individuals have been shown to willfully bias the processing of social comparison by undermining, predicting poor performance for, or psychologically distancing themselves from successful close others. SEM processes also affect partner choice. In one study, middle-school children preferred friends whose performance (both actual and perceived) was better than their own on self-irrelevant traits, but slightly worse than their own on highly self-relevant traits. Thus, SEM effects can lead to different treatment of partners, feelings for partners, and even partner choice.

Between-Relationship Social Comparisons

Social comparisons are also used to evaluate the strength of a relationship by contrasting it to other relationships. Thus, Tony and Maria can feel better about their relationship by comparing themselves to other couples whom they perceive as less happy. For example, when evaluating their relationship problems, spouses tend to view themselves as better off than other couples, thus providing themselves with a downward comparison standard. Some individuals are more likely than others to engage in these between-couple social comparisons. Individuals high in Social Comparison Orientation (i.e., a strong tendency to engage in social comparisons) tend to be happier with their own close relationships after reading about people who have poor social lives or who have to work hard on their relationships to be happy.

Shira Gabriel

See also Adult Attachment, Individual Differences; Comparison Levels; Self-Concept and Relationships; Self-Evaluation Maintenance Model; Similarity in Ongoing Relationships

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SOCIAL EXCHANGE THEORY

The social exchange framework was formally advanced in the late 1950s and early 1960s in the work of the sociologists George Homans and Peter Blau and the work of social psychologists John Thibaut and Harold Kelley. Over the years, several exchange perspectives, rather than one distinct exchange theory, have evolved. The exchange framework is built on the combination of the central tenets of behaviorism and elementary economics. Within this framework, human behavior is driven by the desire to maximize rewards and minimize costs. The framework can be used to understand the constellation of factors contributing to the formation, maintenance, and breakdown of social relationships over time and the interpersonal dynamics found within them.

Core Assumptions of the Exchange Framework

Embedded within the exchange framework are core assumptions about the nature of humans and social or “exchange” relationships. The assumptions about the nature of humans are summarized as follows:

- Individuals seek rewards and avoid punishments.
- When interacting with others, individuals seek to maximize profits for themselves while minimizing costs. Because it is not possible to truly know the actual rewards and costs involved in interacting within another before the interactions occur, individuals guide their behavior through their expectations for rewards and costs.
- Individuals are rational beings and, within the limitations of the information that they possess, calculate rewards and costs and consider alternatives before acting.
- The standards that individuals use to evaluate rewards and costs differ from person to person and will vary over time.

The assumptions about the nature of exchange relationships are as follows:

- Exchange relationships are characterized by interdependence—that is, the ability to obtain profits in a relationship is contingent on the ability to provide others with rewards.
- Exchange relationships are regulated by norms like reciprocity, justice, and fairness.
- Trust and commitment result when relationships are consistently experienced as both rewarding and fair, and these help to stabilize relationships over the long term.
- Exchange relationships are characterized by the levels of attractions and dependence experienced by those participating in the relationship. It is the contrasting levels of attraction and dependence experienced by each partner in the relationship that determines the patterns of interaction found within the relationship and the stability of the relationship over time.

Core Exchange Concepts

The core exchange concepts can be classified as falling into the following broad categories.

Rewards, Costs, and Resources

Exchange theories make use of the concepts of rewards and costs (which were borrowed from behavioral psychology) and resources (which were borrowed from economics) when discussing the foundation of the interpersonal exchange. Rewards and resources refer to the benefits exchanged in social relationships. *Rewards* are defined as the pleasures, satisfactions, and gratifications a person enjoys from participating in a relationship. *Resources* are defined as any commodities, material or symbolic, that can be transmitted through interpersonal behavior and give one person the capacity to reward another. The costs of social exchange relationships can involve punishments experienced, the energy invested in a relationship, or rewards foregone as a result of engaging in one behavior or course of action rather than another.

Relationship Satisfaction

Satisfaction with an exchange relationship is derived, in part, from the evaluation of the outcomes available in a relationship. Outcomes are equal to the rewards obtained from a relationship minus the costs incurred. Although it is generally the case that the higher the level of outcomes available, the greater the satisfaction, these concepts are not equivalent. To account for satisfaction, both the experiences of the outcomes derived from the relationship and the expectations that individuals bring to their relationships are taken into account.

The concept of comparison level (CL) was developed by Thibaut and Kelley to explain the contributions that previous experiences and expectations make to the determination of how satisfied an individual is with a relationship. Individuals come to their relationships with an awareness of societal norms for relationships and a backlog of experiences. The CL is influenced by this information and thus reflects (a) what individuals feel is deserved and realistically obtainable within relationships and (b) what individuals feel is important for them to experience within a relationship. When the outcomes derived from a relationship exceed the CL (particularly highly valued outcomes or ones that are important to individuals), global assessments of a relationship are likely to be high.

Relationship Stability

The satisfaction that partners experience with their relationships does not solely determine the stability of the relationships. Thibaut and Kelley developed the concept of comparison level of alternatives (CL_{alt}), defined as the lowest level of outcome a person will accept from a relationship in light of available alternatives, to explain individuals' decisions to remain in or leave a relationship. The CL_{alt} is an individual's assessment of the outcomes available in an alternative to the present relationship. When the outcomes available in an alternative relationship exceed those available in a relationship, the likelihood increases that that person will leave the relationship.

Hence, staying in or leaving a relationship is not simply a matter of how rewarding that relationship is. Relationships that are rewarding are more likely to be stable because a high level of outcomes reduces, in terms of expectations, the likelihood of a better alternative existing. Unsatisfactory relationships, in turn, may remain stable for the lack of a better alternative. These relationships have been conceived of as nonvoluntary relationships by Thibaut and Kelley. Married individuals who stay in violent relationships can be thought of as participating in a nonvoluntary relationship—that is, the relationship stays stable despite the violence because of the absence of better alternatives.

The CL_{alt} is also related to the experience of dependence. *Dependence* is defined as the degree to which a person believes that he or she is subject to or reliant on the other for relationship outcome. The degree of dependence evidenced is determined by the degree to which the outcomes derived from a relationship exceed the outcomes perceived to be available from existing alternatives. Dependence may be experienced as one of the costs of participating in a relationship, but this is probably determined in part by the level of satisfaction experienced with the relationship. Dependence, in other words, is tolerated in highly rewarding relationships.

Dependence is further influenced by the barriers that increase the costs of dissolving an existing relationship. Two types of barriers (e.g., internal and external) discourage an individual from leaving a relationship by fostering dependence even if attraction is low. Internal barriers are the feelings of obligation and indebtedness to the partner that

contribute to dependence by increasing the psychological costs of terminating the relationship. Internal constraints might involve the moral belief that a marriage, for example, is forever or that children should be raised in a home with both parents present. External barriers are things like community pressures, legal pressures, and material or economic considerations that foster dependence by increasing the social and economic costs of terminating a relationship.

Normative and Cognitive Orientations

Exchange relationships are governed by both normative and cognitive exchange orientations that delineate acceptable and appropriate behavior. Normative orientations refer to the societal views on acceptable and appropriate behavior in relationships. These norms refer to the broader consensus that exists within a culture about how exchange relationships should be structured. Among the more prominent of these normative orientations in Western cultures are the norms of distributed justice or fairness, norms of reciprocity, and norms of equity. Each of these has to do with the expectation that, within a close and intimate relationship, the rewards experienced by partners should be more or less proportionately distributed. When these norms are violated, as when housework is unfairly distributed within a marriage, people are apt to complain more about the relationship and pressure their partners to restore a more just and fair pattern of exchange.

Cognitive orientations are conceptualized as a set of expectations and goals that guide individuals in setting up rules and patterns of interaction within their intimate relationship. A few assumptions derive from this definition of cognitive orientations. First, the individual's cognitive orientation is thought to function as an internal template or "cognitive structure" that shapes and directs his or her behaviors, perceptions, and experiences within intimate relationships. More specifically, this internal template of relationship standards serves as a guidance to establish rules and patterns of interaction with one's partner that determine: (a) how each person should contribute to the relationship, (b) what each person deserves to obtain from the relationship, and (c) how positive and negative outcomes should be distributed among partners.

Second, it is assumed that individuals vary in the type of cognitive orientation they hold vis-à-vis their intimate partners. Underlying such variability, there is a constant tension between taking into account what one (self-focused) or the partner (other-focused) needs and deserves to structure the relationship. That is, individuals' cognitive orientations differ in the extent and degree to which the interests of self or the interests of the partner take precedence when it comes to setting up rules to distribute outcomes and determine obligations.

Last, it is assumed that such cognitions are connected to a macrosystem of cultural beliefs and values. Individuals are embedded in a cultural system in which they internalize norms regarding what relationships are for and the appropriate rules to attain such goals and ideals. Thus, these cognitive orientations are closely connected to the normative orientations about gendered relationships existing in their culture and in the network of relations surrounding them.

Trust and Commitment

Trust refers to the belief on the part of individuals that their partners will not exploit or take unfair advantage of them. When relationships conform to the norms of reciprocity and when the pattern of exchange is perceived as being fair, individuals are more likely to come to believe that they will not be exploited. Trust is proposed to be important in relationship development because it allows individuals to be less calculative and to see longer term outcomes. Put another way, through trust an individual is able to expect fairness and justice in the long term and therefore does not have to demand it immediately.

Commitment is characterized as central in distinguishing social and intimate exchanges from economic exchanges. Commitment involves the willingness of individuals to work for the continuation of their relationships. Exchange theorists would expect commitment to develop within a relationship when partners experience high and reciprocal levels of rewards that facilitate the experience of trust. Commitment builds stability into relationships by increasing partners' dependence on their relationships—in part because the emergence of commitment is thought to be accompanied by a reduction of attention to alternative relationships.

Exchange Dynamics

The exchange framework also provides insight into the dynamics found within intimate relationships. In particular, the exchange framework has been used to explain the patterns of power and decision making found within relationships. Fundamental to the exchange views of power are the assumptions that dependence and power are inversely related and resources and power are positively and linearly related. This is to suggest that exchange theorists address the bases of power by focusing on the constructs of resources and dependence. The partners least interested in their relationships tend to have the greater power in large part because they are less dependent on the relationships. The partners with the greater resources also tend to be the ones with the greater power—here largely because they have relatively greater control over the outcomes available to the partners. In other words, the essential point of the discussion of the patterns of interaction observed within exchange relationships is that the relative levels of involvement, dependence, and resources contribute importantly to the different patterns of interaction observed within relationships.

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See also Equity Theory; Exchange Processes; Interdependence Theory; Resource Theory

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SOCIAL IDENTITY THEORY

Social Identity Theory (SIT), originally developed by Henri Tajfel and John Turner, suggests that people maintain or boost self-esteem by valuing groups in which they are a member (*ingroups*) and by devaluing groups to which they do not belong (*outgroups*). SIT starts with the widely accepted principle that all individuals are motivated to maintain a positive self-image. When evaluating the self, people assess information such as their talents or physical appearance; however, group membership is also an important part of the self-concept (e.g., race, sex, political party, school affiliation). In other words, individuals have several “social selves” that reflect who they are within various groups. To maintain a positive self-esteem, individuals therefore must evaluate both the groups and membership in the groups, or their “social selves,” in a favorable way. This entry describes the classic experimental procedure used to test SIT’s basic predictions, as well as a review of recent research and critiques.

Minimal Groups

SIT posits that people maintain a positive view of their ingroups as a way of maintaining positive self-esteem. Once people identify with a group, they begin to display ingroup favoritism, in which they seek what is known as *positive distinctiveness* by evaluating their group more favorably than the outgroup on some valued dimension, and outgroup distancing (avoiding the outgroup) or outgroup derogation (negative attitudes toward the outgroup).

Whereas several other theories of intergroup relations suggest that people may be prejudiced against outgroups due to historical conflicts, social hierarchies, or previous injustices, in contrast, SIT predicts that people will favor ingroups and become prejudiced against outgroups as soon as and only because group categorization exists. Because group membership makes salient categories of “us” versus “them,” group identification may cause prejudice and discrimination due to people’s motivation to affiliate with and protect their group. An example can be seen in traditional school rivalries. Typically, rival schools are similar in aspects such as region, size, and type of student; despite these similarities, students at the schools maintain a negative view of each other, often via direct comparison.

This prediction led to the classic experimental procedure known as the *minimal group paradigm*. In this procedure, participants are divided into groups using arbitrary, meaningless categories. Examples of specific groups used in this research are underestimators versus overestimators, in which people are told that their group membership was determined by how they incorrectly estimated a large series of dots on a piece of paper given limited time, groups based on art preferences, or even groups decided by the flip of a coin. Participants are divided into groups such as these specifically because the groups are basically meaningless (or minimal). Despite the lack of meaning behind categories such as these, SIT hypothesizes that the participants will feel a certain affinity to their own group, as part of their social identity, and thus will engage in behaviors designed to protect and advance the group.

The common outcome that is measured in this paradigm is how individuals will distribute some type of desirable resource, such as points or money, between their group and at least one other outgroup. In several studies, including participants of different ages and cultures, the results are consistent: People demonstrate ingroup favoritism by providing them with a higher amount of resources while depriving the outgroups. In short, discrimination against an outgroup is elicited easily and quickly even when group assignment and categorization are random and meaningless.

Recent Research and Critiques

An important aspect of SIT is intergroup comparison. As noted, positive self-esteem is maintained by the belief that one’s ingroups are superior to one’s outgroups. Because prejudice and outgroup derogation are the result of this comparison, SIT argues that these prejudiced tendencies should occur more when an individual is feeling insecure, anxious, or inferior. In other words, if individuals feel that their groups are in danger of appearing inferior, they should be increasingly motivated to lash out against other groups. However, if individuals feel secure about their group’s superior status, less prejudice should result. This insecurity may also apply to individual standings within the ingroup. Recent research suggests that it is, in fact, lower status group members who are more likely to discriminate against outgroups.

Other recent research on SIT has examined factors that influence when social identity motives and categories, compared with individual aspects and facets, are activated. As previously noted, one factor is an individual’s status within the group. A second factor is the group size: Smaller groups are more likely to display ingroup favoritism than larger groups. Additional factors include strength of group identification, a prejudiced personality in general, and how similar or different two groups are.

Some criticisms of SIT exist. For example, although there is much evidence that group categorization can lead to ingroup favoritism, which can, in turn, bolster self-esteem, evidence that outgroup derogation actually boosts self-esteem is harder to find. There is evidence that people with low self-esteem will sometimes identify more with a low-status group instead of trying to affiliate with a high-status group (e.g., because “fighting against the status quo” can bring individuals a sense of power and a role of importance in their minority ingroup). In addition, people with high self-esteem sometimes feel more comfortable identifying with low-status groups because they can maintain their positive self-evaluation through other routes. One possible conclusion could be that, although bolstering self-esteem is not a primary motivation for outgroup derogation and prejudice in all cases, it is more important for social identity formation. Finally, one of the original creators of SIT, John

Turner, has recently stated that the theory was originally designed to explain the social status of the group as a whole and was not intended to focus as much on individual-level self-esteem. Despite its criticisms, SIT has had a major impact on social relationships research and has guided the field in directions it would not have achieved without this theory's tenets.

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See also Group Dynamics; Prejudice; Self-Concept and Relationships; Self-Esteem, Effects on Relationships

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SOCIAL INEQUALITIES AND RELATIONSHIPS

The structure and quality of human relationships experienced by adults vary across differences in social status based on social stratification in society. Socioeconomic status (SES) is a major social status factor that results in social inequalities in individuals' experience of relationships, usually advantaging persons of higher SES. SES is typically indexed by differentiation across levels of education, income, occupational status, and wealth. In addition, measurement of SES is sometimes extended to consideration of parents' SES, spouse's SES, and/or neighborhood SES. Most

societies also make social status distinctions across gender, race/ethnicity, and age. This entry focuses on describing inequalities in the structure of relationships (e.g., quantity, differences in timing of relationship entry and exit, geographic proximity) and quality of relationships (e.g., satisfaction, stability, responsiveness, exchange of support) with partners, children, other kin, and nonkin in adulthood that are linked to differences in SES.

Social Inequalities in Partnership Relationships

SES and Structural Aspects of Partnership Relationships

The likelihood and timing of entering into marriage varies across SES. Individuals whose parents achieved higher educational attainment, higher income, and higher occupational status tend to marry later than those whose parents attained lower education, lower income, and lower occupational status. These social inequalities in age at marriage have further life-course impact: Lower age at marriage is associated with higher rates of marital disruption, resulting in higher rates of separation and divorce among those with lower SES.

Before 1950, it was more common for women with more education to remain unmarried throughout their lives than it was for women with less education. Among more recent birth cohorts of young women, this pattern has reversed such that women with the least education now are the most likely to remain lifelong singles.

Overall, there has been a historical trend during recent decades toward experiencing a smaller proportion of adult years in a marital relationship due to demographic trends over time toward longer lives, later ages at first marriage, higher rates of never marrying, higher rates of divorce, and lower rates of remarriage. This smaller proportion of the life course spent married is particularly pronounced among individuals with lower SES. Partnership absence among those with lower SES is accentuated further by the fact that lower SES is consistently associated with higher rates of mortality (as well as both psychological and physical morbidity) and incarceration, particularly among men, at all ages.

Rates of cohabitation have increased in recent decades. Historically, cohabitation was most common among persons with lower SES (income and

education). In the 1960s and 1970s, cohabitation also became more popular among more SES-advantaged young adults going to college—often as a prelude to marital commitment. The prevalence of cohabitation, however, remains highest at lower levels of education and income. Cohabitors' reports that they expect their union to evolve into marriage varies by the male partner's SES, such that individuals in cohabiting partnerships that include a man with lower education and income report less expectation of transitioning the relationship into marriage.

SES and Quality of Partnerships

Longitudinal as well as cross-sectional assessments of marital quality relatively consistently indicate that persons with higher education and higher income report better quality marriages, including higher marital satisfaction, greater marital happiness, less marital discord, less intimate partner violence, and lower expected likelihood of separation. Some research during the 1970s and 1980s suggested that one exception to these associations was that higher wives' individual income was linked to poorer marital quality and greater likelihood of separation. Scholars speculated that women's relative independence due to higher earning capacity might undermine the dependency of wives on husbands, and that this, in turn, might undermine marital quality and stability. Research on more recent cohorts of marriages has not supported this idea, however; by contrast, both husbands' and wives' higher incomes are now found to be associated with better marital quality.

Cohabitation, which is more common among persons with lower SES than persons with higher SES, is associated with more partner violence than marriage.

Social Inequalities in Parent–Child Relationships

SES and Structural Aspects of Parent–Child Relationships

Women with lower education and income are more likely to experience a nonmarital birth or a premarital pregnancy than women with higher education and income. Women with higher SES

are more likely to postpone having a first child and limit their ultimate number of children (although the gap in family size by SES as well as race/ethnicity has been narrowing in recent years). The fact that marriages and partnerships among individuals who experienced lower SES in their families of origin are more unstable results in a greater likelihood that persons with lower SES will become single parents—either custodial or noncustodial. The higher likelihood of having a nonmarital birth and divorce among those with lower SES also results in individuals from families with lower SES reaching adulthood more likely to have experienced disrupted coresidence and/or absence of contact with a parent (typically a father).

In midlife and older age, persons with lower SES may experience more proximity to adult children (including coresidence) due to the greater likelihood of children with lower SES to remain geographically closer to their family of origin. A larger number of children may provide some persons with lower SES more children in their social network—both to provide help to and from whom they might receive help.

Viewed from the adult child's perspective, the health and mortality differentials noted previously across SES result in the fact that adult children with lower SES tend to be less likely to have living mothers and fathers—and the emotional, instrumental, and financial resources that living parents provide—at any given age.

SES and Quality of Parent–Child Relationships

The economic stress experienced by low-income parents can have considerable detrimental impact on parent–child relationship quality. Economic stress is often linked to maternal depression, which is, in turn, linked to less responsive parenting. Attachment patterns (i.e., internalized schemas regarding how trustworthy others are and how worthy of care the self is), which have their antecedents in the responsiveness of a primary attachment figure (usually the mother), are therefore influenced, in part, by poverty and family instability; poverty is associated with less secure attachment among children. Persons with insecure (vs. secure) attachment styles are at a disadvantage in relationship quality across all types of relationships.

Parents with less education and less income also tend to provide less consistent discipline, less consistent monitoring, and less complex and growth-fostering social interaction for children. Psychological and physical violence toward children is more common among parents with lower SES. Adults with lower SES are more likely to be single parents, a parenting status additionally linked to high levels of stress and depression among parents, and greater challenges for high-quality parent-child interaction.

In adulthood, individuals with low-income parents are less likely to receive parental financial support, emotional support, and child-care help than those with parents who have higher income.

The SES differential in psychological and physical morbidity leads parents with lower SES to develop chronic conditions that limit functioning at younger ages than parents with higher SES. Therefore, adults from lower SES backgrounds are more likely to be called on to provide caregiving for their parents at younger ages. Individuals with lower SES also tend to live geographically closer to parents, increasing the likelihood of providing hands-on care when there is a need for care. Individuals with higher SES are more likely to focus on providing financial support and arrangement of social service support for parents in need of care. Interestingly, caregiving research has suggested that persons with lower SES report less negative impact on mental health from caregiving possibly due to a greater relative valuing of caregiving activity among those with lower education, income, and occupational status.

Social Inequalities and Other Kin Relationships

Overall, persons with lower SES tend to report a smaller number of kin other than spouses, children, and parents in their social networks than those with higher SES. Yet individuals with lower education and income report a higher *proportion* of kin in contrast to nonkin in their extended social networks. Persons with lower education and income are more likely to live geographically closer to other kin and emphasize extended family relationships in their everyday lives than are persons with higher education and income.

Individuals with lower SES are more likely to become a grandparent at a younger age due to earlier ages at childbearing for themselves and their children. Grandchildren are likely to be more geographically proximate among those with lower SES; they may also have more need for help from grandparents—including the need for custodial grandparenting—due to the greater likelihood that they are being reared by poorer, often single parents who tend to have more stress, depression, and severe problems. Custodial grandparenting, in contrast to noncustodial grandparenting, has been linked to mental and physical health risks; yet custodial grandparents also report gains from this role—such as increased purpose in life and closer relationships with grandchildren.

Social Inequalities and the Nonkin Relationships

Overall, individuals with lower education and income report fewer nonkin (friends, neighbors, coworkers) in their social networks than those with higher education and income. Sociologists have documented the importance of nonkin “weak ties” (i.e., acquaintances, in contrast to close friends and family), who are most likely to be resources for novel information, and therefore particularly valuable in extending potential contacts for employment leads, housing leads, and other instrumental information that is crucial for expanded life-course opportunities and upward mobility. Persons with more education report broader, deeper, and richer friendship networks that include many more such weak ties, as well as close friendship and family ties—all of which contributes additionally to the intergenerational transmission of SES (i.e., tendency for continuity of similar SES across generations). Those with higher education also report more normative obligation to support friends.

Recent research has suggested that neighborhood SES (specifically, rates of poverty in a neighborhood) contributes additionally to the relative isolation from potential helpful weak nonkin ties that persons in high-poverty neighborhoods experience. In addition, poverty and divorce (more prevalent among lower SES groups) often lead to more frequent residential mobility,

which in turn can disrupt neighborhood social networks.

Some research in the 1960s and 1970s emphasized the ways that lower SES groups use “fictive kin” (i.e., persons not biologically related, but persons who are nonetheless considered to be similar to biological kin in terms of bonds of enduring connection and mutual support) to supplement biological kin network needs. More recent research has questioned whether such strong compensatory networks truly exist for individuals at the bottom of the SES hierarchy, and has indicated that rich compensatory fictive kin networks are not typical. Scholars have documented how the social networks of low-income families can actually result in “stress contagion” as much as support.

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See also African-American Families; Asian-American Families; Attachment Theory; Fictive Kinship; Grandparent–Grandchild Relationships; Hispanic/Latino Families; Intergenerational Transmission of Divorce; Single-Parent Families; Socioeconomic Status

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SOCIAL ISOLATION

Social isolation refers to the separation of individuals from others, especially a lack of strong social ties. It may be defined in terms of behavioral or perceived isolation or as a combination of the two. By any of these definitions, older, single, and less educated individuals have a higher probability of being socially isolated. Having few close connections to others has serious negative effects. Those people who are socially isolated have a higher mortality and morbidity rate and are more likely to suffer from psychological disorders. Researchers have offered a number of explanations for the negative health outcomes of the socially isolated. These explanations link biological functioning, stress, and social support.

Measurement

Researchers who employ behavioral definitions use relational characteristics to define social isolation. For example, one may say that a relation exists between two people if they discuss important matters. Under this definition, a socially isolated individual is someone who has no one with whom they discuss matters that are important to them personally. Similarly, some researchers have defined social isolation as a lack of specific types of relationships—friends (for adolescents), caregivers (for the elderly), or someone who you could ask to watch your children in an emergency (for young parents). In a general population, measures of one type of close tie tend to overlap with others so that the specific question does not matter much. Claude Fischer has pointed out that having just one close connection makes one dependent on that one relationship; he argued that someone with only one tie still has inadequate social support. Therefore, social isolation may not be a qualitative distinction, but a matter of degree. Other researchers refine measures of social isolation by looking at the frequency of contact or the degree to which one’s connections are connected to each other in a tight social group.

In contrast to these behavioral definitions, some researchers have measured isolation in terms of perceived isolation. Such definitions capture

whether individuals feel socially isolated. Perceived social isolation is theoretically independent of actual social ties, although the two are correlated.

Finally, some researchers combine perceived and behavioral connection, arguing that individuals are socially isolated only when they lack interaction partners *and* feel socially isolated. With this view, those who are lonely (high perceived social isolation) but have social ties are not socially isolated (although they may suffer mental distress). Similarly, those who have no social ties but do not feel lonely are not socially isolated. Thus, it is not only the nature or existence of one's relationships that matter, but also one's interpretation of these relationships. In the end, all of these definitions attempt to capture the same thing: whether an individual has operative, sufficient, close social connections to other people.

Characteristics of the Socially Isolated

Socially isolated individuals tend to be older, be unmarried, and have less education than the socially integrated. Those with lower incomes also have a higher chance of being isolated. Thus, a privileged social position is linked to a healthy social environment. Researchers have also found that ethnoracial minorities are more likely to be socially isolated than Whites. There are few gender differences in the likelihood of being socially isolated, although some research suggests that single males may be more socially isolated than single females (because males often depend on a spouse for connection, whereas single females often look to female friends).

Consequences of Social Isolation

Social isolates are more likely to experience a high number of negative life events. This fact is important because close social connections tend to provide help and social support in both routine and emergency circumstances. Oddly, however, social isolates are no less likely than those who have social connections to experience positive life events.

Social isolation constitutes a significant health risk—on the same order as smoking, obesity, and lack of physical activity. Researchers have found, even after controlling for physical

health, demographic characteristics, and health behaviors (e.g., smoking and alcohol use), that those with more social ties are less likely to die over time. Studies have linked social integration with lower rates of cardiovascular disease and stroke, higher rates of survival from heart attacks, and lower chance of cancer recurrence. The relationship between social connections and physical health is distinctly nonlinear. The mortality risk for the completely isolated is high relative to those with at least one close social tie. However, there is little difference in mortality risk between those with average and high levels of social connectivity.

Researchers have also found that social isolation has detrimental effects on psychological well-being. Socially isolated individuals are more likely to have low esteem, have high anxiety, and suffer from depression. They are also more likely to have suicidal thoughts and to attempt suicide.

Underlying Mechanisms

Many mechanisms help explain the deleterious consequences of social isolation. First, the effect appears to be real. Although some researchers have argued that the health patterns arise from selection (e.g., healthier, more physically attractive, happier individuals attracting more friends), there has not been much evidence to support this hypothesis. More research links the effect of social isolation to stress and stress management. Social isolation causes stress, which leads to an increased likelihood of disease. In addition, close social ties act as a stress buffer, lessening the negative effects of stressful life events. These buffering effects can be both direct and indirect. Close confidants offer emotional support and physical help in stressful situations. In addition, those with social ties are more likely to believe that close associates will be there in difficult times, and this expected support decreases one's stress response in dealing with negative life events.

Researchers have also studied the effect of social control on health outcomes. Socially integrated individuals experience social pressure from close others, which may lead to the adoption of more healthy behaviors. Social ties may also offer resources, such as information and finances, which decrease the probability of having health problems.

In conclusion, older, single, and disadvantaged individuals are more likely to be socially isolated. Social isolates suffer from poorer physical and psychological health. The most important mechanisms for this important relationship are: (a) Social isolation is associated with negative life events and directly causes stress; (b) the socially isolated have fewer stress buffers; and (c) the socially isolated have fewer resources to draw on in dealing with routine and emergency needs.

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See also Alienation and Anomie; Community Involvement; Health and Relationships; Isolation, Health Effects; Loneliness; Social Support and Health

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SOCIALIZATION

One of the most fascinating domains of study in sociology involves the process of socialization, or the process by which we learn the ways of a specific society so that we can function within it. The process of socialization is essential for our unique development as human beings. We learn to think, reason, control our emotions, and have relationships through the process of socialization. In short, all of these social behaviors are shaped according to the guidelines given in a particular culture or

society. Multiple forces including parents, family, peers, schools, neighborhoods, the media, as well as the broader culture shape social behavior.

Family has the strongest influence on children's socialization, while peers also exert a strong influence on socializing children and adolescents. The peer group is a social group whose members are the same age, share interests, and share social positions. Further, the mass media may also shape children's ideas about what behaviors and values will help them to fit into society. The mass media are interpersonal communications aimed at a vast audience, including television, newspapers, the Internet, radio, books, as well as other forms of mass communication. Last, broader forces such as social class and gender also influence the socialization process. Social class shapes the process of socialization by influencing values and occupational goals within families. For example, depending on social class, parents may shape their children's behavior toward conformity (necessary for most blue-collar jobs) or independence (necessary for most white-collar jobs). This entry focuses primarily on the role of parenting in the socialization process of children and the ways in which social class and gender influence socialization.

Socialization and Parenting

Parental socialization refers to the process by which parents transmit knowledge and values related to culture to their children. Parents and family are the primary individuals who provide love and nurturance to children so they can develop a foundation of trust in human relationships. Parents also train children with knowledge and skills to become autonomous individuals within a specific culture or society (e.g., parents may train children to be polite to facilitate children's acceptance into social groups). Parents also provide discipline and control necessary for children to develop self-regulation of emotions and to guide their rational decision making as children make the transition from childhood to adolescence and young adulthood. For example, parents train children to control their impulsive emotions so that they can think clearly and make good decisions. Consequently, an adolescent may decide to control her desire to go out with her friends until she has finished her homework.

Parental Support and Control

Parents typically shape children's behavior through the use of two broad dimensions of behavior: emotional support and parental control. They provide emotional support through affection, love, warmth, and acceptance. Parental warmth is essential for children to develop feelings of self-esteem, competence, and a positive orientation toward human relationships. For example, nurturing parents provide positive feedback and love to their children on a consistent, daily basis. This positive feedback, in turn, helps children to develop trust in their parents and promotes self-confidence. When children have these positive, warm interactions with their parents, they develop positive feelings toward others in their own relationships with peers and others.

Parents also exert control over their children's behavior. There are two types of control that parents utilize in the socialization process. These types of control are important because each deals with a different type of child behavior. Parents use upper limit controls to reduce and redirect behavior that exceeds parental or societal standards of intensity or frequency. For example, if a child is running through the supermarket, parents may redirect the child to walk inside the store. A child running through the store exceeds parental standards because the child may get hurt or may hurt others by knocking over a display. In contrast, parents may use lower limit controls to stimulate child behavior that is below parental or societal standards. For example, if a child is not spending enough time on homework, parents may use positive controls or incentives to stimulate the child to focus on academic work. A parent may tell the child that if he does his homework, he will have time to play with a friend before dinner. In this way, parents guide the child's behavior toward standards that are likely to ensure success and competence with culturally appropriate developmental tasks.

Studies also suggest that parental controls can be inductive by setting appropriate limits (e.g., children need to be at home in time for dinner), providing reasons for the limits, and praising the child for observing the limit. Parental controls also may be used in the form of threats or use of punishment (e.g., a parent may tell a child that he will have to go into time-out if he or she continues to

shout at another child). Sometimes parents may even withdraw emotional support as a way of attempting to bring their child's behavior into compliance (e.g., ignore a child's attempts to get attention).

Styles of Parenting

Much research has examined the various combinations of control and support that parents utilize with their children. Diana Baumrind has distinguished three types of parental behavior styles. In the authoritative style of parenting, parents utilize high levels of emotional support with moderate levels of consistent and firm control. With this type of parenting behavior, children experience much positive affection and nurturance combined with firm, clear limits on inappropriate behavior. The limits are explained in rational ways rather than demanded in the context of threats of punishment. For example, if a parent wanted their child to finish a homework project before going to a friend's house, the parent may state that the child will first need to finish the schoolwork and then he or she will be able to go to a friend's house for an hour. In this way, the parent is stating the positive behaviors that are expected of the child while also providing a positive reward for the child when the schoolwork is completed. Research suggests that this style of parenting is characterized by extensive verbal exchange within the family. Longitudinal studies report that this style of parenting leads to more positive, socially competent behavior in children. Children who experience this parenting style also are more likely to be independent, have higher self-esteem, have more positive cooperation with others, and have a strong sense of morality. This positive orientation toward human relationships eases the transition to adolescence as adolescents become more self-reliant and independent in decision making.

In the authoritarian style of parenting, parents use strong levels of coercive control with low levels of emotional support and nurturance. The authoritarian style is associated with a highly restrictive and punitive parenting style. Parents tend to utilize many limits and use excessive control with their children. For example, a parent may become angry and shout at the child that he or she needs to finish

homework, do dishes, and clean the room. This type of parenting style tends to be associated with immature child behavior. Children are likely to be less socially competent, have more behavioral problems, and experience more anxiety in their own relationships.

In the permissive parenting style, parents provide emotional support and nurturance, but are low on control. This occurs because parents are either overly indulgent of their children (e.g., a parent may “spoil” the child while having few expectations of the child’s behavior) or neglectful of their children’s needs (e.g., a parent may be depressed and unable to respond to the child on an emotional level). This style tends to be associated with socially incompetent child behavior later in life. For example, children are not likely to make independent decisions and accomplish goals later in life.

Thus, the authoritative style of parenting is the most optimal style that tends to produce mature, socially competent children and adolescents. As children make the transition from childhood to adolescence, the authoritative style remains the most effective parenting style because it offers sufficient autonomy necessary to foster internal control among adolescents while also offering sufficient controls to foster responsibility. Children exposed to the authoritative parenting style also develop more mature and stable relationships later in life.

Social Class and Gender

The family’s social class also influences socialization. Researchers report that parental social class influences parental childrearing values. Interestingly, the type of work that parents do shapes expectations that they have for their children’s behaviors. Specifically, working-class workers must often perform simple tasks in a repetitive way and tend to be supervised closely. Thus, working-class parents are more likely to emphasize the values of conformity, obedience, or characteristics that individuals need to be successful in working-class positions. In contrast, middle-class parents, such as professionals, are less closely supervised and work with a variety of different people and tasks. Middle-class parents are more likely to encourage independence, creativity, and individualism to help their children be successful

in future middle-class jobs. Thus, the social class of one’s family affects the way children think and the values they have regarding school, work, relationships, and lifestyles (e.g., children from middle-class families may be likely to be more independent and self-reliant in relationships).

More recent research reports that social class is influential in childrearing practices. For example, middle-class parents utilize “concerted cultivation,” or providing lessons, sports activities, active discussion and solicitation of children’s opinions, and much individual attention. Working-class and poor parents tend to focus on a safe environment and promoting the “accomplishment of natural growth” for children. Over time, middle-class children develop advantages because they may be more assertive and independent in school and work settings as a result of these early childrearing experiences.

The gender of the child also may influence the socialization process. Although socialization is considered to be a two-way process in which parents influence children and children influence parents, certain characteristics of the child may be important in parental socialization practices. For example, parents may select stereotypically male toys for boys or female toys for girls, thus reinforcing stereotypical gender differences. As children grow older, peers may further reinforce stereotypical male or female behaviors. Although a broad base of research exists on gender socialization, parents may choose to emphasize stereotypical gender-based behaviors or they may choose to encourage boys and girls to engage in a broad range of behaviors that are not anchored in gender stereotypes, but in autonomous choices regarding roles.

Conclusion

Researchers in the future may need to address the important task of examining the interplay of various influences such as parenting style, social class, and gender in understanding the process of socialization over time. For example, it may be important to assess the relative importance of parenting style within a particular social class or social context, such as whether an authoritarian parenting style may be more powerful than social class in shaping relationships. Or, in what ways does

gender interact with parenting style to influence the development of future relationships with peers and romantic partners? Perhaps girls and boys respond differently to parenting styles. Finally, it is important to assess the relative importance of each of these factors in predicting the quality of relationships that develop over time. So, does the parenting style one experiences in childhood influence the choices one makes in romantic relationships in adolescence and early adulthood? These are all important issues to consider in understanding the process of socialization of relationships over time.

Cynthia J. Schellenbach

See also Parent–Adolescent Communication; Parent–Child Relationships; Parenting; Self-Concept and Relationships; Socialization, Role of Peers; Social Skills in Childhood; Socioeconomic Status

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group contexts and that are a consequence or an antecedent of characteristics of the individual. These experiences have been conceptualized according to a three-level model that includes the individual, the dyad, and the group. According to this model, the level of the individual refers to the characteristics that children bring with them to their experiences with peers or that they take away from these experiences. These characteristics include more or less stable characteristics of the person, such as social orientations, behavioral patterns, temperaments, social skills, forms of social perception, cognition, and social problem solving. Dyadic experiences refer to the properties and characteristics of the interactions and relationships that a child has with a specific peer. The best-known example of a dyadic experience is friendship, but other types exist, such as bully–victim pairs or mutual antipathies. The group context refers to the structure and features of the set of peers in which the child and the child's relationships are embedded. Groups are distinguished from each by their internal structures (e.g., levels of cohesion among members) and by their “content” as manifested by the behavioral norms, attitudes, and values. This entry discusses the theory and current knowledge base about the role of peers in socialization processes, showing how experiences with peers affect development and adjustment.

Phenomena from each of these three levels of experience are interrelated in the sense that individual, dyadic, and group variables influence one another. For example, when individuals enter into a relationship (i.e., a dyadic experience), they bring with them particular behavioral tendencies, as well as a range of expectations and needs derived from their own relationship history. These factors, in turn, combine and interact with those of their friendship partner to determine the characteristics and effects the friendship will have. Moreover, the broader group provides a particular climate that may either favor or disfavor particular characteristics of individuals, thus making a particular child more or less popular.

SOCIALIZATION, ROLE OF PEERS

The term *peer relations* refers to a set of interrelated experiences that take place in either dyadic or

Theoretical Accounts

Theoretical accounts of the developmental significance of peer relations have ascribed socialization

effects to both dyadic and group experiences. That is, they have claimed that peer relations affect basic forms or aspects of development. Studies conducted in the 1960s and 1970s often used concepts from social learning theory that emphasize the role of peers as sources of reinforcement and modeling. These studies showed that children's behavior could be shaped by the rewards given by peers, especially by friends, and by their exposure to peers who modeled either positive (e.g., pro-social) or negative (e.g., aggressive) behavior. According to this approach, peers function as agents of control over each other's behavior. Peers can punish or ignore behaviors that are nonvalued or non-normative just as they can reward behaviors that are desirable or regarded as appropriate. As a result, insofar as children behave in a socially appropriate manner, they are rewarded by receiving further opportunities for interactions with their peers; insofar as they act in ways that transgress norms, standards, or expectations, they risk being excluded or rejected by them. In this way, a peer group is a developmental context that functions as a miniature culture with its own norms, expectations, opportunities, and practices that will, in part, shape or direct the functioning of the children within the group.

Aside from these behavioral approaches, constructivist accounts of development have pointed to the role of peer interaction as a context for the development of social skills and cognitions. Jean Piaget claimed that the balance and egalitarian characteristics of interactions with a peer, especially in contrast with relations with one's parents or other adults, is an ideal context in which children could examine conflicting ideas and explanations, negotiate plans, consider multiple perspectives, and decide to compromise with or reject the perspectives held by peers. Piaget believed that discussion and negotiation in the context of conflict with peers was critical for the development of basic social constructs, such as fairness, care, and justice. In a similar way, Lev Vygotsky proposed that cooperative, rather than conflictual, discussions with peers would promote a shared understanding of social events that would lead to the formation of basic social constructs, such as ideas about the causes and consequences of events. In these ways, experiences with peers are essential for all forms of social cognitive development.

Other theories have also emphasized processes at the level of the dyad. Harry Stack Sullivan's theory emphasized the impact that dyadic experience can have on the formation of the self-concept. Sullivan proposed that the friendships that develop at the beginning of adolescence include experiences of closeness and mutual regard that differ from the hierarchical relationships that children experience with their parents and from the play-based interactions of childhood. Sullivan argued that this close relationship was a child's first true interpersonal experience of reciprocity and mutual exchange and that it was within what he called "chumships" that children had their first opportunities to experience a sense of self-validation. According to Sullivan, this validation results from the internalization of the positive regard and care that their chums provided to them. Sullivan went so far as to propose that the positive experiences of having a chum in adolescence would be so powerful as to enable adolescents to overcome problems that may have resulted from prior family experiences. Sullivan believed that the experience of being isolated from the group during the school-age period would lead a child to have concerns about his or her own competencies and his or her acceptability as a desirable peer. Consequently, Sullivan suggested that children who are unable to establish a position within the peer group would develop feelings of inferiority that could contribute to psychological distress.

A related approach to the study of peer relationships emphasizes the provisions that are available in interactions and relationships with peers. According to this perspective, peers offer each other opportunities for experiences that are critical for well-being and healthy development. These include companionship, help, protection, closeness and intimacy, enduring affective alliances, and ego reinforcement. From a developmental perspective, it is known that the levels of some provisions vary with age, especially with an increase with age for the provisions of intimacy, closeness, reliable alliance, and loyalty. It is expected that the effects that particular provisions (e.g., intimacy) have on development will increase with age as well, although empirical studies of this developmental effect are limited.

Patterns of Attraction

Children differ in the extent and quality of their experiences with peers. Two theories have been proposed to explain why some children are more likely to be liked by their peers than are others. One model emphasizes the importance of particular features or characteristics. A large number of studies have shown that children tend to like peers who are helpful, competent, and engaging and who possess good looks and have lively but well-regulated temperaments. It is well known also that children tend to dislike peers who are disruptive, withdrawn, and possess obnoxious habits and values that contradict group norms and processes. Much of the literature on the factors underlying different children's status in the peer group has adopted this emphasis on features and characteristics. Although some consistent findings have been observed, some developmental differences have also been observed. For example, aggression becomes a less negative predictor of liking at the beginning of early adolescence.

A second model emphasizes the fit between a child and the child's peers. According to this model, children prefer to associate with peers who are like them rather than with dissimilar peers. There is evidence that friends tend to be more similar to each other than they are to other peers. Some of this similarity drives attraction, whereas some of it results from the mutual effects that friends have on each other's behavior. Further evidence for the importance of the fit comes from studies that have shown that attraction varies across contexts, with the attractiveness of a particular feature being higher when it is normative for the immediate peer content than when it is less normative. For example, aggression can be a positive predictor of attraction in contexts where aggression is normative.

Effects of Peer Relations

Studies of the effects of peer relations have taken three general forms. One concerns the effects of peer relations on internalizing problems (e.g., anxiety and depression); a second concerns the effects of peers on behavior, especially disruptive behavior; and the third assesses the extent to which peer relations can protect at-risk peers from

the negative effects of experiences in the family or with other persons.

The effects of peer experiences on internalizing problems have been well documented. The most general findings are that children who are disliked by peers, who are friendless, or who are victimized by peers are more likely than others to show elevated levels of depressed affect. It appears that the lack of positive experiences in any of these domains increases one's risk for internalizing difficulties because these experiences challenge one's sense of validation and one's desire for inclusion. Beyond provoking the negative cognitions that can result from being rejected, friendless, or victimized, these experiences also mean that children will receive limited amounts of provisions from peers. The experience of being rejected by one's peers seems to be especially problematic because it increases the risk of increases in subsequent victimization and friendlessness.

Beyond the effects of friendlessness on internalizing problems, it is also known that some forms of interaction between friends can promote depressed affect. Specifically, the practice of some early adolescents, especially early adolescent girls, to use their opportunities for interaction with a friend to discuss the challenges or negative features of their lives has been shown to increase feeling of depressed affect. Beyond its direct effect on depressed affect, this "corumination" has been shown to help explain why early adolescent girls show higher levels of depressed affect than are shown by boys.

In regard to the effects of peer relations on behavior, a large number of well-designed longitudinal studies have shown that association with aggressive or disruptive peers will lead to an increase in a child's own level of behavior in these areas. These effects, which have also been shown in laboratory-based studies, are typically explained via two processes that were alluded to earlier. One process, known as deviancy training, emphasizes the rewards and encouragement that peers can give to each other for performing acts that are disruptive or harmful. This process of reinforcement has been shown to account for increases in both mild and extreme forms of disordered behavior. Another explanation is related to the typical level of similarity seen between friends. Insofar as the strength of one's relationship with a friend may be manifested in similarity, peers might be motivated to become

like their friends so as to solidify a friendship or to strengthen the ties between them and their friend. In some cases, this means taking on the deviant or disruptive characteristics of one's friend.

Aside from these negative effects that peer experiences can have on affect and behavior, friendships are known to have protective effects. Consistent with the ideas of Sullivan, friendships have been shown to protect children from the negative effects on affect and self-perceptions that can result from being in a nonoptimal family context. Similarly, friendship appears to protect at-risk children from victimization by peers. Specifically, children who are at risk for being victimized because of their individual characteristics, such as being aggressive or withdrawn, are less likely to be victimized if they have a friend than if they do not. Beyond this protective effect against being victimized, friended children who are victimized are less likely to show the negative effects of victimization than are victimized children who are friendless.

William Bukowski

See also Depression and Relationships; Developmental Designs; Friendship Formation and Development; Friendships in Adolescence; Friendships in Childhood; Popularity; Sociometric Methods

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SOCIAL LEARNING THEORY

Social learning theory is a school of psychology that views personality as being shaped by the

interpersonal environments in which people are raised. Initially, social learning referred primarily to learning through imitation of others' actions. However, social learning now refers more broadly to any kind of influence our relations with others have on our behavior, beliefs, and values. Social learning theory sees social goals, such as getting approval from others, dominating others, or depending on others, as powerful motives that direct our behavior. Important psychologists associated with social learning theory are Julian B. Rotter, who began his work in the early 1950s, and Albert Bandura and Walter Mischel, whose work started in the 1960s. This entry reviews the development of social learning theory during the 20th century.

The first social learning theorists were the team of John Dollard and Neal Miller in the early 1940s. Dollard and Miller posited that humans have an innate desire to imitate the behavior of others. Dollard and Miller's work was primarily focused on children; however, they also examined group behavior seen in crowds. Although Dollard and Miller's was an important first step in explaining social learning, their theory was hampered by its reliance on now-discredited *drive theory* to explain human motivation.

During the mid-20th century, there were two competing explanations for what motivates people's behavior. Initially, drive theory dominated. Drive theory posits that behavior is motivated by an uncomfortable internal state (drive), brought about by deprivation, that propels people to satisfy and reduce the intensity of the drive. Thus, psychologists talk about a drive-reduction theory, in which people are motivated to return to a neutral, driveless state that feels optimally comfortable, known as *homeostasis*. The disadvantages of drive theory are, first, that drives are internal, physiological states that cannot be measured. If they cannot be measured, they cannot be used to predict future behavior. Second, if people's ultimate goal is the neutral state of homeostasis, then all behavior is considered an attempt to avoid discomfort. But people are not satisfied just with avoiding discomfort. Therefore, drive theory is inadequate to explain humans' goal-driven behavior, particularly when social motivations conflict with physical comfort.

The most prominent alternative to drive theory is the *empirical law of effect*, which proposes that

people not only seek to reduce negative stimulation, but also to enhance positive stimulation. All behavior is seen as an attempt to obtain desired outcomes, called *reinforcement*. Traditional learning theorists, such as B. F. Skinner, are known as stimulus–response psychologists. They believe that to predict behavior it is only necessary to know what stimuli are in the environment and what the individual’s overt responses are.

The advantage of learning theory is that it gives a scientific framework for conducting psychological research on behavior. However, Skinner was opposed to considering anything mental—thoughts, feelings, or beliefs—when predicting behavior. Skinner’s stimulus–response approach may work reasonably well when applied to such relatively simple organisms as rats and pigeons. However, it has shortcomings as a way of understanding the complex behaviors of human beings.

Rotter’s Social Learning Theory

In the early 1950s, Julian B. Rotter developed his social learning theory, which was a vast departure from Dollard and Miller’s approach. First, Rotter eschewed drive theory. He believed a psychological theory should only include psychological motives, not physiological motives such as drives. Second, Rotter went beyond simple imitation as social learning. Rotter created a model of human behavior that maintained the scientific rigor that Skinner advocated while including aspects of people’s minds that cannot be directly seen. Rotter, like most people, believed our ideas, hopes, and feelings influence our behavior.

Rotter’s motivational principle is the empirical law of effect. Thus, all behaviors are attempts to maximize reinforcement. As a social learning theorist, Rotter viewed social reinforcers—the rewards and punishments we experience in our interpersonal relationships—as powerful influences on our behavior. Much of our behavior can be seen as attempts to obtain love, praise, or approval from others or to avoid criticism, embarrassment, or ridicule.

Rotter proposed four main variables needed to predict behavior. These are expectancy, reinforcement value, behavior potential, and the psychological situation. *Expectancy* represents one’s

subjective probability that a behavior will lead to a particular outcome. If one’s expectancy is high, one is confident that one’s behavior will result in reinforcement. The desirability of the outcome is its *reinforcement value*. The higher the reinforcement value, the more we want to obtain the outcome. *Behavior potential* represents the likelihood that one will engage in a particular behavior. If behavior potential is low, one is unlikely to exhibit the behavior.

According to Rotter, behavior is jointly determined by the desirability of the outcomes of the behavior and the perceived likelihood that the behavior will obtain those outcomes. If both expectancy and reinforcement value are high, then behavior potential will be high. This means one is likely to exhibit a behavior if one is confident that the behavior will lead to a desired result. However, if either expectancy or reinforcement value is low, behavior potential will be reduced. Thus, even if a person desires friendship, he or she will not try to make friends with others if those attempts seem likely to meet with failure.

The fourth variable, the *psychological situation*, is used to point out that it is the subjective environment, rather than objective reality, that determines people’s behavior. The psychological situation explains why different people behave differently in the same circumstances. In any given situation, different individuals identify different reinforcers as available, place different values on those reinforcers, and have different expectancies about the likelihood of obtaining those reinforcers. For many children, being yelled at by their parents would be punishing; thus, they try to avoid this consequence. However, other children may prefer being scolded over having their parents ignore them. In this case, punishment has a higher reinforcement value than neglect.

Rotter proposed that our expectancies and reinforcement values develop over time. In particular, our social relationships shape our likes and dislikes, as well as our beliefs about our ability to obtain reinforcement. If we have been rewarded in the past for a particular behavior, we will have a high expectancy of being successful in the future. In addition, Rotter believed that not only do the consequences we personally experience influence our expectancies, but also the consequences we observe others experiencing. Thus, if we observe

someone being rejected by others for a particular behavior, our expectancy for being rejected for that behavior will go up without our personally needing to experience rejection ourselves.

Rotter coined the term *generalized expectancies* to refer to our cross-situational beliefs about the likelihood of being reinforced. The most widely known of these is generalized expectancies for internal versus external control of reinforcement, also known as *locus of control*. Locus of control refers to people's beliefs about whether the results they achieve in life are largely due to their own efforts (internal) or due to luck, chance, or powerful others (external). People who are more internal tend to actively attempt to change their circumstances. In contrast, those who are more external tend to be more passive in life because they believe they have little influence on the consequences they experience. Thus, a battered woman may stay in an abusive relationship because she has little expectation that she will be able to leave or that leaving will better her circumstances.

As a clinical psychologist, Rotter was concerned with how people develop mental disorders and how those disorders are treated. Rotter did not view mental problems as illnesses. Rather, because all behavior is *learned* behavior, symptoms of mental disorders stem from faulty learning experiences. People either have not previously learned adaptive ways to deal with life stress or they have developed irrational expectancies regarding the likelihood of obtaining reinforcement for certain behaviors. For example, a man may not be assertive with his partner either because he has not learned how to be assertive or because he has been raised to believe that attempts at assertiveness will lead to disapproval. Rotter viewed the therapist-client relationship as essentially a teacher-student relationship, in which irrational beliefs are corrected and adaptive behaviors are taught. His ideas have influenced contemporary cognitive-behavior therapy.

Overall, Rotter's social learning theory has a positive view of humanity. People are drawn forward by their goals and their desire to maximize the positive experiences they have. Rotter's social learning theory explicitly connects personality, pathology, and clinical methods that therapists use to treat mental disorders.

Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory

In the early 1960s, Albert Bandura began work on his own social learning theory. His early work focused on sources of aggressive behavior in children, particularly imitation. Bandura conducted a famous series of studies, in which children observed adults attacking a blow-up Bobo doll and then exhibited this behavior toward the doll themselves. This type of observational learning is known as *vicarious* learning or *modeling*. Bandura also did research on how direct experience with reinforcement shapes children's aggressive behavior over time.

In the 1970s, Bandura broadened his social learning theory. (Later, he would change the name to *social cognitive theory*.) Like Rotter, Bandura believed that personality, behavior, and environment all influence one another. He called this interaction of factors *reciprocal determinism*. Thus, like Rotter, Bandura believed personality develops through both direct and vicarious experience in our interactions with others and the environment.

As Rotter had, Bandura rejected Skinner's position that mental factors should not be considered in a personality theory. He believed that one's thoughts, one's *cognitions*, have an important role in determining behavior. Bandura postulated two primary cognitive variables: (1) efficacy expectations, more commonly known as self-efficacy, and (2) outcome expectancies. *Self-efficacy* is the subjective probability that one can execute a particular behavior. If one has learned the set of skills needed to engage in a behavior, one's self-efficacy will be high. *Outcome expectancies* refer to one's beliefs about the results of our behavior; will they result in reinforcement or not? These variables resemble Rotter's concept of expectancy, but they have the advantage of separating the two components of expectancy—beliefs about one's ability to accomplish the behavior (self-efficacy) and the anticipated results of the behavior (outcome expectancy).

This distinction is important because a low expectancy from Rotter's perspective could be due to either a lack of skills (low self-efficacy) or an environment that will not reward even a skillfully executed behavior (low outcome expectancy). For example, parents may not discipline their children either because they have not learned effective disciplinary techniques or because they worry that

children will love them less if the parents impose limits. Like expectancy, self-efficacy is seen as a product of our experiences, both direct and vicarious.

Mischel's Cognitive Social Theory

Cognitive social theory was developed by Walter Mischel, who was a student of Rotter's in the 1950s. Like Rotter and Bandura, Mischel saw the interaction of the person and the environment as crucial to understanding behavior. Unlike Rotter and Bandura, however, Mischel more heavily emphasized the environment, suggesting that stable personality characteristics are an illusion. Rather, behavioral consistency is largely determined by stability of the environment. What appear to be personality traits really represent habitual ways of responding to certain situations. If the situation changes, so do our responses.

Mischel has also incorporated emotion into his model of behavior, showing that our interpretations of events differ depending on whether we are experiencing mild or intense affect at the time. This explains why our interpretation of a loved one's behavior is different when we are angry than when we are feeling calm. A major focus of Mischel's work has been delay of gratification, which is one's ability to forgo immediate reward in favor of more desirable longer term outcomes.

Jack Mearns

See also Cognitive Behavioral Couple Therapy; Cognitive Processes in Relationships; Expectations About Relationships; Goals in Relationships

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SOCIAL NETWORKS, DYAD EFFECTS ON

The traffic between dyadic (two-person) relationships and the larger networks in which they are embedded always runs in both directions. Although researchers have traditionally emphasized ways that networks influence what goes on inside relationships, there are many ways that dyadic events flow outward to affect the behavior of others and the structure of social networks as a whole.

Deliberate Efforts to Change the Perception and Behavior of Network Members

Relational partners often deliberately seek support or resources for their relationship from other members of their social networks. Researchers have found that, during the initiation of relationships, network members are regularly recruited to make introductions, facilitate meetings, relay information, and promote a positive image of one prospective partner in the eyes of the other.

Deliberate attempts to enlist or influence network members continue as relationships develop. Leigh Leslie and her colleagues found that 85 percent of young people in romantic relationships had attempted to influence one or both parents. They used multiple strategies (e.g., emphasizing the partner's good points, talking about how well the partner treats them, reassuring their parents that they are still valued). At the other end of the relational life cycle, participants in troubled relationships commonly enlist network members as confidants, supporters, and even coconspirators in efforts to end the relationship. But these intentional, self-interested attempts

to “work the network” only hint at the myriad ways in which events inside a given relationship spread outward and affect other relationships and the overall structure of the network.

Unintentional Effects on Perception and Behavior of Network Members

Many of the effects of dyadic relationships on networks are beyond the vision of the relational participants. For example, regardless of whether they know it, their relationship provides others with a point of comparison for evaluating their own relationships. Married couples commonly compare their marriages to the marriages of their friends. Thus, the friends’ marriages become reference points that influence perceptions and behaviors within the network.

Individuals will also be influenced in more diffuse ways. As they observe others and as they hear gossip, they will infer rules and norms to be applied to their own relationships. Social-psychological research on conformity in group settings demonstrates that people will adjust their attitudes and perceptions in response to perceived consistencies in what others think or do. Face-to-face interaction enhances these effects, but researchers have found similar, although less robust, conformity effects in computer-mediated settings where face-to-face contact was absent.

Other subtle effects on the perceptions of network members occur as well. For example, research in settings where there are sharp intergroup differences, such as between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland, demonstrates that people will be more tolerant of those in the opposing group when they discover that their close associates have friends in that group.

Dyads may become the critical nodes in a larger process of diffusion or contagion. The decision of whether to discuss a topic with a partner is not just a dyadic event. It also functions as an information gate structuring the flow of information through a network. Those who disclose may attempt to limit retransmission of the information to others, but research suggests that these efforts are rarely successful. People promise not to tell, but they do. Nor are these effects limited to information. In a study in a U.S. high school, for example, Peter

Bearman and his colleagues found that more than 50 percent of sexually active students were linked to each other in a single sexual network. Nearly half of these students reported that they had been sexually monogamous—having sex with just one person and no one else—but they were nonetheless linked to everyone else in the network by virtue of their partner’s less monogamous behavior. Findings such as these obviously have implications for the spread of sexually transmitted diseases, but they also illustrate how choices made within dyads embedded in networks extend to affect the network as a whole.

Dyadic Effects on Network Structure

Network Distance

The concept of network distance refers to the number of links needed to connect any two network members. The distance separating any two individuals will change as other individuals within the network initiate, develop, and dissolve dyadic relationships.

When two previously unacquainted people meet, the members of their network who were not already connected are shifted closer in social space, thus increasing the chance that they will meet. Studies in the United States and the Netherlands show that most relational partners already had some friends in common by the time they met for the first time. As their relationship grows closer, romantic partners typically reprioritize their interactions with network members in order to make more time for each other. They spend less time with their friends and relatives. Yet the degree of withdrawal is usually relatively small and occurs chiefly in the less intimate sectors of the network. More important, the withdrawal from one’s own contacts is usually more than matched by the new contacts and interactions with members of the partner’s network. Thus, the overall process is not so much a process of withdrawal as a process of realignment and reprioritization.

Realignment and reprioritization of relationships with network members also occur when dyads experience difficulty. Divorce typically ruptures the network that has assembled around the partners. Less dramatic changes in network structure occur when people disengage from particular

friendships or business relationships. These changes fan out to stimulate changes in surrounding relationships and alter the relative distances of network members from one another. Some may become more distant as a dyad dissolves (e.g., the former in-laws on each side of a divorce). Others may become closer as the relational partners realign and reprioritize. Indeed, the circle of relational life becomes complete as the demise of some relationships hastens the formation of new ones. If we could visualize the entire network in motion, we might see new partners moving toward one another even as one or both are still involved in their present relationships.

Network Centrality

Changes in our individual relationships not only affect the distance between particular network members, but also ripple out to influence the prestige and influence of others, including those whom we may know only slightly or not at all. Central members of the network have more favorable positions, more opportunities, and greater influence owing to their position relative to others in the network. Being directly connected to more people generally increases one's centrality, but it matters even more how one is linked to them. Network theorists commonly distinguish between prestige and influence. You gain prestige when a large number of others identify you as one of their contacts, but your influence depends on the number of people you contact. Prestige and influence need not balance—an individual may, for instance, have a great deal of prestige, but relatively little influence.

Centrality, and hence power, in networks flows not only from one's direct contacts, but also from how those individuals are linked to others. One might think that being directly connected to others who are highly connected would confer power or prestige. But if the people to whom we are connected are also well connected, then they are less dependent on us. Ironically, we are in a more powerful position when those to whom we are linked are not well connected.

The concept of centrality in its many forms gives us a way to recognize how changes in individual relationships may yield changes in others' relationships and in their prestige, influence, and power. New romantic partners, for instance, are not only

creating a connection with each other, but are also stimulating the formation of links between members of their networks. This alters the power or influence of network members, as in the case of the man who becomes friends with his brother's girlfriend's brother. The same occurs when relationships terminate. The friend who maintains contact with both former spouses, for example, may find herself in a particularly influential position as other contacts are dropped. The same might be said for those who are successful in retaining contact with each side of failed friendships or busted business relationships. In each case, the centrality of the individual has been increased because other linkages have dissolved and others are now more dependent on him or her for information. By the same token, those who were once in central positions may find themselves relegated to the backwaters of the network as changes in key relationships around them reduce others' dependence on them and their connections.

Network Density

Density refers to the overall degree of interconnectedness among network members. It is typically calculated as the ratio of actual links to total possible links. In low-density or loosely knit networks, relatively few network members are linked to one another. In high-density or tightly knit networks, members are highly interlinked, often in multiple ways.

As relational partners develop their relationship, they typically increase contact with the members of each other's networks and develop overlapping networks. This cross-network contact increases in the density of linkages between the partners' networks and the overall density of the larger network. As the dyadic relationship becomes more interdependent and more stable, the connectedness of those around it is likely to increase. Researchers have found that both dating and married couples whose relationships are closer, more satisfied, and more stable tend to have more friends in common and more contact with each other's friends and family.

Conversely, when a dyadic relationship begins to deteriorate, the network surrounding it may unravel. Members of the network who were brought together by virtue of their relationship

with the dyadic partners often lose incentive to stay connected. The demise of a friendship, romantic relationship, or work relationship may force members of the surrounding network to choose sides. Even in the absence of loyalty conflicts, however, network members may begin to question their own relationships as the dyads around them begin to deteriorate. They may lose access to resources. The barriers to alternative relationships may be raised or lowered. The termination of a business partnership, for example, creates options for network members to form new collaborations. The demise of a romantic relationship loosens other bonds within the network, freeing network members for new associations.

Conclusion

To appreciate the effects that dyads can have on networks, we only need consider two questions: How could events inside my relationships affect others? How are my relationships affected by my responses to what others do in their relationships? These questions differ only in perspective, and both point toward ways that dyads influence networks. These include the deliberate attempts of dyadic partners to secure support or other resources from network members, as well as a series of less direct effects on the behavior of network members, the distance between them, their prestige or influence, and the overall structure of the network.

Malcolm R. Parks

See also Acquaintance Process; Affiliation; Courtship, Models and Processes of; Developing Relationships; Friendship Formation and Development; Initiation of Relationships; Interpersonal Attraction; Social Networks, Effects on Developed Relationships; Social Networks, Role in Relationship Initiation; Weak Ties

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SOCIAL NETWORKS, EFFECTS ON DEVELOPED RELATIONSHIPS

It is often said that when we marry, we marry our spouse's family as well. As it turns out, there is truth to this statement. In fact, each time we enter a romantic relationship, we not only "marry" the family, but friends as well. Romantic relationships do not exist in a vacuum, but are embedded in a network of interdependent relationships. This social network affects not only marital relationships, but also has been shown to affect romantic relationships at all stages of development. The present entry addresses the current research highlighting the impact of social networks on relationship initiation, maintenance, and termination.

Defining Aspects of Social Networks

The global social network is a collection of all individuals with whom we are personally acquainted. Social networks can vary in structure in a number of ways. For instance, the size of a social network varies for individuals, with some people having smaller networks and others having more expansive ones. Further, some networks are considered higher in density because they are more closely knit, with many members of the network being directly acquainted with each other. Often these networks are higher in intensity, meaning members are more willing to respond to the expectations of their social network. Meanwhile, others are lower in density, with fewer within-network associations, and may be higher in distance, such that associations within the network are more indirect (e.g., Andrea knows of Vincent because Vincent is friends with her sister). Alternatively, it may only be that subsets of individuals within a network may be closely linked with each other, whereas others are not. This is referred to as clustering or the development of cliques within one's network.

Each social network is typically composed of family members as well as nonfamily members, such as friends, neighbors, and coworkers. As such, within the global network, there are subsets of individuals who constitute

- The psychological network—people to whom one feels close (e.g., one's significant others).
- The exchange network—those who are important to the individual because they provide resources or are those to whom the individual provides support.
- The interactive network—those with whom one regularly communicates.

These categorizations are not mutually exclusive. Rather, it is common for there to be overlap across these different networks. In fact, much of the research on social networks has focused on the inner circle of significant others who are exchange and interactive network members, in addition to members of the psychological network. Personal relationships with these individuals can significantly impact one's physical and mental well-being. In addition, these social network relations can influence one's relations with others within the network, such as the development, quality, and fate of one's romantic relationships.

Social Network Influences

There have been four primary avenues of research examining the influences of social networks on romantic relationship dynamics:

1. Studying how networks contribute to relationship initiation by facilitating introductions of potential partners (e.g., "matchmaking")
2. Examining how aspects of global network structure (e.g., size, density, intensity) contribute to relationship quality
3. Investigating how the provision of resources (e.g., finances, advice) from the social network affects different relationship aspects
4. Exploring associations between social network perceptions (e.g., approval, disapproval, perceptions of the likelihood of the relationship succeeding) and relationship state and fate

Within each of these foci, one theme is consistent: Social networks are important for a variety of romantic relationship variables, from the beginning of the romantic relationship to its end.

Relationship Initiation

Social networks can exert influence in a number of ways during the early stages of relationship formation. Research has shown, for example, that it is often through social networks that we find potential romantic partners. In one national study, 35 percent of married couples claimed to have met their partner through mutual friends, 15 percent met through family, and another 13 percent reporting to have met their spouse through other work or school acquaintances. Sometimes these third parties help through direct matchmaking attempts and blind dates, but friends and family also assist in introducing one to a date through parties, through joint dating (e.g., double dating), and by couples meshing their social networks so that, say, friends from Erika's network come to meet friends of her new husband.

Within Western cultures, there is some evidence that friends can have more influence than the family at these initial stages of relationship formation. After all, it is at this courtship stage that one is essentially making the decision about who to integrate into one's existing peer network. Whereas it is at later stages of relationship development—namely, when deciding whether to commit to a partner for life—that the individual is making a decision about including a partner in his or her family. As discussed earlier, friends of friends make up one of the primary sources of long-term partners. Also, in younger groups of mixed-sex acquaintances, it is not uncommon for friends to date multiple friends within their network. In some instances, literature within developmental psychology has also reported that adolescents even feel pressure to date exclusively within their own social networks and thus limit their choices of romantic partners to avoid exclusion from their peer group. Further, recent experiments in social network research have shown that when weighing potential dates in a dating game study, between 60 and 80 percent of participants chose the bachelor(ette) that was approved for them by their friends. In contrast, participants

were equally likely to choose the candidate they were told their parents disliked as they were to choose the match their parents approved. Last, research on individuals using personal ads shows that if anyone is consulted to help the individual choose among their options, it is friends.

Relationship Maintenance

Once the courtship commences, social networks continue to play a role in affecting the relationship state (e.g., the levels of satisfaction, love, commitment, and overall quality within the romantic relationship). For instance, work by Robert Milardo and colleagues has shown that the more the networks of the couple overlap (i.e., the more they share mutual friends), the lower the likelihood of relationship demise. The social network prevents breakup because the more overlap there is in the network, the more a breakup would cause turmoil—in one's romantic relationship, as well as with one's friends, perhaps forcing them to choose sides.

Another interesting finding is that cross-network contact also plays a significant role in relational development. As the number of individuals one meets in one's partner's network increases, a greater amount of time is spent with the partner. Also, as a result of greater cross-network contact, individuals also report feeling more understanding and predictability in their relationship. Additionally, people report greater disclosure and emotional attachment and generally become more committed to continuing their relationship with greater cross-network contact.

There are a number of possible reasons that cross-network contact yields these positive outcomes. First, meeting the partner's network can be seen as an important step in a developing relationship. Thus, the partner simply being willing to integrate the partner into his or her social network could be indicative of him or her being more committed to the relationship. Second, if individuals are willing to spend time with their partner's social network, this allows them to spend more time with their partner. After all, one would not feel like she or he has to choose between spending Friday night with the partner or his or her friends. Third, meeting individuals from one's partner's network can provide more insight into one's

partner, thus building understanding. For instance, stories of one's partner's past would emerge, perhaps accompanied by an embarrassing photo or two. During these interactions, an individual can get a better sense of a partner's character (e.g., how does she or he react to that embarrassing photo) and his or her approach to relationships. Last, greater disclosure may come about as partners share their experiences from interacting with cross-network associations. Plus, emerging research has shown that if the cross-network contact involves intimate disclosure with other couples, this disclosure not only enhances feelings of trust and love between couples, but within couples as well. It is as if the other couples serve as models, giving couple members training in intimacy building.

Aside from network structure, much of the research examining links between social networks and relationship state has focused on the role of social network support for the romantic relationship. One could define network support of a romantic relationship as the actions, feelings, or expressed opinions of third parties that romantic relationship members perceive as conveying that the network member is validating of the romantic relationship and facilitating of relationship development. Support from one's social network can be expressed in a variety of ways. Emotional support is that which reassures the couple of the value of their relationship, such as when third parties express liking for the partner, include the partner in events (e.g., holidays, parties), and otherwise approve of the relationship. Network members may also serve as sources of advice about the relationship, lending appraisal support. In fact, research suggests that once a couple marries, the social network, particularly friends for women, become the primary source of "relationship work" (e.g., help "make sense" of relationship issues). Last, these friends and family may lend instrumental support through providing material and financial resources to help facilitate relationship development. For instance, friends may throw a baby shower or parents may lend the new couple a down payment for a new home.

In studies of the association between social network support and relationship state, degree of support has been assessed through a variety of measures. Many use single-item indices that ask

individuals in the couple how much they agree that: "My friends/family support my romantic relationship" to which couple members respond from *completely disagree* (1) to *completely agree* (7). Others use scales with multiple items asking about the perception of social approval or about behaviors that third parties engage in to indicate support. Most studies ask about the perceived social support, asking the couple members about the opinions of their social network, rather than asking the third parties. Studies that have inquired about actual social support in addition to perceived social support find that the latter is actually a better predictor of relationship state. Indeed, most studies find that perceived social network support is a positive correlate of satisfaction, love, commitment, investment, and general relationship quality.

This correlation is likely bidirectional. On one side, the better the relationship, the more the network approves. After all, people want the best for their friends and family and would be more approving of a relationship that makes their child or friend happy. On the other side, the more the social network supports the relationship, the more positively one comes to view one's relationship. The positive social network opinion reaffirms one's choice, and the social network likely actively provides resources to help maintain the relationship (e.g., positive advice, encouraging commitment).

By and large, the focus in the literature has been on the influence of social network opinions on the romantic relationship, rather than vice versa. Emerging experimental evidence shows that social network approval is causally linked to greater commitment and affection in a romantic relationship. Also, some longitudinal studies have found the social network support indices to be a stronger predictor of relationship continuation than the perceptions of the couple about how satisfied or committed they are to the relationship. Further, although the majority of this research has been conducted with surveys of primarily White college students in heterosexual dating relationships, this finding about the influence of social network opinion has been replicated in studies of long-term married couples, in experimental surveys, in longitudinal designs where couples are followed for months or years, in studies in non-Western cultures with racially diverse samples, and in relationships with a history of societal disapproval (e.g., intergroup, Internet, or homosexual).

Relationship Termination

Perhaps it is not surprising, then, that lack of support, interference, or other forms of disapproval from the social network are linked to a higher risk of relationship dissolution. Couples coping with the lack of social support for their relationship tend to show lowered levels of commitment and increased risks of infidelity and breakup. Further, new research shows that the impact of the social network extends even beyond breakup, as disapproved couples are less likely to even remain friends postdissolution.

However, the research findings on the impact of disapproval have been less consistent than those assessing approval. Although many research studies examine disapproval and approval as opposite poles on a continuum, increasingly, evidence suggests that disapproval is not merely the inverse of approval. After all, approval largely indicates that the social network is in agreement with the couple about their perception of the relationship. Disapproval, however, indicates disagreement. This difference is important because one doesn't need to stop to question why it is that one's friends and family agree with him or her, but disagreement causes one to stop, think, reconsider, and sometimes choose between the relationship with the disapproving friend/relative and the romantic relationship.

As such, although a number of studies show links between disapproval and relationship failure, there are exceptions. Most notably, early research on the Romeo and Juliet effect found that, in some instances, parental interference was linked to increased love for one's partner. Limited support for the Romeo and Juliet effect has been found in subsequent studies. However, other studies have failed to find a link between disapproval and relationship outcomes. Given the array of findings, it is difficult to pin down the impact of social disapproval. Likely, some respond to disapproval with reactance—whereby they interpret the disapproval as attempts of third parties to interfere in their life and thus respond by doing the opposite of what the third party would like them to do. In contrast, others could not imagine being in a relationship disapproved of by their parents, particularly if they are from a more collectivistic culture where family bonds are considered to be of the utmost importance. Additional individual, relationship, cultural,

and situational variables probably come into play as well and are currently being investigated.

An additional challenge facing the interpretation of results regarding the association of disapproval and relationship outcomes is the lack of a clear and consistent definition of *disapproval*. Most often disapproval is measured with the same instruments used to assess approval, and relationships low in approval are considered disapproved. However, the measurement of disapproval has varied in terms of

- Type of disapproval—Active versus Passive: Some studies ask about the active attempts of third parties to end the relationship (e.g., such as parents forbidding children to see a boyfriend or girlfriend). This type of active disapproval may be more likely to trigger rebellion because third parties are actually interfering in the relationship. In contrast, more passive forms of disapproval—whereby the third party simply doesn't provide as much support for the relationship (as opposed to, say, threatening the withdrawal of resources for remaining in the relationship)—likely elicits a different reaction.
- Target of disapproval—Partner versus Relationship: Other studies ask about dislike of the partner as opposed to disapproval of the relationship, and yet one may like the partner but disapprove of the relationship, perhaps feeling the couple members are too young.

Other aspects of disapproval may also be important to consider. For instance, the third party's reasons for disapproval have yet to be examined in the field. Yet in some cases, the reasons one's parents or friends object may be seen as biased or otherwise invalid, such as if one's parents object to one being in a cross-race relationship. However, in other instances, it could be that the network members disapprove because the relationship is indeed an unhealthy one, perhaps abusive. In this case, the individual may be dependent on the romantic relationship. Dependency on one's romantic relationship has been shown to decrease the impact of social network opinion on the likelihood of relationship termination. Otherwise, it could be that the individual still sees their partner with rose-colored glasses. These idealized perceptions of the partner—called positive illusions—can prevent the individual in the

relationship from seeing flaws evident to outside observers. Indeed, when Diane Felmlee asked participants how members of their social network had affected the breakup, it was evident that third parties played a significant role in helping them see what their partner “was really like.”

Given the more realistic views of the relationship that third parties are credited with having, perhaps it is not surprising, then, that recent research has found that certain social network members are better able to predict whether a romantic relationship will last than are the members of the couple. However, a competing alternative may be that the opinions of the third party regarding relationship quality becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy, whereby if third parties perceive a relationship as doomed to failure, they may bring about this outcome. For instance, their opinion would influence the feedback they gave their friends/family whenever that person sought them out for relationship advice. Thus, the disapproving third party may be more likely to assign blame to the partner and encourage break up in the face of relationship difficulties, rather than help the couple member forgive his or her partner. How the social network facilitates relationship sense making is one of the newer avenues of study in social networks research. It is but one path currently being pursued by researchers as they move from establishing that social network opinions have an impact on trying to understand how and why it is that third parties affect relationship dynamics.

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See also Adolescence, Romantic Relationships in; Attribution Processes in Relationships; Collectivism, Effects on Relationships; Commitment, Predictors and Outcomes; Contextual Influences on Relationships; Interracial and Interethnic Relationships; Social Networks, Dyad Effects on; Social Support, Nature of

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SOCIAL NETWORKS, ROLE IN RELATIONSHIP INITIATION

Social network perspectives have much to contribute to our understanding of why some people meet and others do not and why some who meet go on to develop a personal relationship and others do not. Although the forces that bring people together are often treated as a matter of chance or destiny, research has shown that social network factors play two important roles in this process.

First, they help determine who meets whom. Second, they provide a set of resources or affordances that people employ to create first meetings and facilitate the initial development of relationships. To set these network factors in context, it is helpful first to consider the cultural notion of chance and choice in relationship initiation and, second, the adequacy of traditional social scientific approaches to relationship initiation.

Choice and Chance in Relationship Initiation

Human cultures vary in the degree to which they attempt to regulate contact between strangers. The clearest examples of this can be found in the regulation of contact between unattached men and women who might become sexual partners. In many cultures and groups, relationship initiation is heavily regulated by norms about contact between opposite-sex strangers, as well as mechanisms for sexual segregation and surveillance. When young women and men meet, they meet in a relatively “closed field” that is actively managed by the families and institutions to which they belong.

In other cultures, particularly contemporary European-American cultures, relationship initiation is widely presumed to occur in an “open field,” in which individual choice is maximized and larger social influences are minimized. The romantic literature of these cultures celebrates the role of chance or “destiny” in human encounters, although it frequently contains cautionary tales regarding the risks of consorting with strangers as well.

Two things are apparent when we look across the continuum from “closed” to “open” relational fields. First, although cultures differ, all are concerned to one degree or another with regulating contact between strangers, and all have complex literary and cultural traditions regarding the virtues and risks of such meetings. Second, although some cultures regulate relational initiation to a greater degree and more explicitly than others, there is no such thing as a pure “open field” when it comes to relational choices. That is, whom we meet and who is judged to be a potential relational partner is never solely a matter of chance or choice. There are other factors at work even in the most open of cultures. Before looking at those, it is useful to consider how the myth of

the open field has limited our understanding of relationship initiation.

Blind Spots in the Study of Relationship Initiation

Until recently, researchers typically sought to examine relationship initiation by asking arbitrarily selected strangers to interact in a laboratory setting. Sometimes they were not even asked to interact. In one popular technique, for example, subjects were asked to form impressions or make relational choices based on extremely limited information—such as pictures or brief printed descriptions of others' attitudes. This was called the *phantom-other* technique because there wasn't actually another person with whom subjects interacted. Subjects in these stripped-down situations naturally used the few scraps of information they were given, but how they did so probably tells us little about how people seek and use information in real settings.

Studies that track naturally occurring relationships over time or compare relationships at different stages of development are more informative. Unfortunately, nearly all of these studies start with established relationships because participants usually elect to report on their more established relationships, rather than on their more tentative, early stage relationships. If we are to understand how relationships begin, we must therefore catch them as early as possible and in their natural setting. Fortunately, there is research that speaks to these issues of timing and context in a general way. This is the research on social norms and physical proximity.

Norms of Relationship Initiation

Researchers view relationship initiation as a screening process—winnowing a comparative large “field of availables” to a narrower “field of eligibles” and then to a still narrower “field of desirables.” Some aspects of the selection process are idiosyncratic, but others reflect broader social norms within the individual's group regarding who is an appropriate and desirable partner.

The most powerful of these is the norm of similarity or homogamy. When it comes to selecting mate or friends, selection favors those who are

similar in terms of age, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, education, and religion. These factors are not equally important in every relationship, but research has consistently demonstrated that people draw on norms of similarity when selecting partners for interaction and when deciding whether they wish to pursue a closer relationship.

Norms have influence because they are widely diffused throughout the individual's social group. The more frequently a norm is referenced or enacted within the group's social network, the more influence it will have. Conversely, if the network becomes fragmented or the opportunities to enact norms are restricted, then the impact of the norm on relationship initiation is diminished. Thus, the power of social norms in relationship initiation implicitly depends on the activity and structure of the group's social network.

Physical Proximity and Relationship Initiation

Physical proximity is undoubtedly the most widely recognized factor accounting for why some people meet and others do not. Put simply, one is more likely to meet and begin a relationship with someone nearby than with someone not so near. Research dating back to the 1930s has consistently documented the effects of physical proximity. Apartment dwellers are more likely to become friends with others who live on their floor than with those who live on other floors. Homeowners are more likely to become friends with the neighbors who live next door than with those who live several houses away. Workers are more likely to strike up a relationship with those who work in close proximity than with those who work in other areas of a plant or office.

Physical proximity offers such a commonsense account for why people meet that researchers rarely question it. However, there are a number of problems with physical proximity as an explanation for relationship initiation. First, the findings of the early research were often not as conclusive as we might think. Although they showed that people who lived within a few blocks of each other were more likely to become friends or marry, a large minority of the relational partners examined in these studies were not in close proximity. In some cases, researchers overestimated proximity

effects because they did not count people who met while living in different cities.

Second, physical proximity cannot account for differences within the same geographic radius. Demonstrating that many of those who become friends or romantic partners live within a few blocks of one another does not explain why those particular people connected while others within the same area did not.

Finally, advances in transportation and communication technology over the past 50 years have steadily reduced the importance of proximity as a basis for relationships. In many cases, physical proximity is no longer even a necessary condition for relationship initiation. Computer-mediated communication now makes it possible for people to establish relationships, often close ones, without reference to physical location.

Social Proximity and Relationship Initiation

In social networks, people are directly linked to those they know, but indirectly linked to many others. In fact, nearly everyone is linked to nearly everyone else, although a relatively small number of indirect links. This has been called the “small world” effect, and it accounts for why total strangers often find that they have common acquaintances.

The pattern of social linkages among any large group of people is in a constant state of flux. Some people are pushed further from one another in social space as the number of links separating them increases. Others are carried toward one another as the number of links separating them decreases. Being carried toward one another in social space during the time before individuals actually meet defines a sort of prehistory of relationships. Imagine, for instance, that we could go back in time to visualize changes in the networks containing two individuals who will someday meet and marry. Early on, they might be separated by many links, but as time moved forward, we would see that the number of links separating them steadily decreased. At some point, they were separated by just one or two links. They probably have now become members of at least some of the same groups and have started to share at least some of the same values, attitudes, and expectations. They

may become aware of each other through their common contacts and at some point meet for the first time.

These shifts in network structure create “social proximity effects.” As the number of links separating any two people decreases, the probability of meeting increases. Although it is difficult to document social proximity effects in large social networks, several lines of research point to their existence and illustrate the role they play in relationship initiation. Structural sociologists have shown that patterns of liking tend to be transitive in groups. That is, if A likes B and B likes C, then A will come to like C. Other researchers have shown that this transitivity of liking helps predict friendships over time. Two people are more likely to become friends if they already have a friend in common.

Social proximity effects imply that people who become friends or romantic partners should have had one or more common contacts prior to meeting for the first time. Using a national sample of married and cohabitating couples in the Netherlands, Matthijs Kalmijn and Henk Flap found that almost 50 percent had common friends before they met, and a bit more than 14 percent said that members of their immediate families had known each other before they met for the first time.

Further evidence of social proximity effects comes from a series of studies by Malcolm Parks, who examined the relational prehistories of 858 individuals involved in opposite-sex romantic relationships or same-sex friendships. Respondents were asked which of their partner’s 12 closest friends and family they had met prior to meeting their partner for the first time. Two thirds (66.3 percent) had met at least one member of their partner’s network of family and close friends prior to meeting their partners for the first time. Close to half (47.3 percent) had met between one and three members of the partner’s close circle before meeting the partner, and nearly 20 percent had met more. Social proximity effects occurred equally for men and women and across age groups. Interestingly, however, people in romantic relationships reported that they had prior contact with almost twice as many people in their prospective partner’s network as people in same-sex friendships. It appears that young people tend to select romantic partners from those who are socially

close, but are willing to develop friendships with those who are not quite so close in social space.

Direct Involvement of Network Members in Relationship Initiation

Network members are often actively involved in the initiation of personal relationships—far more often than is acknowledged in the social scientific literature. Some attention has been devoted to those in formal roles such as marital matchmakers. The formal role of matchmaker can be found in a number of non-Western countries and in a variety of ethnic enclaves in the United States and Europe. Yet focusing on such formal roles leads us to overlook the many informal roles played by network members in everyday life.

Network members rarely describe what they do as “matchmaking,” but people agree that they have often given or received “help” in initiating romantic relationships. In one of the few studies to address this phenomenon, Malcolm Parks found that more than half of those in a sample of young adults in the United States said that they had helped at least one other couple “get a romantic relationship started” in the last year. Those who had helped reported helping an average of nearly three couples during the previous 12 months. Among those who had initiated a new romantic relationship themselves during that time, almost two thirds said that they had assistance from at least one person in their social network. In many cases, they reported having received help from multiple parties. Thus, even in a culture that emphasizes personal choice in romantic relationships, the active involvement of network members in relationship initiation appears to be the rule rather than the exception.

The findings of this study also challenged popular gender stereotypes of women as relational specialists and men as less relationally oriented and probably in greater need of help. Men and women were equally likely to help others begin romantic relationships. They are also equally likely to be recipients of help.

The helper’s location within the social network was critical. Helpers were more likely to be unmarried—perhaps reflecting the fact that married people tend to have married friends and are thus

less likely to be in a position to know people who require assistance. People also did not generally give or receive help from relatives, although this may have been a reflection of the fact that most of the study participants were college students away from home and so relatives were perhaps less available. From a network perspective, however, the most interesting finding was how helpers and recipients were related. Cases in which the helper was close to both recipients were rare. The most common cases were those in which the helper was much closer to one of the recipients than the other. Thus, helpers functioned as “network operators” who were not just bringing potential romantic partners together, but who were also bringing together previously unconnected parts of their own social networks.

Contrary to the common stereotype of informal matchmakers operating behind the scenes, most of the people who received help were aware of what the helper was doing on their behalf. More important, in nearly half the cases reported in the Parks study, one or both of the recipients had sought help from the third party. Instead of being passive receivers of third-party influence, then, many people actively enlist the resources of their networks to assist with relational initiation.

The activities of third-party helpers fall into three broad categories: attraction manipulations, direct initiations, and direct assists. Attraction manipulations attempt to increase the prospective partners’ attraction to each other by making positive comments about one person to the other, downplaying or reframing less positive attributes, or noting and reinforcing similarities between the prospective partners. Direct initiations include all those activities intended to facilitate meetings between the prospective partners—arranging for them to be at the same place at the same time, making introductions, and arranging social events intended to bring the prospective partners together. Direct assists range from coaching one or both prospective partners to acting as information relays between the prospective partners. Again, these activities are frequently done with the person’s knowledge and often at their request.

The availability of help from network members often has a profound influence on relationship initiation. In Parks’s study of third-party assistance in the initiation of romantic relationships, just over half of the helpers believed that

they had been successful. More important, the majority of those who had received assistance from network members believed that it had been beneficial. Those who received third-party assistance had more active social lives than those who did not.

Malcolm R. Parks

See also Acquaintance Process; Affiliation; Affinity Seeking; Arranged Marriages; Courtship, Models and Processes of; Developing Relationships; Falling in Love; First Impressions; Friendship Formation and Development; Initiation of Relationships; Interpersonal Attraction; Social Network, Dyad Effects on; Social Networks, Effects on Developed Relationships; Weak Ties

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SOCIAL NEUROSCIENCE

Social neuroscience is the study of the associations between social and neural levels of analysis and the biological mechanisms underlying these associations. Neuroscientists have tended to focus on single organisms, organs, cells, or intracellular processes. Social species create relationships and organizations beyond the individual, however, and these emergent structures evolved hand in hand with neural and hormonal mechanisms to support them because the consequent social behaviors helped animals survive, reproduce, and care for offspring sufficiently long that they too reproduced. Human relationships represent a particularly important social structure that serves these functions. Social neuroscience is concerned with how biological systems implement social processes and behavior, capitalizing on concepts and methods from the neurosciences to inform and refine theories of social-psychological processes, and using social and behavioral concepts and data to inform and refine theories of neural organization and function.

Consider the recent evolutionary development of the brain, which has grown substantially larger than needed to maintain life. According to the social brain hypothesis, deducing better ways to find food, avoid perils, and navigate territories has adaptive value for large mammals, but the complexities of these ecological demands pale by comparison to the complexities of social living. The latter include (a) learning by social observation; (b) recognizing the shifting status of friends and foes; (c) anticipating and coordinating efforts between two or more individuals; (d) using language to communicate, reason, teach, and deceive others; (e) orchestrating relationships, ranging from pair bonds and families to friends, bands, and coalitions; (f) navigating complex social hierarchies, social norms, and cultural developments; (g) subjugating self-interests to the interests of the pair bond or social group in exchange for the possibility of long-term benefits; (h) recruiting support to sanction individuals who violate group norms; and (i) doing all this across time frames that stretch from the distant past to multiple possible futures. Accordingly, cross-species comparisons suggest that the evolution of large and metabolically expensive

brains is more closely associated with social than ecological complexity, at least in primates.

Even within anthropoid primates, the achievements of *Homo sapiens* are notable. Humans were not the first bipedal creatures or the first to use tools, but humans, apparently uniquely, contemplate the history of the earth, the reach of the universe, the origin of the species, and the genetic blueprint of life. Estimates among biologists at the dawn of the 21st century were that 100,000 genes were needed for the cellular processes that are responsible for complex human behavior. It appears that humans have only about a quarter this number of genes, but as a species we have been faster than other animals to acquire new genes and to discard unnecessary ones. The frontal cortex is particularly important for critical behaviors such as executive function and working memory, yet the ratio of frontal to total cortical gray matter is about the same in humans as in nonhuman primates. Although humans may have more cortical neurons than other mammals, whales and elephants are not far behind on this count. The specialized capacities of humans may depend less on the number of neurons than the number of synapses in the brain, the greater cell-packing density in the brain, and the higher neural conduction velocities, which together raise the overall capacity for abstraction, representation, and information processing.

A biological approach that treats the individual organism as the broadest legitimate unit of organization may help illuminate some aspects of development and behavior, but it is unlikely to provide a comprehensive account. Nevertheless, from the perspective of many biological scientists during most of the 20th century, the contributions of the social world to biology and behavior were thought best to be considered later in time, if at all. Accordingly, social factors were viewed as of minimal interest with respect to the basic development, structure, or processes of the brain. To the extent that social factors were suspected of being relevant, their consideration would so complicate the study of brain and behavior that they were not a priority. The approach of social scientists throughout most of the 20th century was no less narrowly focused than that of biologists. World wars, a Great Depression, and civil injustices made it amply clear that social and cultural forces were too important

to address to await the full explication of cellular and molecular mechanisms. Thus, biological events and processes were routinely ignored.

Despite this historical independence of biological and social sciences, evidence for a social brain has continued to accrue. Individuals with frontal variant frontotemporal dementia have relatively normal general cognition and intelligence, but exhibit severely impaired social cognition such as empathy and self-regulation. Individuals with Alzheimer's dementia, in contrast, whose disease first manifests in the entorhinal cortex and hippocampal regions, are characterized by severely impaired memory and cognition, but aspects of social cognition such as empathy and theory of mind are relatively intact. Prosopagnosics, who typically have bilateral lesions in the occipital lobes near the temporal lobes, do not undergo a change in personality, but they no longer recognize the faces of those whom they once knew (e.g., spouses). The Capgras syndrome, typically associated with bilateral lesions in the temporal and right frontoparietal cortices, is characterized by an indelible belief that others who are emotionally close to the affected individual have been replaced by physically identical imposters. In contrast, Fregoli syndrome, typically associated with right hemisphere dysfunction, is characterized by a belief that strangers (i.e., people who are perceived to be physically different) are in fact familiar individuals (i.e., psychologically identical to familiar individuals).

In addition to the impact of the brain on social behavior, social behavior has a substantial impact on the brain and genes. Social factors such as loneliness are heritable and affect genetic expression in white blood cells. For example, early work by Harry Harlow and colleagues suggested that tactile contact is a stronger determinant of mother–infant attachment than feeding. In rodents, early tactile deprivation reduces the number of glucocorticoid (a class of stress monitoring and dampening hormones) receptors (sites at which neurotransmitters act on neurons) in the hippocampus and frontal cortex. These changes can be long-lasting, and, as a consequence, stress reactivity is elevated in both the pup and the adult. Intentional action and the observation of intentional action by another individual activate the same neurons—the so-called mirror neuron system—thereby providing a shared

neural notation that promotes positive social interactions, synchrony, and communication. Positive social interactions promote the release of oxytocin in the brain, which in turn promotes social recognition and bonding and down-regulates reactivity to stressors. The release of testosterone in nonhuman male primates not only promotes sexual behavior, but the availability of receptive females—a social factor—influences testosterone levels in these male primates.

In summary, mounting evidence for the importance of the relationship between social and biological events has prompted biological scientists, cognitive scientists, and social scientists to collaborate more systematically, with a common view that the understanding of mind and behavior could be enhanced by an integrative analysis that encompassed brain, cells, and genes. The growth in this research suggests that linking the neurosciences and social sciences is indeed practical and indicates potential for a common scientific language that can establish bridge principles needed to connect the theoretical terms of these sciences. Social neuroscience is the interdisciplinary scientific field that emerged to bridge these different levels of organization.

Social neuroscience assumes that all human social behavior is implemented biologically. This does not mean that the concepts of biology can provide an adequate description or explanation of social behavior, or that “molecular” forms of representation provide the only level of analysis for understanding social behavior. Reductionism is a focus on the component parts of a whole to understand these parts and how they function together, but reductionism should not be conflated with substitutionism. Reductionism is one of various approaches to better science based on the value of data derived from distinct levels of analysis to constrain and inspire the interpretation of data derived from others levels of analysis. Emergent social structures and molar constructs, in turn, provide a means of understanding highly complex activity without needing to specify each individual action by its simplest components, thereby providing an efficient approach to describing complex systems. By analogy, chemists who work with the periodic table on a daily basis use recipes rather than the periodic table to cook, not because a particular food preparation cannot be coded by complex

chemical expressions. However, efficiency of expression is not the only issue: The concepts defining fine cuisine are not part of the discipline of chemistry. The theoretical terms of the behavioral and social sciences are similarly valuable in relation to those of biology, but can be informed and refined through integration with theories and methods from the neurosciences.

Research in social neuroscience has grown dramatically since the term was introduced in 1992. The most active areas of research in social neuroscience include brain-imaging studies in normal children and adults, animal models of social behavior, studies of patients with brain lesions (e.g., stroke patients), imaging studies of psychiatric patients, and research on social determinants of peripheral neural, neuroendocrine, and immunological processes. These areas of research have important implications for a wide range of issues in human relationships that are only beginning to be investigated.

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See also Affiliation in Nonhuman Animals; Attachment Theory; Biological Systems for Courtship, Mating, Reproduction, and Parenting; Empathy; Evolutionary Perspectives on Women's Romantic Interests

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SOCIAL PENETRATION THEORY

What happens as individuals move through the different stages of a personal relationship—from being strangers, to acquaintances, to close friends, or, perhaps, to romantic partners? Social penetration theory, developed by Irwin Altman and Dalmas Taylor in 1973, provides a theoretical framework for understanding the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors of two people as they establish a close relationship. This entry summarizes the behavioral and subjective processes that occur in the development of a close relationship according to social penetration theory.

Social Penetration Processes in Relationship Development

Social penetration theory predicts that partners become more open with one another verbally (e.g., self-disclosure of thoughts and feelings), nonverbally (e.g., smiling, direct eye contact), and environmentally (e.g., moving chairs in order to be closer) as a relationship develops. In particular, social penetration theory has influenced research on self-disclosure during the different stages of a relationship. The theory assumes that people gradually reveal more personal information about themselves as a relationship progresses, allowing partners to assess how rewarding it is to interact together and to forecast the likely success of a closer relationship.

Self-Disclosure and Relationship Development

What exactly are the changes in self-disclosure as partners become more open with one another as their relationship develops? Social penetration theory assumes that the personality of the person making a disclosure is composed of numerous “items” (including facts, opinions, values, and emotions). These characteristics of personality are organized into a series of concentric circles (akin to the structure of an onion), reflecting layers of the personality. Self-disclosure is expected to increase in breadth and depth as a relationship progresses. *Breadth category* refers to the number of topic areas (e.g., family, religion, sex, hobbies) about the self that an individual talks about with another person. *Breadth*

frequency refers to the number of items within a topic area (e.g., views about having children; growing-up experiences with parents, grandparents, and siblings) that someone might talk about, whereas *depth* refers to the level of intimacy of information about the self that might be disclosed. Greater depth of disclosure is associated with disclosing about inner layers of personality, reflecting central, emotionally sensitive, and potentially vulnerable information about the self (e.g., fears, values, and closely held beliefs). Finally, *breadth time* refers to the amount of time spent talking about various topic areas to the other person.

Wedge-Shaped Model of Disclosure and Social Penetration

Changes in the breadth and depth of self-disclosure can be represented as a series of wedges penetrating into one’s personality. At each stage of a relationship, breadth of disclosure (i.e., how much information is revealed about the self) is expected to be greater in outer than in inner layers of personality. But as a relationship develops, these wedges widen and deepen as individuals reveal more information about themselves to the partner and at a deeper level of intimacy.

Several features of this wedge-shaped model of social penetration should be noted. First, people are expected to move only gradually from superficial to more intimate areas of disclosure as a relationship develops. People may not want to plunge too quickly into intimate exchanges (i.e., disclosing about highly personal and vulnerable information about the self early rather than later in a relationship’s development) because the potential costs of rejection and being hurt are much greater at more intimate levels of exchange. People will gradually increase the disclosure of more intimate information to another person based on their subjective assessment that outcomes (rewards vs. costs) have been favorable in earlier interactions and based on a forecast that rewards are likely to be greater than costs in more intimate interactions.

Second, people are expected to continue disclosing as well as to expand the breadth of disclosure at levels of intimacy that already have been attained. For instance, self-disclosure in a developing relationship may be a blend of talking about the old and the new at a particular level of intimacy: continuing to exchange information about

previously discussed topics (where favorable outcomes are known to occur), but also expanding disclosure to related topics that might be at the same level of intimacy. Social penetration theory predicts that the exchange of self-disclosure continues at already achieved levels of intimacy because of the certainty of rewards at these levels of intimacy. Self-disclosure (including an assessment of the other's reactions to the disclosure input) also continues at these previously accessed levels of intimacy to improve the accuracy of the mental picture of the other person. This information is used, in turn, by a "central memory reservoir" to infer whether it is worthwhile interacting with the other person in more intimate areas, as well as to decide whether developing a relationship with this person compares favorably (in terms of reward/cost outcomes) with starting a new relationship with someone else.

A third major feature of the social penetration process is that self-disclosure (and social interactions generally) may occur in *any* area that has been previously accessed. Partners in a relationship are open and flexible in exchanging information that has been associated with positive outcomes. Conversely, self-disclosure about certain topics may be taboo because the information is perceived as "too private" to disclose or as a potential source of conflict and/or negative outcomes in interactions with the other person. Social penetration theory is often associated with the notion that relationships develop unidirectionally and cumulatively as individuals reveal more and more information about themselves to their partner. But this "ever-increasing" openness is qualified by an individual's decisions to revisit previously explored areas of self as well as to restrict and perhaps deny access about certain areas of self to the other person.

Social penetration theory acknowledges that there are other possible models besides the wedge shape to describe changes in openness as a relationship develops. For instance, akin to a summer romance where partners sweep one another off their feet quickly, partners might accelerate depth of disclosure in just a few areas as they get to know one another. But this pattern of relationship development, according to social penetration theory, is atypical. People are expected to be cautious in exchanging information about central layers of self. They are unsure about the likelihood of reward/cost

outcomes at more intimate levels of interactions without more information about what it is like to interact with the other person at less intimate levels of interactions. People may be cautious about developing a relationship too rapidly to avoid unanticipated costs (e.g., losing the other's respect, being rejected as a relationship partner) associated with disclosure about central areas of self.

Unresolved Conflict and Reversal of the Social Penetration Process

What happens to a relationship when there is disagreement and maybe irresolvable conflict? First, there should be considerable conversation surrounding the conflict issues and/or disagreement. But if the conflict is not settled, then a reversal in the social penetration process (i.e., depenetration) is predicted as interactions decrease in breadth and depth of disclosure. Interactions may regress to more superficial levels to reduce conflict and to minimize costs that are incurred at more intimate levels of communication. The depenetration process is generally expected to be gradual in responding to an unresolved conflict, but it may occur rapidly if the conflict is associated with sensitive areas of personality.

Contributions of Social Penetration Theory

Social penetration theory has made several contributions to the field of personal relationships. Social penetration theory provided the first systematic framework to describe the multiple behaviors associated with the development of a close relationship. Although this entry focused on changes in verbal behavior (especially self-disclosure) that occur as a close relationship develops, social penetration theory and research have examined how people become more open on a range of interpersonal behaviors in a developing relationship, including how they communicate, how they share joint activities, how they show mutual consideration, and how they display affection toward one another. Altman and Taylor also pioneered in conducting longitudinal research among college roommates and U.S. Navy personnel on changes in self-disclosure and social penetration in the development of a close relationship.

More recently, researchers have used social penetration theory as a conceptual and empirical framework for studying changes in openness in the development of online relationships. Although social penetration theory predicts that relationship development is associated with a gradual increase in openness about the self, it has also stimulated the construction of privacy and dialectical theories of communications by its emphasis on the spiraling or cycling nature of disclosure (as relationship partners revisit previously explored areas of social exchange), as well as the idea that certain areas of personality may be closed off to disclosure. Although changes in self-disclosure may be linked to the progression of a close relationship, social penetration also anticipated transactional theories of relationship intimacy by the suggestion that it is the reaction of the disclosure recipient, not the disclosure, that influences the experience of rewards and costs in a social interaction and, in turn, whether a relationship will develop.

Valerian J. Derlega

See also Computer-Mediated Communication; Dialectical Processes; Interpersonal Process Model of Intimacy; Privacy; Responsiveness; Self-Disclosure; Stage Theories of Relationship Development; Taboo Topics

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SOCIAL RELATIONS MODEL

David Kenny's Social Relations Model (SRM) allows researchers to study patterns in the thoughts, feelings, and behavior of individuals across relationships, as well as to examine the uniqueness of each relationship. Additionally, the model addresses the most important statistical challenge for relationships research that involves dyadic data—data collected from more than one person in a relationship. Specifically, the model accounts for nonindependence, the situation in which responses from persons in a relationship are related to each other. For example, a husband's marital satisfaction is likely related to or influenced by his wife's satisfaction. Nonindependence is more than a statistical nuisance because relationship research is often explicitly concerned with the degree of nonindependence between individuals and the processes that explain nonindependence, how one person's thoughts, feelings, and behavior influence another person. Designed explicitly for the analysis of dyadic data, the SRM offers researchers an important tool to understand relationships. This entry reviews the SRM and illustrates its application to different relationships, including friendships and families.

Although the SRM applies to dyadic data, the analysis requires information from groups of at least four individuals. Thus, the model is most easily applied to the study of work groups, friendship groups, and families. The most commonly used group design is a round robin. Consider a study of self-disclosure among a group of mutual friends. In a round-robin design, each person would rate how

much he or she discloses to each other friend. Similarly, if actual self-disclosure is measured, each person would interact one on one with each friend, and the disclosures of each person in every interaction would be recorded.

The SRM proposes that any dyadic measure (one person's report about or behavior toward another person) may reflect three important effects: actor, partner, and relationship. To illustrate, imagine that Mike reports trusting his friend Susan. Mike is the actor and Susan is the partner. The actor effect measures the degree to which Mike generally trusts or distrusts his friends. The partner effect assesses whether all of Susan's friends tend to trust or distrust her. Finally, the relationship effect indicates whether Mike especially trusts Susan beyond his general tendency to trust and the tendency for others to trust Susan. The presence of actor effects indicates individual differences in the tendency to be trusting, whereas partner effects point to something about the target person that elicits trust from others. The relationship effect reflects either the unique combination of two persons or a relationship property that emerges over time. These effects are interpreted in a similar manner for actual behavior. For example, consider the tendency of individuals to compliment friends while doing a cooperative decision-making task. An actor effect indicates that some individuals tend to compliment everyone, whereas others are less complimentary. A partner effect would demonstrate that some individuals are complimented more than others. The presence of a relationship effect would indicate that compliments are particularly prevalent in some friendships and less prevalent in others.

Recently, the SRM has been applied to families. In a family analysis, each family role (e.g., mother) has an actor and a partner effect. Relationship effects refer to the particular role combinations. For example, consider a study that examines criticism in families consisting of a mother, a father, and a daughter. The actor effect for mothers would indicate whether mothers tend to criticize all family members to a similar degree. The father partner effect would reveal whether fathers tend to be criticized to a similar degree by both mothers and daughters. The mother-father relationship effect would show whether criticism is especially pronounced in that particular relationship.

Although the presence or absence of actor, partner, and relationship effects may address important questions about relationships, the SRM is particularly helpful in understanding phenomena such as reciprocity. If Susan likes Mike, does Mike like Susan? With an SRM analysis, reciprocity can be examined at the individual and relationship levels. Reciprocity exists at the individual level if Mike generally likes others (actor effect) and others generally like Mike (partner effect). At the relationship level, reciprocity would exist if Susan especially likes Mike and Mike especially likes Mike.

Additionally, to understand the determinants of each effect, researchers can assess aspects of the individuals or relationships such as the individuals' personalities. For example, if everyone tends to think Joe is extroverted (Joe's partner effect), is Joe actually extroverted measured with a personality test? Similarly, researchers can assess whether a person's personality is related to how he or she is generally viewed by others and generally views others. For example, is an individual with high self-esteem generally trusted by others and does he or she generally trust others?

Much of the research using the SRM has examined personality judgments among unacquainted individuals. Do individuals agree in their perceptions of the same person and are those perceptions accurate? This research has shown remarkable levels of accuracy at least for some judgments. Research on acquainted individuals and friendship groups has focused on whether increased acquaintance improves accuracy, revealing some improvements in agreement and accuracy. Research on well-acquainted individuals also examines other aspects of relationships, including liking and self-disclosure. Not surprisingly, both liking and self-disclosure among acquainted individuals are characterized by strong relationship effects and somewhat weaker actor effects. Thus, some individuals tend to disclose to all their friends and others disclose relatively little, but the amount of disclosure still varies considerably depending on the particular friendship. Several studies have been conducted with family data, but clearly there is a need for more research in this area.

Results of recent SRM studies of friendship groups, families, and important relationship phenomena, such as self-disclosure, suggest that the

model has considerable promise as a tool for understanding relationships.

Maurice J. Levesque

See also Dyadic Data Analysis; Interaction Analysis; Quantitative Methods in Relationship Research; Reciprocity of Liking

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SOCIAL SKILLS, ADULTS

Adult social skills (also referred to as *interpersonal skills* or *interpersonal* or *social competence*) consist of a wide range of interpersonal abilities and competencies that help people function effectively in social situations. Social skills are particularly important in the initiation, formation, and maintenance of adult interpersonal relationships. Rather than being a clearly defined area of research on human relationships, research on adult social skills is progressing in many disciplines and subdisciplines on a variety of fronts. Scholars in clinical psychology, communication, social/personality psychology, and human development have all contributed to what we know about adult social skills. Moreover, the complexity and variety of adult social skills is enormous. This entry explores how and where adult social skills have been investigated in the social science literature, reviews models for understanding and measuring adult social skills, and discusses their implications for effective human relationships.

Social Skills in Adult Clinical Work

Research on adult social skills has its roots in clinical psychology as a means of helping hospitalized and discharged patients, as well as participants in a variety of outpatient programs, develop interpersonal skills to help them cope with problems stemming from family and other interpersonal conflicts. Social skills training typically consists of providing strategies for initiating and maintaining conversations, resolving interpersonal conflicts, avoiding inappropriate statements or nonverbal behavior, and understanding and adhering to appropriate social rules and conventions. Social skill training uses a variety of methods, ranging from simple instruction to role-playing, to homework assignments that have participants use their newly developed skills in actual social settings. Using a behavioral approach, social skills training typically relies on behavior modeling, live and video-recorded feedback, and rehearsal of effective social behaviors in simulated (and sometimes actual) social settings. Some research has demonstrated that social skills training is superior to traditional psychotherapy in effecting positive outcomes with certain clinical populations, particularly those suffering from chronic social anxiety or difficulty coping with social relationships. Social skills training has been a component of a number of psychological interventions, including conflict management training, anger management, family and marital therapy, assertiveness training, and in programs to treat severe shyness and social anxiety.

Perhaps the most impressive and well-organized social skills training program has been the work of John Gottman and his colleagues on marital relationships. In Gottman's program, couples are taught to recognize problematic aspects of their marital communication (e.g., criticizing, displaying anger and defensiveness, etc.); they are then taught appropriate social skills to deal with marital disagreements and conflict, such as learning how to tactfully discuss a conflict, avoiding negativity in interactions, and the like. These skills consist of both learning appropriate verbal interchanges and dealing with the nonverbal and emotional aspects of marital conflict.

Social Skills, Social Intelligence, and Social and Communicative Competence

In the early 20th century, psychologists studying intelligence proposed that, in addition to academic intelligence (i.e., the construct of Intelligence Quotient [IQ]), there existed another form of “everyday” intelligence: social intelligence. The domain of social intelligence consists of knowledge of appropriate behavior in common social interactions; the ability to understand others’ communications, intentions, and emotions; and knowing how to act wisely and tactfully in social encounters. Unfortunately, this line of research was nearly abandoned because of the complex variety of social abilities that composed social intelligence and difficulty distinguishing social intelligence from academic intelligence. Instead, scholars began investigating these constructs with research that examined various social skills, abilities, or competencies, usually without an organizing theoretical framework.

For example, social/personality psychologist Mark Snyder proposed a construct that he labeled *self-monitoring*, which is the ability to monitor and control one’s social behavior in order to manage impressions and behave appropriately. Although representing only specific aspects of the broad domain of social skills/competence, self-monitoring has been used by some scholars as a substitute for social competence.

Similarly, communication scholars have focused on *communicative competence* as a theoretical construct to capture abilities to exchange information in social situations and in the context of interpersonal relationships. Often communicative competence is broken down into a number of sub-components, such as effective listening behavior, abilities to plan and execute communication in social settings, adapting to social or cultural conventions, and regulating the flow of communication, and these are examined individually or in combination in research. In addition, there are certain skills that are less focused on building social relationships and more instrumental in nature, such as persuasion skills, arguing/debating, public or informal speaking ability, and skills in providing emotional support and comfort. Other communication scholars view communicative competence as a more global construct, similar to

social competence/intelligence, and examine how it impacts social behavior and outcomes.

Nonverbal and Emotional Skills

Another line of research has focused on nonverbal and emotional communication skills as a specific subset of more general social skills/competence. Specifically, research has examined people’s abilities to identify or “decode” nonverbal cues, such as facial expressions of emotion, gestures, or tone of voice. A parallel line examines individual differences in the ability to send or “encode” nonverbal messages accurately and appropriately. This is related to the concept of empathic accuracy—the ability to understand what another person is feeling or thinking. Finally, some scholars have studied ability to regulate and control the expression of emotional messages or other nonverbal cues, abilities that are important when a person is trying to cover up nervousness in social situations or anxiety and guilt when lying.

Nonverbal skills associated with emotional communication, particularly abilities to decode emotional messages and regulate one’s felt emotional states, have been included as components of the new and quite popular concept of *emotional intelligence*. In addition to nonverbal/emotional communication skills, emotional intelligence also includes knowledge about how emotions are involved in social interactions and human relationships, awareness of one’s own emotional states, and ability to regulate those states.

One model that is aligned with both the communication perspective and research on nonverbal and emotional skills focuses on the core, basic skills involved in interpersonal communication. According to this framework proposed by Ronald Riggio, social skills are broken down into three types: skills in encoding or expressing messages; skills in decoding, referred to as sensitivity to others’ messages; and skill in regulating or controlling communication. These three skills—expressiveness, sensitivity, and control—operate in both the emotional and the social/verbal domains, leading to six basic social skills: emotional expressiveness, emotional sensitivity, emotional control, social expressiveness, social sensitivity, and social control. Although the emotional skills include abilities to

send, receive, and regulate the display of nonverbal and emotional messages, social expressiveness is a verbal speaking skill and the ability to engage others in conversation, social sensitivity is the ability to decode and understand the elements of social situations, and social control is sophisticated social role-playing skill, somewhat similar to self-monitoring. Research has demonstrated that well-developed social skills, such as emotional expressiveness, emotional sensitivity, social control, and self-monitoring, are predictive of the quality of social relationships and the effectiveness in a variety of social situations, and are predictive of the ability to play complex social roles, such as formal leadership positions and ability as a public speaker.

Measurement of Adult Social Skills

In clinical settings, adult social skills are most commonly measured through observational coding of behavior or by having trained evaluators rate the possession or absence of particular types of social skills (or make an overall rating of social competence). Observational coding is used, for example, in Gottman's work on marital communication, where couples are allowed to interact with each other, and specific behaviors are used as indicators of good or poor communication processes.

In much of the research on social skills, performance-based assessments are used routinely. Individuals being assessed are asked to perform in some sort of actual or simulated social environment, and inferences are made about their possession of particular social skills based on their performance. In research on nonverbal encoding skills, individuals are asked to enact specific emotional expressions through face or tone of voice. These expressions are then shown to judges who try to decipher which emotions are being conveyed. The percentage of judges who correctly identify the emotion communicated represents the encoder's possession of emotional encoding skill. Likewise, to assess nonverbal decoding skill, individuals are shown video-recorded emotional expressions or social scenes and are asked to interpret the expressions or scenes. Accuracy at the decoding task represents the possession of nonverbal decoding skill. A number of standardized performance-based tests of decoding skill have

been developed and are used frequently in research on nonverbal skill. Some of these tests measure ability to read basic facial expressions of emotion or from voice tone, whereas others assess skill in reading the nonverbal and verbal/social cues in actual human interactions.

Another strategy for measuring social skills is the use of self-report instruments that ask individuals to report on their own social successes, strengths, and weaknesses. Although there is some concern over whether respondents are able to report their possession of skills or will report accurately their skill in communication and in social interactions, there is good evidence that many aspects of social skill can be validly assessed through carefully constructed and validated self-report instruments. Rather than simply asking people whether they possess certain social skills, these self-report measures focus on asking respondents about social outcomes and success in social situations. For example, the Social Skills Inventory measures the six basic social skills outlined earlier in Riggio's model. Similarly, although performance-based measures of emotional intelligence are the preferred method of measuring aspects of emotional skill, there has been some limited success with self-report assessments of emotional intelligence, although performance-based assessments of social skill and emotional intelligence are preferred and likely more accurate.

Research Findings and Implications for Human Relationships

Social skills training is an extremely common component of many clinical interventions, with patients suffering from chronic shyness, social anxiety, or difficulties in family and interpersonal relationships. There is substantial research that supports its effectiveness as a therapeutic tool.

There is also general agreement that social skills are critically important in everyday social interactions, in developing and maintaining high-quality human relationships, and in good relationships in the work setting. Research on social skills in nonclinical populations suggests that possession of social skills is positively related to the size and quality of social support networks, positive initial impressions, greater social self-efficacy,

self-esteem, and even life satisfaction. There is even evidence that suggests that socially skilled persons are evaluated more positively as potential dating partners, leaders, and job applicants; holding physical beauty constant, socially skilled persons are rated as more attractive than their nonskilled peers. Possession of high levels of social skills is also negatively related to self-reported shyness, loneliness, and social anxiety.

Although common sense and research evidence suggests that social skills are important for everyday social functioning and for the quality of human relationships, there has been relatively little research on adult social skills. Part of the problem is the lack of agreed-on theoretical models for social skills and no consensus on methods for measuring social skills. Another difficulty is that the research on social skills is scattered across a number of disciplines and in different areas of focus within those disciplines, as has been outlined. The emphasis and even the language of the topic vary depending on the discipline. The construct of adult social skills goes by many names—communicative competence, social and emotional intelligence, nonverbal skill, and interpersonal skill. However, regardless of the label, social skills are critically important for effective human social functioning and for relationships.

Ronald E. Riggio

See also Communication Skills; Emotional Communication; Emotional Intelligence; Empathic Accuracy and Inaccuracy; Interpersonal Sensitivity; Self-Monitoring and Relationships; Shyness

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SOCIAL SKILLS IN CHILDHOOD

The term *social skills in childhood* refers to behaviors that enable children to elicit positive responses from others and establish positive relationships with others. Normal acquisition of social skills during childhood is a critical developmental task that fosters healthy adjustment across time and life domains. Children with good social skills generally enjoy positive relationships with peers and adults, which, in turn, serve a wide range of supportive functions. In contrast, children with poorer social skills may experience social rejection or neglect, and they face higher risk for maladjustment across social and psychological domains. In this entry, childhood social skills are conceptualized as multidimensional (i.e., behavioral, cognitive, emotional, and biological systems are involved), and social skills are contextualized within developmental (i.e., age group) and social circumstances.

Integrative Conceptualization of Social Skills

To conceptualize social skills, some scholars emphasize the capacity to elicit positive responses from peers and to forge positive peer relationships (e.g., friendships), whereas others focus on the attainment of social goals (e.g., establishing a position of leadership). Positive or desired peer responses are established by enacting behaviors

that are sensitive to specific demands across diverse social settings (e.g., classroom vs. playground) and situations (e.g., dyadic vs. group interaction). However, most scholars agree that social skills involve more than possessing a particular behavioral repertoire. The social behaviors that children display in a given social situation are shaped by cognitive and emotional capacities, such as an ability to “read” social situations accurately, an understanding of effective solutions to social problems, and well-controlled experiences and expressions of emotion. Thus, social skills are dynamic and multidetermined, not simply “mechanical” behaviors that function equally well across social contexts.

Several conceptual models have been formulated to explain how children’s social behavior is influenced by the ways in which they interpret social information (e.g., the facial expressions or behaviors of others during social interactions). Children’s interpretation of social information is often referred to as social information processing. Generally, these models propose that children process social information, first, by noticing and interpreting social cues and by selecting goals for the situation; next, by generating, evaluating, and selecting potential social responses; and, finally, by enacting the chosen response. Numerous studies have provided compelling evidence that social information-processing tendencies are associated with children’s social behavior and social status. For example, a well-replicated finding is that aggressive or peer-rejected children are more likely to attribute hostile intent to others in social situations (e.g., interpret an accident as an intentional attempt to harm), compared with nonaggressive or accepted children.

Likewise, emotion is tightly intertwined with children’s social information processing and social behaviors. Children’s interpretation of social cues and their selection of social responses is associated with the valence (i.e., positive or negative) and intensity of their emotions. For example, aggressive children are more likely to attribute hostile intent to peers after negative emotions (e.g., anger, frustration) have been primed, compared with neutral emotional conditions. Furthermore, emotion can be directly related to children’s observable social behavior. For example, to invite peers to interact with them, it is important for children to

experience appropriate emotion (e.g., happiness at the prospect of interaction), send appropriate emotional messages (e.g., facial expressions such as smiling), and receive emotional messages appropriately (e.g., read the other child’s emotion to assess whether she is also inclined to interact).

Socially skilled behaviors have emotional and cognitive determinants, and the evaluation of social skills cannot be judged apart from the child’s age, cultural norms, or situation-specific demands. Moreover, the development of social skills is affected by other child characteristics (e.g., temperament or personality, which have genetic roots) and numerous environmental factors, such as opportunities to learn social skills via peer interaction, as well as experiences in the family context (e.g., parental social coaching, observations of interparental conflict) and peer context (e.g., reinforcement for prosocial behavior, victimization by peers). Although social skills have multiple determinants and involve more than behavior alone, social behaviors are the most proximal determinants of peer responses and attainment of social goals.

Socially Skilled Behaviors

The “competence correlates” approach is one method for identifying socially skilled behavioral strategies. According to this approach, social behaviors can be classified as social skills to the extent that the behaviors are empirically associated with peer liking or peer acceptance. A vast array of discrete social behaviors has been linked to positive or problematic peer relationships during childhood. Thus, the competence correlates approach focuses on general social interaction strategies with multiple behavioral exemplars (e.g., fair-play skills), rather than specific social behaviors.

Karen Bierman distilled the literature on competence correlates in childhood and identified seven social skill domains. *Social participation* involves initiating or entering ongoing peer activities or conversations, attending to and responding to peers, and displaying positive affect in the context of peer interactions. *Emotional understanding* involves recognizing one’s own feelings and expressing them appropriately, detecting the feelings of others, and responding sensitively to the

feelings of others. *Prosocial behaviors* refer to playing or interacting cooperatively in dyadic or peer-group settings and include behaviors such as helping, sharing, and taking turns. *Self-control* refers to inhibiting impulsive behaviors and instead coping with upset feelings (e.g., anxiety, anger) in a way that promotes problem solving and does not escalate conflict situations. *Communication skills* involve appropriate self-expression, listening attentively and respectfully to others, and asking and answering questions in conversation. *Fair-play skills* refer to following rules during games or play activities and winning or losing games in a graceful manner. *Social problem-solving skills* involve the abilities to identify problems, generate and evaluate solutions and plans, and negotiate and compromise when disagreements arise. These behavioral strategies can be viewed as social skills based on their empirical associations with positive dyadic (e.g., friendship) or peer-group (e.g., overall acceptance by the peer group) relationships. Despite their general effectiveness, the optimal manifestation of these behavioral strategies varies depending on age and activity context (e.g., fantasy play in early childhood, rule-based games in middle childhood, and conversations in late childhood and adolescence), as well as gender and cultural norms.

Steven Asher and colleagues proposed a complementary approach for understanding social skills. This approach outlines six core issues that help determine whether peers will be inclined to like or accept a child: (1) whether peers find the child entertaining, (2) whether peers think they can trust the child, (3) whether peers believe that the child influences them in acceptable ways, (4) whether peers find that the child facilitates their personal goals, (5) whether the child makes them feel good about themselves, and (6) whether peers feel that the child shares their values and priorities. Thus, peer interpretations of social behaviors, as well as the actions in their own right, have implications for the social skillfulness of children.

Whereas a variety of social behaviors have been linked with peer success, many other behaviors have been associated with peer disliking or rejection by peers. Exhibiting relatively low rates of these “problem” behaviors may be necessary, but not sufficient, for social skillfulness. Aggressive

behavior has received the most attention. Direct (e.g., bullying, hitting, calling names) and indirect (e.g., spreading rumors) forms of aggression have been associated with lower peer liking across age, gender, and ethnic groups, as well as across peer, teacher, and observations of peer relationships. Oppositional, annoying, or hyperactive behaviors that disrupt peer-group interactions or classroom activities are also correlates of peer dislike. Another class of social behavior linked with peer relationship problems is anxious-withdrawn behavior.

Despite the relatively robust association between these problem behaviors and peer rejection, it is increasingly evident that the overall profile of behavior is more important than any particular behavior per se. For example, aggressive behaviors that are concomitant with a broader pattern of emotionally reactive (e.g., angry) and annoying or disruptive behaviors are highly predictive of peer rejection. In contrast, peer rejection is not necessarily associated with instrumental aggression that is executed to attain specific social goals or to gain access to resources when accompanied by prosocial skills (e.g., taking a valued toy from one group of children and then sharing it with another group of children).

The acceptability of behaviors is also shaped by characteristics of the peer context or peer culture, including the age range and normativeness of the behavior in question. For example, aggressive behavior is more normative and acceptable in early childhood before children have mastered emotional and cognitive skills that allow them to inhibit impulses and solve problems verbally. Likewise, social withdrawal predicts peer rejection better during late childhood and early adolescence than during early childhood, when playing alone and object-centered activities are more common. Furthermore, research by Xinyin Chen, Kenneth Rubin, and colleagues suggests that shy or withdrawn children are less rejected and more accepted in collectivist cultural contexts, such as in China. Thus, even behaviors that are generally associated with peer relationship problems can be adaptive (or at least not maladaptive) at certain times or under certain circumstances. Social skills are best viewed as a profile of behaviors that are exhibited flexibly depending on the context, rather than as the presence or absence of discrete behaviors.

Social Skills Training

Group-based social skills training programs have been designed to remediate children's social skill deficits and, in turn, improve their peer relationships. In general, effective programs promote social skills that are empirically associated with peer liking (i.e., competence correlates), target specific skill deficits exhibited by participants, and attempt to transfer skills from the intervention setting to naturalistic settings (e.g., school, playground, neighborhood). Such programs present *skill concepts* through verbal instruction or modeling, provide multiple *skill practice opportunities* for children in both structured settings (e.g., role-play with group leaders or group members) and more naturalistic settings (e.g., activities involving peers without social skill deficits), and provide *reinforcement and corrective feedback* on the basis of children's performance during practice sessions. Social skills training programs have made significant progress toward meeting several key challenges, such as generalizing skills to the naturalistic peer context, establishing skill improvements and increases in peer acceptance, and promoting sustained improvements over time.

Stephen A. Erath

See also Children's Peer Groups; Friendships in Adolescence; Friendships in Childhood; Loneliness, Children; Socialization; Socialization, Role of Peers; Sociometric Methods

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SOCIAL SUPPORT, NATURE OF

Social support is a term that is understood by most people, but what is meant by it? Often it means that others understand a person's feelings or that someone seems caring or encouraging in times of trouble. Sometimes people use the term to refer to help with tasks when overburdened at home or work. Occasionally, what is meant is just being present and spending time together. Research definitions match these lay conceptions pretty well. Furthermore, the forgoing indicates clearly that social support is not one thing, but many things. In other words, it is multifaceted. How do we untangle the multiple facets or aspects of this complex concept? Luckily, research for more than 25 years has given us some ideas.

Perceived and Enacted Support

Two primary conceptions of social support exist. *Perceived support* refers to an individual's perception that social support is available if needed. Individuals high in perceived support believe that there are people in their social network on whom they can depend to provide various kinds of resources in times of need. Perceived support is associated with many different health benefits, including longer life, lower likelihood of disease, and better mental health and well-being (see Social Support and Health). This form of support is fairly stable or unchanging and is related to other characteristics of individuals. For example, people who perceive that

they have a lot of support available are also more likely to have high self-esteem; be optimistic, extroverted and socially competent; and be secure in their attachment to important figures in their life. Perceived support can be measured reliably with several questionnaires such as the Social Support Questionnaire (SSQ), the Interpersonal Support Evaluation List (ISEL), or the Social Provisions Scale (SPS). Questions might ask whether there is anyone available to provide caring and comfort, to provide advice, or to provide assistance if needed.

In contrast, *enacted support* refers to actual social exchanges or interactions in which one person behaves in a manner meant to meet another's needs. Enacted support (also known as received support) is experienced as specific acts of caring, assistance, and guidance. Intuitively, it seems that perceived and enacted support should be closely related, but research has demonstrated otherwise. For example, in stigmatizing circumstances such as HIV or following a sexual assault, expected support is not always forthcoming. Although perceived support has been consistently linked with positive mental and physical outcomes, enacted support has not always appeared to be beneficial. This is most likely a result of the fact that support exchanges usually coincide with ongoing stressors, which makes it difficult to disentangle the benefits of enacted support from the adverse effects of stressors on adjustment. In addition, the mere attempt to provide social support does not guarantee that it will be effective.

Some theorists argue that the type of support provided must match the needs of the recipient to be beneficial. Evidence is largely supportive of this intuitively attractive "matching hypothesis," but it is difficult to test because it calls for a detailed analysis of support needs and provisions over time, which is rarely done. In addition, matching the type of social support to needs does not capture the quality of support. For example, a family member may provide advice when needed, but do so in a controlling, critical, or domineering manner.

To assess whether enacted support meets a recipient's needs and the quality of it, Chris Rini and Chris Dunkel Schetter developed the Social Support Effectiveness (SSE) interview to assess the effectiveness of enacted support. In a sample of pregnant women who were interviewed in depth about their supportive interactions with a partner

or spouse, SSE was shown to be multidimensional and reliably assessed, and higher SSE scores were associated with reduced anxiety in mid-pregnancy and over the course of pregnancy. The SSE is now being used in further research, such as studies with bone marrow transplant patients, and has applicability to other contexts.

Types of Support

Similar to lay definitions, scientific definitions of social support include different functions or types such as *emotional*, *instrumental*, and *informational* resources. *Emotional support* refers to acts such as listening, providing empathy and understanding, and showing affection. The simplest of all forms of support is *instrumental support* (also known as tangible support), which refers to the provision of material resources or task assistance. For example, an individual might receive instrumental support in the form of a loan or help in moving residences. Finally, *informational support* refers to information, guidance, or advice as a form of support in problem solving. Advice is difficult to give because it is frequently considered unhelpful by recipients, yet sometimes this type of support can be quite effective.

In addition to these three core types, researchers have studied other specific types of support. *Appraisal support* (also known as *esteem support*) is defined as the provision of information that one is worthy and valued. Such affirmation is closely related to emotional support and is often subsumed into the same category. It may also be considered as a form of validation. In addition, belonging and companionship have been viewed as separate types of support. *Companionship* includes both the mere presence of others and engaging in activities with others, such as seeing a movie when someone needs relaxation or distraction from a problem. *Belonging* involves the support experienced when someone is a member of a group that provides an identity and perhaps other resources.

Normal Adaptation Versus Adjustment to Stress

A further wrinkle in understanding the nature of support is distinguishing the everyday presence of

support from the extra support received when something unusually stressful occurs. Perceived support is fairly constant for those who are fortunate enough to possess it. It tends to be relatively unchanging regardless of whether a crisis is occurring. Perceived support can be thought of as adaptive beliefs that function to protect people in numerous ways, not only in times of stress. Their stability is what has led some theorists such as Barbara and Irwin Sarason to refer to perceived support as more of a personality characteristic. It has also been conceptualized as cognitive structures or mental working models, sometimes called support schemas. Such schemas shape people's views of the world and everyday experiences. In contrast, enacted support is transactional and is therefore much more dynamic or fluctuating. It is most commonly observed in the context of stress, whether minor or cataclysmic. Because there are many forms of stress, there are many examples of enacted support that may be experienced or observed. For example, a parent might provide emotional support by hugging a child when he or she is upset, or a friend might provide instrumental support by cooking meals following the death of a family member.

In 1987, the UCLA Social Support Interview (SSI) was developed to study the complexities of enacted support. This questionnaire measures support of three types from each of three sources (e.g., partner, friend, professional) and, within these, the need for support, the quantity and quality of support received, and various negative aspects of interactions. It serves as a subjective and multidimensional view of a person's support exchanges over a specific time period (e.g., 3 months), and the questions can be adapted for specific research needs. The UCLA SSI has been used in research on HIV, heart disease, cancer, and many other stressful diseases. Other assessments of enacted support, such as the Inventory of Socially Supportive Behaviors, are available, but they typically do not distinguish sources of support.

Who Provides Support Matters

Individuals may receive support from any number of sources—friends, parents, romantic partners, extended family, siblings, colleagues, neighbors, or

acquaintances—and who provides support is an important determinant of its effectiveness. Certain people are most likely to be called on to provide specific types of support. For example, married couples tend to rely on spouses for support, and spousal support is especially beneficial, whereas its absence can be especially detrimental. In general, people tend to seek and receive many types of support from their closest relationships. Not surprisingly, however, they do not report *receiving* equal amounts of support from all relationships. Although social support varies from person to person, particular relationships, such as one's mother or spouse, may provide the most support over a person's lifetime. In short, the provider of support matters a great deal in many ways. Intriguing is the finding that giving support is beneficial to the provider as well as the recipient.

What should be sought from whom? This question has not yet been well addressed by research, but some findings suggest that experts or professionals are the best sources of advice or guidance. Skillful listeners and empathic people are probably the best sources of emotional support. Friends are often sources of companionship, and parents can be excellent sources of affirmation. Yet this is clearly a bit simplistic because myriad other factors matter too, including the support provider's personality, support capability (such as interpersonal skills and available time), and the nature of the relationship between provider and recipient (e.g., extent of trust and degree of interdependence). These and other factors contribute to who would be the best person to rely on for support in a given situation. If people operated as highly skilled seekers of support, they would tend to express feelings to others who listen attentively and keep confidences, to seek advice from those who are good problem solvers, and to ask for assistance with tasks from those who have the necessary skills and resources to help and no tendency to create feelings of indebtedness. However, research has not delved into support seeking this much nor have support interventions tried to teach support seeking skills or selectivity as yet.

Clearly, social support is intricately embedded in our interpersonal relationships, and the quality of those relationships influences from whom support is sought and received, as well as how we feel about it afterward. Although the earliest social support

researchers did not take into account a relationships perspective, recent work has emphasized the importance of understanding close relationships as the context in which social support occurs. As relationship science has progressed, research on social support has been progressing also. For example, Nancy Collins and Brooke Feeney have extended our understanding of enacted support by showing that anxious or secure attachment styles predict perceptions of support in couples and, further, that the quality of the relationship and of the couple's interactions have implications for physiology and health. Findings on intimacy and relationship satisfaction are among other areas where there has also been progress in linking relationship processes to understanding social support.

Relationships as Double-Edged Swords

Just as interpersonal and close relationships are not uniformly supportive, neither is all support beneficial or positive. Supportive transactions are not always perceived by the recipient as helpful. Some researchers have characterized close relationships as "double-edged swords" to refer to the fact that relationships can be both helpful and harmful. Paradoxically, the people who are one's strongest allies can be the strongest sources of stress and aggravation. Social support research has shown that people may be disappointed in the support received from others, which may not meet our expectations in strength, consistency, or quality. In addition, if support is not enacted skillfully, it may make us feel indebted, stupid, or unworthy. Support attempts may be selfishly motivated, intrusive, or controlling. If excessive, support can create feelings of anger, a loss of autonomy, and unhealthy dependency. Finally, as Karen Rook and others have clarified, the negative aspects of interactions such as social conflict can reduce the benefits of social support for health and well-being.

Niall Bolger's research suggests that support is most beneficial when it occurs outside the recipient's awareness or is delivered with such subtlety that it is not even noticed or perceived as social support. These invisible support acts are thought to be effective because they allow the recipient to enjoy the benefits of support without the emotional costs and threats to self-esteem (e.g., feelings of

dependence or indebtedness) that highly visible support acts can endanger. Thus, in examining the nature of social support, it is imperative to consider a complete picture of close relationships, incorporating both negative as well as positive aspects.

Gender, Ethnicity, and Culture Within Support Processes

Gender, ethnicity, and culture are other interesting determinants of the nature of support. Women and men differ in how often and how skillfully they provide support and in how beneficial it is. In the words of one scientist, "Women make the potato salad and men eat it," referring to findings that women more often provide support and men benefit more. Possible genetic, neural, and biological bases for gender differences are now garnering a lot of attention. For example, the role of oxytocin in predisposing women to be more affiliative and caregiving—to *tend and befriend*, a term used by Shelley Taylor—is under investigation. Changes in gender roles and their implications for support is another topic of interest. One review suggests that women and men may differ not so much in the ability to provide support, but in responsiveness to a partner's support needs, with women being more responsive than men.

Interesting cultural differences are also emerging in how people perceive, seek, provide, and receive support. For example, some cultures emphasize independence and individual problem solving, some emphasize reliance on the social group in times of need, and still others appear to discourage support seeking, but not necessarily the acceptance of support when offered. Furthermore, cultures differ in the behaviors seen as supportive and the ways they should be enacted. Providing assistance in tasks of everyday life to someone who is struggling is an insult in some places in the world, whereas not providing assistance is an insult in others. Also, cultures differ in who should be relied on for support. For example, in Asian cultures, families feel that it is inappropriate to talk to people outside one's family about problems because family problems are considered to be private. It has been suggested by Taylor and colleagues that group-level perceptions of support, referred to as

implicit support, are helpful in Asian cultures, whereas individual-level enactments of support, called explicit support, are helpful to European-Americans. Much is left to do to understand the interplay of gender, ethnic, and cultural differences in the nature of support. With time the field may have a better understanding of universal patterns of support as well as their cultural variations.

In summary, although it may seem simple at first glance, the nature of social support turns out to be a multifaceted and complex topic. Two primary aspects are *perceived support* and *enacted support*. Orthogonal to this are three core functional types of support: (1) emotional support, (2) informational support, and (3) instrumental support. Other types have also been delineated, such as affirmation, companionship, and belonging. The nature of support may differ in various ways depending on whether it is normatively occurring in the absence of a major stressor or occurring as a result of an identifiable stressor. Furthermore, the person who is providing the support matters very much. Some providers are more able to meet specific needs than others due to skills and resources. Beyond this, support is embedded in our interpersonal relationships, and the study of them enhances our understanding of support greatly. For example, research on attachment style, intimacy, and interdependence has already led to advances in our understanding of the nature of social support. Relationships are not only sources of support, however. They also contribute to social conflict, overdependence, and feelings of indebtedness and unworthiness. These negative aspects of close relationships both influence the effects of support on health and well-being and enhance a broader understanding of our supportive relationships. Finally, gender, ethnicity, and culture are important factors contributing to understanding the nature of social support. Although this is a relatively seasoned area of research, there is much left to discover. As a result, the study of the nature of social support is alive and well.

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See also Health and Relationships; Helping Behaviors in Relationships; Marriage and Health; Reassurance-Seeking; Social Networks, Dyad Effects on; Social Networks, Effects on Developed Relationships; Social Support and Health; Stress and Relationships; Validation in Relationships

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SOCIAL SUPPORT AND HEALTH

Social support is a variable based on the concept that resources provided through social relationships can enhance psychological adjustment and assist coping with problems. This entry discusses the relation of social support to physical and mental health. This topic is relevant to human relationships because research has shown that persons with higher support have lower rates of illness, and theory on how social support operates to reduce risk for illness involves concepts from research on human relationships and health psychology. In this entry, we discuss the conceptualization of social support, summarize evidence on the relation of social support to health outcomes, and outline possible mechanisms for the protective effect of social relationships. In addition, we highlight concepts from relationships research that may be useful for understanding social support processes.

Conceptualizing Social Support

There have been two approaches to conceptualizing and measuring social support in health outcome research. One approach examines how many persons an individual knows and/or considers as friends (i.e., the size of his or her social network). This measure of network size is often termed *social integration* because these structured relationships reflect the degree of a person's integration in the community. Other aspects of network structure include the existence of particular social roles (e.g., marriage, children, member of a community organization), the proportion of network members who know each other, and an individual's participation in regular activities with other persons.

Another approach involves determining the extent to which a person's relationships (irrespective of number) provide particular supportive functions. Typical questions ask whether a person would have a particular function available if needed. One function measured in many studies is emotional support—the perception that an individual has persons available who can provide confiding, sympathy, and understanding in times of trouble. Other functions include instrumental support, defined as providing tangible goods (e.g., providing tools, loaning money) or services (e.g., transportation, child care) when needed, and informational support, defined as providing useful advice and guidance. Data show that network size is not highly correlated with availability of supportive functions; a large social network may provide relatively little emotional and instrumental support, whereas a few relationships may provide a great deal of these. Hence, these two aspects of social relationships are measured separately.

Social Support and Health

In typical studies of mortality, social relationships are measured at one point in time in a large sample; researchers then determine whether each person is living at a subsequent time point, typically 5 to 10 years later. Results have shown that persons with larger social networks are less likely to die over the study period. This protective effect has been observed in more than 80 studies, conducted with samples including different ethnic groups and national populations, and has been found for mortality from several diseases, including heart disease and cancer. The effect of social integration on mortality is found with statistical control for a number of variables, including gender, socioeconomic status, and initial health, so this effect is not just attributable to certain types of persons (e.g., males, poor people) having larger or smaller networks. Some data have suggested that women may derive more benefit from close relationships that involve confiding and intimacy, whereas men derive more benefit from a looser network of worksite and community alliances (e.g., work mates, sports and outdoor activities, voluntary organizations). However, significant effects for social integration

and social support have been observed across groups, and overall the similarities are more striking than the differences.

With regard to other outcomes, longitudinal studies with samples of persons showing early symptoms of disease have linked social support to disease progression for several conditions. For example, higher emotional support is related to lesser progression of coronary artery disease among persons with some initial level of arterial occlusion. Social support is also related to recovery from serious illness. In such studies, persons who have suffered a major disease episode (e.g., heart attack) are identified shortly after the occurrence and are then followed over time. Results have shown that persons with larger networks or higher levels of functional support have longer survival times and fewer new disease episodes. For example, heart attack patients who have high emotional support are less likely to have a subsequent heart attack, compared with those with low support, and these findings are independent of demographic characteristics and initial severity of disease. In addition, support from others may enhance quality of life among persons with illness. Emotional support helps to maintain feelings of physical attractiveness and self-esteem, whereas instrumental support helps to increase mobility and feelings of control.

Some research has focused on the role of social support for reducing the impact of acute negative life events or chronic strains such as job pressure. This is termed a *stress-buffering effect* because support serves to buffer (protect) the individual against stressors that could present risk for disease. For example, studies of job-related stress have shown that men with high stress and high support have lower rates of mortality, compared with those with high stress and low support. Such findings have been demonstrated for measures of both social network size and availability of supportive functions, including emotional and instrumental support. Stress-buffering effects of social support have been found with various outcomes, including depression/anxiety, substance use, and physical health indices.

Several mechanisms have been suggested for the health-protective effect of social support. Persons with larger networks or more functional support are less likely to smoke cigarettes or engage in heavy use of alcohol; hence, a behavioral mechanism is

implicated because social support influences these health-related behaviors. Other studies have shown that persons with higher support show smaller increases in blood pressure under stress and have more healthful blood levels of biological markers for heart disease (e.g., clotting factors and inflammatory markers), so a direct biological mechanism has been suggested. Affect states associated with social relationships have been linked to measures of the functioning of the immune system, which protects persons from infectious bacteria and conducts surveillance for cancerous cells; supportive relationships are related to higher positive affect and better immune-system function, whereas conflict in relationships is related to worse immune-system functioning. In addition, studies indicate that persons with higher support tend to show better adherence to medical treatment programs. No single mechanism totally accounts for the health-protective effect of social support, and it may be that all mechanisms contribute to some extent, possibly under different conditions.

Social Support and Human Relationships Research

Findings on social support and health raise several questions for human relationships research. One issue concerns the question of how social networks and functional support can both be related to health. Research on mortality is clear in showing that having a larger number of established social connections is protective. These connections are by definition fairly stable, and the implication is that their protective effect derives in part from personal feelings of stability and the kind of self-esteem that derives from feeling that one is a valued member of a larger community. Social networks have also been shown to serve as agents of social control through communicating reminders about obligations to others (e.g., not smoking in order to protect family members). At the same time, emotional and instrumental support are activated in times of stress and help to reduce the impact of negative events, serving a protective role in this way. However, the availability of supportive functions is not strongly correlated with the size of one's network. Both aspects of social relationships (i.e., structure and function)

have been shown to be protective, so the implication is that different mechanisms are involved: one relying on stability and permanence of relationships, the other relying on the ability of spouses, friends, and relatives to be responsive in times of stress and to facilitate optimism, coping, and problem solving in response to challenges.

Another issue concerns the concepts of support and strain in relationships. Every relationship (e.g., parent and child, husband and wife, supervisor and worker) contains elements of supportiveness together with elements of conflict (e.g., arguments and disagreements). The latter elements have been termed *negative support* or *social strain*. Research has shown that supportive aspects of relationships are health-protective, but social strain can be detrimental to health. Although data show that people tend to perceive their primary relationships as relatively supportive, the existence of strain in relationships (e.g., marital conflict, job dissatisfaction) cannot be ignored, and the balance (or ratio) of support and strain should be considered for prediction of psychological well-being.

A special case of strain derives from the context of long-term caregiving, where one individual has primary responsibility for caring for a chronically ill person. In this context, the rewards of giving support to a close friend or relative may be offset by the burden of providing continual care to a person who may not be socially responsive (e.g., someone with Alzheimer's disease). Research has suggested that caregivers are at risk for health problems if the recipient is disabled and not actively helping with caregiving. Thus, the act of being supportive to another person has potential costs for the caregiver, and caregivers who are at risk may need support from others as well as alternative activities and breaks from caregiving.

Given the demonstrated health benefits of social support, interventions have been conducted to increase perceived support among persons with chronic illness (e.g., education and support groups for patients with cancer) or social isolation (e.g., visitors and telephone contacts for elderly persons with few network members). The results of these interventions have been more mixed than was originally expected, and questions have been raised about how the context of these interventions may differ from that of naturally existing social relationships. One difference is that these

interventions are often temporary, compared with the relative stability of natural relationships. Another possible difference is that social support typically involves ongoing communal relationships, a concept developed by Margaret Clark, in that supporters are motivated primarily to enhance the other person's welfare, and recipients will have many opportunities to subtly benefit the supporter in return. The challenge for support interventions has been to re-create the conditions of communality and reciprocity that are thought to be important components of naturally existing support.

Finally, the Internet is a recent development that is changing conceptions of social support and social networks. Physical proximity is no longer necessary, and individuals today may communicate frequently with persons who live in other towns or countries and whom they have never met. Research is beginning to study the role of Web-based health information services and online support groups for persons with various illnesses (e.g., cancer, diabetes) and has obtained preliminary evidence that these may enhance adjustment to illness. At the same time, research by Robert Kraut and others has indicated that extensive involvement in use of the Internet, at the expense of ordinary social interaction, may have adverse consequences for at least some persons. At present, research is needed to determine how Internet usage interfaces with actual social interaction and participation, and how these different types of communication are ultimately related to health status.

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See also Communal Relationships; Health Behaviors, Relationships and Interpersonal Spread of; Helping Behaviors in Relationships; Isolation, Health Effects; Job Stress, Relationship Effects; Reciprocity, Norm of; Social Networks, Dyad Effects on; Social Support Interventions

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SOCIAL SUPPORT INTERVENTIONS

Social support refers to the exchange of a variety of helping behaviors that arise from people's interactions and relationships with members of their social network who have not received any formal mental health training. Natural support usually arises spontaneously when close network members such as family members and friends provide comfort, companionship, practical assistance, advice, and feedback about an individual's performance or worth. Moreover, a voluminous literature has amply documented the health-protective functions of perceived natural support under conditions of stress. What this means is that the belief that support is forthcoming—its anticipated delivery alone—seems to cushion the impact of stressors, perhaps by rendering them less daunting or by instilling greater confidence in the individual's own resources for resisting stress. High levels of perceived support are, at least in part, a consequence of past episodes when natural network members provided assistance. This entry reviews

different types of interventions designed to increase, improve, or specialize social support and then concentrates on the design and processes occurring in support groups.

Recognizing the stress-buffering and health-protective effects of social support, and with an emphasis on actual rather than perceived support, a number of investigators and practitioners have formulated ideas about ways of harnessing this resource in programs for people exposed to a variety of adversities. Whole network initiatives teach people how to identify and capitalize on the support of their field of close associates, whereas dyadic interventions concentrate on ways of mobilizing, specializing, and optimizing the quality and durability of the support rendered by a single valued social tie or confidant. A complementary set of support interventions differs from these natural network strategies by introducing new social ties deemed capable of meeting people's supportive needs. Confidence in their capability as relevant sources of support stemmed from a growing literature on the benefits of mutual aid, self-help (MASH) groups, longstanding community programs such as Big Brothers/Sisters, and, not least of all, the legacy of Stanley Schachter's work on affiliation and Leon Festinger's theory of social comparison, which documented the need for affiliation and comparison under conditions of threat that evoke fear.

The resulting armamentarium of support interventions can be summarized in a 2×2 matrix that takes into account the level of intervention (namely, the dyad or the group) and the relationship status of the support provider (namely, a member of the natural network or a stranger who is grafted onto the network on a temporary or permanent basis). Of these four types, the most widely implemented and studied is the support group, the main focus of this entry. The other three types include: (1) grafted interventions at the dyadic level, such as a program that links volunteers who have recovered from cardiac surgery with patients about to undergo similar surgery; (2) natural network interventions at the group level, such as programs that assemble key network members to support an associate who is affected by a mental or physical disability; and (3) natural network interventions at the dyadic level, such as efforts to improve the frequency and quality of support that a romantic partner provides to a woman affected by breast cancer.

Support Groups

The term *support group* is a generic label for a variety of small groups that generally range in size from 8 to 12 members and are facilitated by an expert who manages the group process, provides education, and, in some instances, provides behavioral training. Initially, the group participants are strangers who share a common disease, noxious habit, affliction, or stressful life experience, and who meet together on a fixed schedule for several weeks or months. Each session is divided into a portion when the facilitator or designated expert offers instruction and education, and another portion when the members swap experiences and anecdotes. Unlike most MASH groups, the membership is closed, the facilitator is not necessarily a “veteran sufferer,” and the group does not engage in advocacy activities. Examples of the most widely implemented support groups are face-to-face or online groups for cancer patients and their close associates, and groups for the family caregivers of persons affected by Alzheimer’s disease.

How can support materialize in a group composed of strangers? Numerous explicit and implicit interpersonal processes are implicated, the former consisting of increasingly penetrating and emotional disclosures about the members’ common predicament and their individual ways of handling it, verbal and nonverbal expressions of mutual empathy and concern that lead over time to valuing and trusting the group as an entity, and perhaps most important, diverse expressions of mutual aid and the reduction of uncertainty that lies at the core of stress. These processes mirror processes active in the development of close relationships, with group cohesion and feelings of belonging arising over time, along with the psychological sense of support that sustains the members in the intervals between group sessions. The implicit processes that unfold in support groups are equally impactful and include the private social comparisons that are vital sources of feedback and self-stabilization, the new attributions that permit the members to view the causes and control of their predicament in ways that are less self-incriminating, and the normalization and acceptance of the members’ feelings and experiences.

Support groups offer many opportunities to examine the conduct and course of both natural

and engineered human relationships that are mobilized during difficult times. Focusing on intragroup dynamics, investigators can use interviews, diaries, and observation (with permission of the group) to capture the support process that arises over time, both in terms of its behavioral expressions and its subjective perception. Shifting the focus to intergroup dynamics, researchers can examine support group outcomes in relation to the quantity and quality of the support that resides in the natural network. They can also study whether and how selected group members are transplanted from the group into one another’s natural network and take stock of any spillover that the knowledge, skills, and emotional expression gained in the group has on relationships with network members.

Although there is evidence that support groups are not universally appealing, those who choose to participate view this temporary social milieu as a way of supplementing, specializing, and, in some cases, compensating for deficiencies in the natural support rendered by their social network. With more research, a better appreciation of the ways that social ties can be structured as systems of support can be gained.

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See also Affiliation; Social Comparison, Effects on Relationships; Social Support and Health; Social Support, Nature of; Stress and Relationships

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SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS

Socioeconomic status (SES) is one of the central concepts in the social sciences. Scholars use it to understand human relationships—for example, who individuals will marry, who will have children and how many, and who will eventually divorce and the consequences of divorce. Yet as Robert

Bradley and Robert Corwyn note, how scholars conceptualize SES varies greatly. Thus, as a basis for understanding the concept of SES, this entry discusses the notion of social stratification. Then it presents two theoretical perspectives that are foundational to the current interpretations of SES, some primary challenges of applying SES to real-world situations, and examples of research that has successfully linked SES with human relationships.

Social Stratification

The concept of SES comes from a broad area of research in sociology called social stratification. Scholars who conduct research in this area typically think of society as being made up of a series of layers. Stadium seating at a baseball game that situates individuals by the price of the ticket may offer an intuitive picture of how a layer in society may be constructed. Some people who cannot afford to pay a lot of money for a ballgame may purchase a lower priced ticket and sit far away from the ground, whereas others who can afford to pay for an expensive ticket may sit close to the ground, where they have a level view of the game. As in this hypothetical baseball stadium, social scientists argue that in the real world, individuals are situated in one of ordered areas depending on what they already have or can do. For example, people are unequal—positioned differently—in terms of how much money they make, the level of education they have attained, the power they can exert over others, and the prestige of their jobs.

An individual's location in this layered society may alter his or her human relationships. Belonging to the upper layer of society, for instance, can provide privileges and power to individuals compared with belonging to a lower layer of society. The location also gives or denies a person access to desirable relationships (e.g., wealthy individuals can afford to attend expensive parties where they are likely to meet other wealthy individuals). At the same time, establishing certain relationships, such as marrying into a wealthy family, affords a person entrance into particular layers of society that may be socially and economically advantageous.

However, unless placed in situations such as the seating arrangement of a baseball stadium organized by ticket price, people in everyday lives are

not visibly ordered in hierarchical layers. If observing layers is difficult for individuals in most situations, how do researchers know that these layers exist in the first place and know what they look like? Their typical approach is to come up with a theory of what these layers look like, often referred to as ideal types, and see how well they fit the physical world. Sometimes ideal types apply well in some societies, but not in others. At the same time, some scholars, such as Donald Treiman and David Featherman, argue that certain aspects of the layers are common to all societies.

Researchers use these ideal types to understand how resources (e.g., money, education, power) are allocated to individuals, how the allocation process affects human relationships, and how human relationships affect the allocation process. Social scientists, for example, find that higher status persons often use their political power to keep lower status persons from accumulating a share of the limited resources they enjoy, such as residential location, occupational opportunities, and entertainment venues. The result is that the different status groups experience intergroup competition and conflict.

Examples of Ideal Types

Two important social theorists who lived during the mid-1800s and early 1900s offer contrasting ideal types to understand the structure of the layers. The first one is Karl Marx. Although there are many ways of reading Marx's work, one way is to consider his argument that the only dimension that is truly foundational is economic class. In his day, he thought about economic class as having two levels. Either a person was an owner or a worker. Because the workers had to work for the owners, the owners had more money (and prestige and power as a result) to do what they wanted in society. Consequently, other dimensions, such as culture capital, which reflects knowledge of the arts and does not necessarily distinguish owners from workers, were only important if the owners thought they were important, making the one dimension of economic class foundational to everything else. From this perspective, a person's economic class would represent his or her SES.

Max Weber offers a contrasting view of the structure of the layers to this interpretation of

Marx by suggesting that many other social dimensions are important. In particular, he said that status (e.g., how cultured individuals are) and party (e.g., the organizations to which people belong) were equally consequential in a person's life as economic class (e.g., how much their income is). First, economic class for Weber was a position in the economic market, rather than a matter of being an owner or worker. For example, a CEO and an entry-level employee may work for the same company—neither is the “owner.” Yet they enjoy different amounts of power, money, and prestige due to the difference in their economic positions. Second, a person's status may not always be determined by his or her economic class. An individual may achieve academic success, for instance, despite coming from a poor household, and this academic success gives him or her a measure of status in the eyes of others. In fact, this academic success may improve the person's economic class by helping him or her obtain a high-paying job. Third, the parties or social organizations to which a person belongs, such as political parties, trade unions, and religious organizations, may place him or her in the upper layers of society because the parties or organizations seek to systematically gain power for their members. In this case, a number of dimensions may constitute a person's SES.

Challenges of Applying Simple Ideal Types

Although these ideal types are valuable models for understanding an individual's position and available resources (e.g., money, education, and power) in society, there are challenges when applying any ideal type in a dynamic social world. The following are several examples of the challenges that scholars face when using the ideal types in their research on human relationships.

Multidimensionality

Ideal types, unless they are complex ones, are typically unidimensional and do not take into account the fact that, in reality, individuals participate in multidimensions in society. For example, college professors often enjoy high status among the general public—people consider their work

prestigious. Yet many college professors also earn less money than people who work in less prestigious occupations, such as a plumber or an auto mechanic.

One way in which scholars have dealt with this human complexity is to determine which of the multiple dimensions is most salient. For example, Greg J. Duncan and his colleagues find that parents' level of income during their offsprings' pre-adolescent years has the greatest impact on the eventual academic achievement of their children. Therefore, parental income is arguably more important than other dimensions, such as the education level of the parents, when studying the causal factors of school success.

A second way is to separate out the dimensions. If individuals are multidimensional, then SES needs to be multidimensional. For instance, evidence indicates that women with high SES are attractive romantic partners for several reasons. One, a woman's income attributes needed financial resources to the family; two, her occupational status, such as being a doctor, may bring prestige to the family; and, three, her education may offer family members access to important people who could help family members find jobs.

A third way to maintain the multidimensionality of the layers to which individuals belong is to develop a scale that takes averages of each of the several dimensions and weighs them according to how important they are in a particular society. For example, in some societies, earning more money may be valued more than being better educated, but in other societies, the value system may be the opposite. This strategy is used in scales, such as Otis Dudley Duncan's Socioeconomic Index and Treiman's Occupational Prestige Scale.

Multilevel Structure

Another problem that scholars face in applying ideal types to the real world is that the layers are nested and multileveled. That is, although each individual has his or her own status position consisting of several dimensions, the status of units larger than the person, such as the family, the school, and the country to which the individual belongs, also influences his or her personal status. For example, although a husband may have his own earnings, years of schooling, occupation, and

so on, which define his personal status, the members of his family each have their own statuses too, which contribute to the family's overall status. This overall status may reflect positively or negatively on him in the eyes of other people. If the husband goes to school, his status is further defined by the prestige of the school that he attends. The prestige of the school may be defined by how wealthy the country is and how much it is able to pour into the quality of education it provides. This multilevel definition of status contributes to the context-specific causes and effects of SES, which are discussed further next.

Changing Structure of the Layers

A final problem of applying the concept of SES in real-life situations concerns the structure (e.g., the stadium at a baseball game). Certain structures shift over time; as a result, individuals' positions in the layers also change. For example, a person's economic class may change in his or her lifetime when the economic conditions of society change. Earning \$40,000 may place a person in the working class during a period of economic boom and in the middle class during a period of economic depression. Researchers apply certain techniques, such as the real income conversion based on the Consumer Price Index, to achieve research consistency and comparability over time despite shifting economic structures.

SES and Human Relationships

Notwithstanding the challenges, scholars have successfully shown that SES affects human relationships and is also affected by human relationships in a highly context-specific manner. Consequently, the association between SES and human relationships often varies by a country's cultural, historical, political, and institutional conditions.

SES Affects Human Relationships

One can take examples from a group of studies examining the effect of SES on marriage and divorce. Scholars who study marriages in the United States typically find that men and women

in higher SES positions are more likely to marry and are less likely to divorce. In other industrialized countries, however, this is not the link that is found. For example, in Japan, where expectations are that wives do housework rather than labor market work, women with a high level of income are less likely to marry than women with a low level of income.

Human Relationships Affect SES

Several studies find that the teacher–student relationship influences the eventual SES of the students. This occurs because teachers often unconsciously hold negative stereotypes about certain groups of people, such as females or minorities. Teachers may act differently toward these groups of students, directing them toward vocational training rather than 4-year colleges and beyond, for example. Thereby, they affect the students' abilities to attain a certain level of SES as adults. The impact of the negative stereotypes, however, may be more or less powerful depending on the context of the students' families. For instance, students who come from families that provide emotional support and empowering guidance may be less vulnerable to the detrimental effects of these negative stereotypes than students who come from families that provide no such support and guidance.

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See also Divorce, Prevalence and Trends; Economic Pressures, Effects on Relationships; Marital Stability, Predictors of; Social Inequalities and Relationships

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SOCIOEMOTIONAL SELECTIVITY THEORY

This entry describes a life-span theory of motivation that offers an explanatory framework and testable hypotheses about the ways in which perceived endings affect goals, preferences, and even cognitive processing. Because aging is associated with time left in life, the theory predicts reliable age differences in these domains. Socioemotional Selectivity Theory maintains, however, that such age differences reflect differences in perceived time horizons more than chronological age. Studies testing the theory have found similar patterns in younger people who face endings through terminal illness, wars, or even geographical relocations.

According to the theory, temporal horizons direct two overarching sets of goals that govern much of human social behavior. One set of goals concerns the acquisition of knowledge, whereas another concerns the regulation of emotional states. Both sets of goals activate behavior across the life span, but the relative importance and priority placed on them varies as a function of time horizons.

The theory posits that when time is perceived as expansive, informational goals assume dominance. Under these temporal conditions, people are motivated to plan for seemingly unlimited futures. Potential social partners are selected based on the potential for new information and future opportunities. Cognitive resources are allocated to these goals. People who prioritize information-related goals attend to all sorts of information in their environments because even information that is not immediately relevant could become important in

the future. Banking information takes precedence over emotional satisfaction. For example, learning one's place in the social hierarchy may be useful for social interaction even if it is relatively bad news. Similarly, when the future is perceived as long, people may invest in even taxing efforts if they may pay off in the future. As temporal horizons diminish, the relative importance of information-related goals decreases. When future time is constrained, emotion-related goals grow in importance. Emotional well-being takes priority over gaining new information. People engage in strategies aimed at optimizing well-being, especially decreasing the experience of negative emotions. Just as people select emotionally meaningful social partners over others because of the emotional satisfaction they derive from them, they direct their attention toward positive stimuli and away from negative stimuli in an effort to ensure well-being.

Temporal Horizons and Social Relationships

Socioemotional Selectivity Theory was first developed to explain a paradox observed in studies examining age differences in social and emotional functioning. Social relationships are critical for physical and mental health across the life span, with higher levels of perceived social support related to less depression and higher levels of life satisfaction. Social network size and level of social activity, however, decrease with age. Given these declines, older adults should presumably fair worse on studies of mental health, yet older adults in general are not more depressed or anxious, nor do they report more loneliness than younger adults. Moreover, in normal populations, older adults regulate their emotions more effectively than younger adults. At advanced ages, marriages often return to earlier levels of happiness, and relationships with adult children grow more satisfying.

The apparent contradiction between age-related reductions in social activity and stability, if not increases in affective well-being, is reconciled by socioemotional selectivity. According to the theory, older adults are motivated to optimize their interactions with emotionally meaningful social partners. As a result, they proactively cull peripheral acquaintances from their networks while continuing to interact with friends and family members

who offer emotional meaning and satisfaction. Over the years, people report spending less time with casual acquaintances and more time with close friends and family members. Older adults also report relatively higher percentages of emotionally close social partners in their networks than do younger people. Moreover, emotional satisfaction derived from close social partners increases with age.

Temporal Horizons Beyond Chronological Age

When asked directly about how they would like to spend an hour of free time, older adults choose close social partners, whereas younger adults are just as likely to opt for spending time with a new neighbor or the author of a book just read than with a close social partner. When evaluating lists of potential social partners, older adults are also more likely to weigh the potential emotional meaningfulness of these social partners more strongly than younger adults, who more likely weigh social partners by the potential for knowledge and future possibilities. Additional research shows that these findings are not limited to age per se, but are better explained by time perspective. When asked to imagine that their healthy active life span has been increased by 20 years, older adults no longer elect to spend time with close social partners and instead mirror the partner selection choices observed among younger adults. Similarly, when younger adults are asked to imagine that they are moving across the country without friends or family, they too focus on shorter time horizons and choose social partners in the service of emotional gratification. Thus, age per se does not guide these social choices. Rather, the perception of time availability accounts for social choices. Focusing on the present tends to be good for well-being.

Time perspective is intrinsically linked to chronological age, but social, political, and health-related conditions can also alter these perceptions and consequent social and emotional motivations. For example, prior to the return of Hong Kong to the People's Republic of China, the future for citizens was uncertain. Three months prior to the handover and in the midst of this uncertainty, people of all ages were asked about their social

partner preferences. Both younger and older adults reported a preference for emotionally close social partners. Three months after the handover, when dire predictions were not realized, people were asked again about their social preferences. Older adults' preferences were unchanged, whereas younger adults reported preferring to interact with novel social partners, just as they had before the handover was imminent. This pattern of findings was later replicated during and after the unrest created by a severe acute respiratory syndrome epidemic in Asia and the attacks of September 11th, 2001, in the United States. For men suffering from AIDS prior to the development of effective drug treatments, social partner preferences and the importance placed on emotional value derived from social interactions varied from same-age healthy peers in ways similar to older adults. Studies have ruled out emotional neediness as an alternative. When people were asked why they choose the partners they choose, people say that they are seeking emotional meaning more often than social support.

Temporal Horizons and Emotional Experience

Socioemotional Selectivity Theory maintains that poignant emotional states, defined as the co-occurrence of negative and positive emotions, usually occur in contexts that denote the end of one life chapter and the beginning of another, such as college graduations, weddings, and births. Theoretically, this is because the close of each life chapter marks progression through life. Even in young people, mixed emotional experiences are observed when endings are primed. In one study, participants were asked to imagine themselves in a place that was emotionally meaningful to them and to rate the emotions they were experiencing. Other participants were asked to rate their emotions after imagining that they were visiting this location for the last time. People in the anticipated endings conditions described a more bittersweet experience, characterized by both happiness and sadness. In another study, younger adults who were reminded that this was the last day of their college career reported higher levels of poignancy than participants who were not primed to focus on the temporal aspects of the condition.

Temporal Horizons, Cognitive Processing, and the Positivity Effect

The theory predicts that, because goals direct cognitive processing, age will be associated with preferences for difference types of information. In one study, older and younger adults were shown advertisements that appealed to either emotionally meaningful experiences or the desire for information gain. Older adults preferred the messages framed with the emotionally meaningful appeal more than younger adults did. Older adults were also more likely to remember advertisements that framed the product in terms of emotional meaning as opposed to information gain. The memories of younger adults did not differ as a function of message framing. Manipulating time perspective substantiated the influence of temporal horizons for explaining these age differences: The greater preference for emotional meaning by age was eliminated when people were asked to imagine that their time left to live had been expanded another 20 years.

Tests of Socioemotional Selectivity Theory led to the identification of the so-called positivity effect. Researchers hypothesized that when emotional satisfaction is a high priority, emotions—particularly positive emotions—will be more salient in cognitive processing. In direct tests of these hypotheses, researchers have observed preferences for positive information in attention and memory in older adults. When presented with pairs of faces featuring neutral and positive expressions, older people look more at positive faces. When neutral and negative faces were paired, older people looked more at neutral ones and away from negative ones. Studies of memory reveal that younger, middle-age, and older adults differ in the types of images they best remember. Successively older age groups remember proportionately more of the positive images. Patterns of brain activation are consistent with a preference for positive information among older adults, suggesting that the patterns described earlier are not simply reporting differences. When viewing negative images, regions of the brain associated with storing emotion memories show less activation in older adults. Compelling evidence that such differences are motivated also has been found. Mara Mather and her colleagues found that age-related patterns are most robust in older people

with well-preserved executive functioning and that the positivity effect disappears in dual attention tasks when cognitive resources are drained by demands of multiple tasks.

Preferences for positive material explain age differences in memories for decisions. When asked to remember the positive and negative characteristics of a chosen option and the nonselected alternative, older adults engage in more choice-supportive recall, whereby they remember the positive characteristics of their selected option as opposed to potential drawbacks. When choosing a health care plan from a range of alternatives, older people focus more on the positive aspects of the plans than negative aspects while they review the plans. They also later recall a greater proportion of positive information than younger adults recall. Consistent with Socioemotional Selectivity Theory, these differences disappear when controlling for time perspective.

Conclusion

For many years, social scientists presumed that old age was a time of loneliness and despair. As evidence accrued that older people suffer lower rates of mental disorders than younger people and report greater satisfaction with life despite reductions in their social spheres, the phrase “paradox of aging” was coined: Older people experience fewer negative emotions in everyday life and report even more satisfying relationships than younger adults. According to Socioemotional Selectivity Theory, as temporal horizons shrink, people live in the present. They shift attention away from the long-term future and prioritize the most important aspects of life. For most people, this prioritizes close relationships.

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See also Cognitive Processes in Relationships; Emotion in Relationships; Emotion Regulation in Relationships; Friendship in Late Adulthood; Nostalgia; Positive Affectivity

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SOCIOMETER THEORY

Sociometer Theory proposes that self-esteem is an internal, subjective gauge of the degree to which people perceive that they are relationally valued and socially accepted by other people. The sociometer approach to self-esteem differs from most traditional explanations in suggesting that self-esteem has no value in its own right and that people neither need self-esteem nor are motivated to pursue it for its own sake. Rather, self-esteem is viewed as the output of a psychological system that monitors and responds to events vis-à-vis interpersonal acceptance and rejection. State self-esteem—people's current feelings about themselves that fluctuate in response to interpersonal events—is viewed as a reaction to people's perceptions of the degree to which they are, or are likely to be, valued and accepted by other people in the immediate context or near future. Trait self-esteem—people's average or typical level of self-esteem across situations and time—is conceptualized as a reflection of their general sense of the degree to which they are socially valued and accepted. This entry describes Sociometer Theory's perspective on the function of self-esteem, the nature of the self-esteem motive, and the relationship between self-esteem and dysfunctional behavior.

Function of Self-Esteem

Human beings and their hominid ancestors survived and prospered as species because they lived in

cooperative groups. Given the importance of group living, natural selection favored individuals who sought the company of others and behaved in ways that led others to value, accept, and support them. Because social acceptance was vital, a psychological system evolved that monitored and responded to cues indicating that the person may be devalued and rejected by other people. Prior to the appearance of self-awareness in evolutionary history, this system presumably operated on the basis of affective responses to nonverbal cues. However, after human beings developed the mental capacity for self-awareness, detection of a threat to social acceptance also triggered a conscious analysis of the situation, including an assessment of one's own characteristics and behavior. Thus, state self-esteem—the valenced feelings that people have about themselves—rises and falls with changes in perceived relational value, alerting people to real and potential rejection and motivating actions that maintain relational value and social acceptance. The sociometer system monitors relational value in all of people's interpersonal encounters, including those with friends, romantic partners, group members, acquaintances, family members, and even strangers, although the question has been raised whether people possess a single sociometer that monitors acceptance in all relationships or a set of relationship-specific sociometers that operate in different interpersonal contexts.

From the standpoint of Sociometer Theory, events that lower self-esteem—such as failure, rejection, embarrassing situations, negative evaluations, and being outperformed by others—do so because they potentially lower people's relational value to other people. Many laboratory experiments show that participants who learn that other people have excluded them from groups or interactions, do not want to get to know them, or hold negative impressions of them report lower state self-esteem than those who believe that others accept them. Similarly, studies of people's reactions to real-world instances of rejection and ostracism show that people consistently report decreased self-esteem following rejection. In general, rejection has a greater effect on state self-esteem than does acceptance. Because people are usually accepted at some minimal level by most people with whom they interact, being included is the default situation.

Self-esteem is closely linked to people's beliefs about whether other people are likely to accept or reject them, as Sociometer Theory predicts. Not only does explicit rejection lower state self-esteem, but people's feelings about themselves when they perform certain behaviors mirror the degree to which they think their actions will lead others to accept or reject them. The more that people think that their behavior will lead others to reject them, the worse they feel about themselves. Furthermore, research shows that people's own self-evaluations on particular dimensions predict their self-esteem primarily to the degree to which they believe that those dimensions are relevant to their social acceptance and rejection by other people. For example, people who believe that their relational value to others depends greatly on their physical appearance experience larger decrements in self-esteem when they believe they are regarded as more unattractive than people who do think that appearance is less important for social acceptance. Although some people maintain that their feelings about themselves are unaffected by acceptance and rejection, the effects of rejection on self-esteem are nearly universal. Research shows that rejecting feedback significantly affects state self-esteem even among people who insist that their feelings about themselves are not affected by others' evaluations or acceptance.

Although social and behavioral scientists agree that people's feelings about themselves are affected by others' evaluations, few theorists have addressed the question of why self-esteem is based so strongly on social evaluations and interpersonal acceptance. In fact, some have insisted that genuine self-esteem is not affected by other people's judgments. In contrast, Sociometer Theory maintains that people's views of themselves *should* be affected by how they think other people evaluate them, at least to a degree, because self-esteem monitors others' evaluations, which are important to personal well-being.

Self-Esteem Motive

People often behave in ways that seem intended to protect or increase their self-esteem. They make self-serving attributions that absolve themselves of responsibility for failure, compare themselves to those who are worse off than they are, misremember

information about themselves in flattering ways, choose friends and romantic partners who do not outperform them on important dimensions, and do many other things that make them feel good about themselves. According to Sociometer Theory, when people do things that appear intended to maintain or raise self-esteem, their goal is usually to protect and enhance their relational value to increase their likelihood of interpersonal acceptance. Self-serving attributions, self-handicapping behaviors, social judgments, prejudices, and ego-defensive reactions may reflect efforts to promote acceptance rather than to raise self-esteem per se. The theory acknowledges that people sometimes try to feel good about themselves in their own minds, but this fact does not contradict Sociometer Theory's claim that the fundamental function of the self-esteem system is to monitor and respond to threats to relational value and social acceptance.

Research investigating cultural differences in self-esteem enhancement has led some researchers to conclude that people in certain cultures, particularly those in east Asia, are either indifferent to self-esteem or do not experience self-esteem at all. For example, studies have shown that Japanese respondents do not engage in the self-enhancing biases that have been shown among American and European samples. From the perspective of Sociometer Theory, these data suggest that the criteria for being relationally valued differ by culture. Because self-enhancement does not promote acceptance in Japan as it does in the West, the Japanese are not only reluctant to self-enhance, but also feel badly about themselves when they do. Research suggests that behaviors that promote relational value in Japan—deference, self-effacement, and being other-oriented, for example—result in high self-esteem.

Self-Esteem, Emotion, and Dysfunctional Behavior

Many cognitive, emotional, and behavioral variables correlate with self-esteem. According to Sociometer Theory, some variables that correlate with self-esteem do so because they are associated with the perception that one is (or is not) valued as a relational partner by other individuals. For example, because people are more likely to value

those who are competent, physically attractive, norm-abiding, and likable, people who believe that they possess these acceptance-promoting characteristics tend to perceive that their relational value is high and, thus, possess higher self-esteem than people who do not believe that they have these attributes.

Other variables may correlate with self-esteem because they reflect ways of dealing with low relational value. For example, conformity may be related to low self-esteem because people who believe they have low relational value (and who, thus, have lower self-esteem) conform to increase their chances for social acceptance. Some variables that correlate with self-esteem may be both a cause and a consequence of feeling accepted or rejected. For example, feeling unaccepted may lead people to pursue social acceptance through deviant behaviors such as drug use (because certain antisocial groups often require little more than a willingness to participate in deviant behaviors), but then such behaviors may result in disapproval and rejection by others, thereby lowering self-esteem.

Virtually every negative emotion is more common among people who have low versus high self-esteem. In conceptualizing self-esteem as a gauge of relational value, Sociometer Theory suggests that low self-esteem is associated with these emotions because they are related to real, potential, or imagined rejection. Feeling inadequately accepted not only lowers self-esteem, but also makes people prone to emotions such as hurt feelings, sadness, jealousy, and anger, all of which often reflect the current or future state of one's interpersonal relationships.

Much of psychology's interest in self-esteem stems from the fact that low self-esteem tends to be associated with an array of emotional and behavioral problems. The relationship between low self-esteem and dysfunctional behavior is not as strong as many suppose, but the general pattern is for people with low trait self-esteem to be troubled by behavioral and emotional problems, such as depression, anxiety, alcohol and drug abuse, and conflicted relationships, more frequently than people with high trait self-esteem. From the standpoint of Sociometer Theory, low self-esteem may be related to maladaptive emotions and behaviors for three general reasons. First, feeling inadequately accepted by other people promotes a number of

aversive emotions (such as sadness, anxiety, and anger), as well as dysfunctional interpersonal behaviors such as derogating other people and interpersonal aggression. Such reactions have been demonstrated in response to short-term rejections in laboratory experiments and also are more common among people with histories of rejection, who tend to be depressed, anxious, hostile, and aggressive. As a monitor of relational value, self-esteem changes with perceived acceptance and rejection and, thus, correlates with other reactions to rejection.

Second, feeling inadequately valued typically increases people's desire to be accepted. Although people presumably prefer to gain acceptance through socially desirable means (such as through achievement, being a likable person, or treating others well), those who feel inadequately valued may resort to extreme, and sometimes deviant or antisocial, means when the prospect of gaining acceptance via socially desirable avenues looks unlikely. As a result, people with low self-esteem, who feel inadequately valued at the moment or inherently unacceptable over time, may join deviant groups—such as gangs, religious cults, or drug subcultures—in which the standards for acceptance by other people are lower than in mainstream, socially acceptable groups.

Third, some emotional and behavioral problems are related to self-esteem because they precipitate rejection. For example, nearly every psychological disorder leads other people to devalue and distance themselves from the individual, thereby lowering his or her self-esteem. Thus, people with psychological difficulties, whatever their cause, tend to have lower self-esteem. Similarly, although rejection may promote drug and alcohol use—either as an escape from the aversiveness of rejection or as a way to promote acceptance by deviant groups—substance abuse may lead to lowered acceptance and, thus, lower self-esteem.

Thus, the psychological difficulties that have previously been attributed to low self-esteem seem to be the causes or consequences of interpersonal rejection rather than effects of self-esteem *per se*. Furthermore, clinical treatments that focus on raising self-esteem to ameliorate these problems may have their effects by increasing people's real or perceived acceptability to other people. Virtually

all treatment programs designed to raise self-esteem involve interventions that would be expected to increase clients' perceptions of their social desirability and relational value.

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See also Belonging, Need for; Emotion in Relationships; Ostracism; Rejection; Self-Esteem, Effects on Relationships

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SOCIOMETRIC METHODS

Sociometric methods include a large class of methods that assess the positive and negative links

between persons in a group. The basic principle of the sociometric method is that every group member has the capacity to evaluate every other group member on one or more criteria. The term *sociometry* often has a narrower meaning—that is, the assessment of sociometric status in peer groups of children or adolescents. Sociometric methods have been used extensively in research with children and adolescents to assess their social relationships in the peer group. The origins of sociometric methods are attributed to Jacob Moreno (1934). Moreno's work was embedded in a broader movement in the social sciences at the beginning of the 20th century aimed at understanding interactions and relationships in groups. This entry reviews the basic elements of a sociometric procedure and the information it provides.

The results of a sociometric test can be presented graphically in a sociogram, a picture of the associations and connections between the members of a social network. Quantitatively, information can be derived at three levels of analysis: individual, dyad, and group. At the individual level, the results from the sociometric test can determine the degree of popularity, network centrality, connectedness, isolation, or rejection of every member of the group. At the dyadic level, the procedure can identify different types of dyads, such as friendships, but also antipathies, mutually aggressive dyads, bully–victim pairs, or romantic relationships. At the level of the group, the procedure can identify cliques of well-connected individuals with a certain identity who form cohesive subgroups in the larger social network.

The most common application of the sociometric method in research with children and adolescents focuses on individual-level sociometric status, in particular peer rejection and popularity. What does it mean that a child or adolescent is “rejected” or “popular?” These sociometric status types are sometimes seen as absolute characteristics of the individual that are caused by stable traits or behaviors (e.g., the popular child is cooperative and helpful, whereas the rejected child is aggressive or withdrawn). However, peer status is not independent of the group in which it is assessed. A person who is accepted in one group may not be accepted in another group with different norms.

Throughout the history of sociometric measurement, various methods have been used. John Coie,

Kenneth Dodge, and Heide Coppotelli presented a sociometric method that has served as the standard in the child and adolescent literature since the 1980s. In this procedure, children are asked to name three classroom peers they like most (*acceptance*) and three they like least (*rejection*). Nominations received for both questions are counted for each child and standardized within classrooms to control for differences in classroom size. A continuous score for *social preference* is created by taking the difference between the standardized acceptance and rejection scores and again standardizing the resulting scores within classrooms. A continuous score for *social impact* is created by summing the standardized acceptance and rejection scores and restandardizing the results. Finally, each child is assigned to one of five sociometric status types: popular (liked by many, disliked by few), rejected (disliked by many, liked by few), neglected (neither liked nor disliked), controversial (liked by some and disliked by others), and average (around the means of acceptance and rejection). The continuous scores and categorical status types tend to be stable over time. This suggests that peer status is difficult to change.

In a sociometric procedure, the *reference group* is the larger social network within which status is determined. For children and adolescents, the reference group is often the classroom or grade, but other possibilities are sports teams, hobby clubs, the peers in an afterschool program, or all peers in the neighborhood. Because peer status is relative to the group, it matters which reference group is chosen. In North America, the reference group for kindergarten and elementary school children is typically the classroom, for early adolescents in middle school all peers in their grade, and for adolescents in high school further extended across grade levels. This may vary in other cultures with differently structured school systems.

The *voter population* is the children or adolescents who participate as evaluators in a sociometric test. The *votee population* is the children or adolescents who are being evaluated. Ideally, all members of the reference group (e.g., classroom or grade) participate as both voters and votees. The questions on a sociometric test are called *sociometric criteria*. Moreno distinguished two types: emotional and reputational. Emotional criteria are subjective evaluations that are personal to the

voter. Items measuring acceptance and rejection (liked most, liked least, best friends) are in this category. Reputational criteria measure perceived behaviors or reputations, rather than personal evaluations. Nominations of peers who start fights, cooperate and share, or stay by themselves are reputational items of social behaviors. Nominations of popularity, attractiveness, and being good in school or at sports are also reputational. Because reputational items measure shared perceptions, rather than personal perceptions, there is a higher consensus in the peer group for reputational items than for emotional items.

Today, there are many variations of the basic sociometric method that increasingly include technology, such as in computerized assessments. What started as a simple test has grown into a sophisticated method for relationship assessment that is widely used in research and applications. Although the procedure is relatively simple, the information obtained is powerful. Sociometric status in childhood and adolescence correlates with behavioral, social-cognitive, and emotional skills in important ways and predicts social adjustment or maladjustment later in life. Sociometric methods have also been used with adults in work settings to understand the interactions among the members of an organization and to create effective work teams.

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See also Children's Peer Groups; Group Dynamics; Interpersonal Attraction; Leadership; Liking; Peer Report Methods; Popularity; Rejection

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SOCIOSEXUAL ORIENTATION

The construct of sociosexuality was developed to explain variation in the degree to which individuals need to feel emotionally close and connected to romantic partners before having sex with them. In his pioneering study of human sexuality, Alfred Kinsey documented that, although men on average report being more comfortable engaging in different forms of sociosexual behaviors than do most women, considerably more variability existed *within* each gender than between women and men. Early models developed to explain this variation posited that individuals who are willing to engage in sex without closeness or emotional intimacy have stronger sex drives. The sociosexuality construct, which was first introduced in 1990, shifted the causal focus away from a sex drive interpretation and toward a more psychological one.

Jeff Simpson and Steve Gangestad developed and validated the Sociosexual Orientation Inventory (SOI) in 1991 to measure the degree to which individuals need or require closeness and emotional intimacy before engaging in sexual intercourse with romantic partners. The SOI has five self-reported components: (1) the number of different sex partners (where *sex* connotes sexual intercourse) the respondent has had in the past year; (2) the number of lifetime one-night-stand partners; (3) the number of different sex partners realistically anticipated within the next 5 years; (4) the frequency of having sexual fantasies involving persons other than the current (or most recent) romantic partner; and (5) attitudes toward engaging in casual, uncommitted sex (e.g., "I can imagine myself being comfortable and enjoying casual sex with different partners"). The five components of the SOI are weighted and then summed to form a single sociosexual orientation score.

Individuals who score higher on the SOI have a more *unrestricted* sociosexual orientation in that they report having more sex partners in the past year, they have had more one-night stands, they foresee having a greater number of sex partners in the near future, they fantasize more about having sex with people other than their current or most recent romantic partner, and they express more positive attitudes about engaging in casual sex in the absence of love, commitment, or intimacy.

Individuals who have lower scores on the SOI have a more *restricted* sociosexual orientation given that their behavior and attitudes indicate that they require some level of love, commitment, or intimacy prior to having sex with someone. The SOI has recently been used to gauge the general mating strategies/orientations that individuals tend to adopt. People who score higher on the SOI (more unrestricted individuals) typically pursue short-term mating strategies devoid of emotional intimacy and commitment, whereas those who score lower (more restricted individuals) tend to enact long-term mating strategies defined by greater emotional intimacy and commitment.

Several studies have confirmed that scores on the SOI are systematically related to two constellations of variables: (1) other individual difference constructs and measures (e.g., measures of sexuality, personality traits, attachment styles, and gender-based measures) and (2) mating orientations and preferences (e.g., motives for mating, preferred mate attributes, and relationship initiation and interaction styles). As a rule, more unrestricted people tend to be more extraverted, less agreeable, more erotophilic, more disinhibited and impulsive, more likely to take risks, and more avoidantly attached. More restricted people, in contrast, are more introverted, more agreeable, more erotophobic, more socially constrained, less impulsive, less likely to take risks, and more securely attached. Although some evidence suggests that highly unrestricted individuals might also have more masculine characteristics than more restricted persons, this association is less conclusive.

A larger body of research has investigated how restricted and unrestricted sociosexual orientations are associated with different mating strategies, motives, preferences, and behavioral tactics. This work has confirmed that more restricted people have stronger intrinsic motives for entering romantic relationships; once relationships are established, they tend to be more committed to sustaining them. More restricted persons also prefer mates who, like themselves, value intimacy and commitment and are relatively more affectionate, trustworthy, and faithful. When attempting to attract such partners, more restricted men accentuate their best personal attributes, particularly those likely to be valued by persons seeking long-term mates (e.g., kindness, honesty, and loyalty).

More unrestricted individuals, in contrast, typically become involved in temporary, short-term relationships characterized by lower levels of commitment and emotional intimacy. Unrestricted individuals also gravitate toward more physically attractive and higher status partners, and they place more weight on sexual attraction and the potential for sex when choosing opposite-sex friends (who at some point might become romantic partners). Highly unrestricted individuals are also more likely to cheat—or claim they would cheat—on their current romantic partners, especially if a highly desirable alternative partner became available. In addition, more unrestricted women tend to perceive sexual rewards, resource acquisition, and the refinement of their seductive skills as positive outcomes of pursuing a short-term mating strategy. When trying to attract mates, highly unrestricted men tend to use direct, competitive tactics such as showing off, bragging about past accomplishments, or belittling other men. They also are more likely to display nonverbal behaviors that convey contact-readiness, such as coy smiles, flirtatious glances, and head cants, which are likely to facilitate sexual intimacy without accompanying love, closeness, or commitment. Some recent evidence suggests that more unrestricted women may at times use short-term mating tactics to evaluate, attract, and possibly retain certain men as long-term mates, which is not true of more unrestricted men. In addition, more unrestricted men and women report being more likely to “poach” and be poached by individuals who had been involved in other established relationships.

In conclusion, the sociosexuality construct and measure have spawned a surprising amount of empirical research since the construct was introduced in 1990. From a theoretical standpoint, the most fruitful lines of inquiry have used the sociosexuality construct and measure to test evolutionary-based models of human mating, including important life-span models of social, emotional, and physical development. The sociosexuality construct and measure have also helped to move the study of human mating away from simple sex difference accounts of how and why men and women mate and toward more complex, complete, and accurate models that incorporate the social and environmental conditions

under which *both* genders enact short- and/or long-term mating strategies.

Jeffrey A. Simpson

See also Hooking Up, Hookups; Sexuality; Sexual Motives; Sexual Standards

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SPEED DATING

Speed dating is an activity designed for individuals who are interested in meeting potential romantic partners. At speed-dating events, participants have the opportunity to meet other attendees on a series of brief, one-on-one, 3- to 8-minute “dates.” Heterosexual speed-dating events, for example, typically include 10 to 20 members of each sex, with members of one sex (usually the men) rotating to the next partner after each speed date until everybody has met all of the opposite-sex speed daters. After the event, participants report whether they would (“yes”) or would not (“no”) be interested in corresponding again with each of their speed-dating partners in the future. If two speed daters say “yes” to each other, they are a *match*, and the host of the speed-dating event gives them the opportunity to contact each other subsequently, perhaps to arrange a more traditional date.

Speed dating more closely resembles a party than a series of blind dates. Compared with parties, however, speed dating offers several advantages, including the assurance that the people who attendees meet are also interested in meeting romantic partners and the security of knowing that awkward or unpleasant dates require only minimal endurance.

History

Rabbi Yaacov Deyo invented speed dating in the late 1990s to help Jewish singles in Los Angeles meet each other. Since then, speed dating has become an international phenomenon serving diverse populations across dozens of countries. It has become a mainstay of popular culture, appearing in television programs, movies, and mainstream news outlets. It has also become big business, with millions of people paying tens of millions of dollars to attend events.

Although mechanisms for meeting romantic partners have existed for time immemorial, the rapid growth and widespread availability of the Internet in the mid-1990s spawned a variety of new avenues for individuals to find and meet partners. For example, today's singles frequently meet each other via online dating (e.g., eHarmony.com, match.com) and social networking Web sites (e.g., facebook.com, myspace.com). Speed dating also emerged with this burst of modern dating innovations, but it does not involve Internet use to the same extent as these other methods. Instead, speed dating is distinctive in featuring face-to-face interaction at the first step of the romantic initiation process. Speed-dating companies (e.g., Cupid.com, HurryDate.com) do allow users to register for events and contact their matches over the Internet, but this online communication does not substitute for the live interactions that lie at the heart of speed dating.

Speed Dating and Romantic Attraction Research

Soon after speed dating became a pop culture phenomenon, scholars recognized it as an efficient means of studying romantic attraction. A stream of articles began appearing in the scientific literature in 2005, with some reporting findings from

commercial speed-dating events and others reporting findings from events hosted by romantic attraction scholars for graduate or undergraduate students.

Scholars are enthusiastic about the scientific potential of speed dating because its procedures possess many features that make it an ideal method for studying romantic attraction. For example, speed-dating procedures allow scholars to: (a) study real relationships with a potential future, (b) study both partners from each speed date simultaneously, (c) maintain tight control over the circumstances in which individuals meet potential partners, and (d) examine how individuals select among a series of available romantic partners. Speed-dating procedures also allow scholars to assess background characteristics about individuals before they attend the event and to follow matched pairs into the future to study early relationship development.

A skeptic might question whether these benefits of speed-dating procedures might be offset by the disadvantage of each speed date's brevity. After all, perhaps individuals are not able to learn anything substantive about each other in only a few minutes. Although this concern is reasonable, it is contradicted by decades of research demonstrating that individuals can make impressive and nuanced social evaluations quickly—sometimes in a matter of seconds. Because the social psyche is so sophisticated, people can make speedy social judgments that go well beyond physical attractiveness evaluations. Indeed, one study revealed that speed daters tend to be especially attracted to others who selectively like them: When a speed dater encounters partners who experience romantic desire for everybody they meet, she tends not to reciprocate this desire, but when she encounters partners who experience romantic desire uniquely for her, she tends to reciprocate this selective desire.

Other speed-dating research has explored the roles that race and sex play in predicting romantic attraction. For example, evidence now suggests that (a) men are less selective in their “yessing” decisions than women are (especially as the number of attendees at the event gets larger) and (b) women show stronger preferences for partners of their own race than men do. Additional research has demonstrated that both men and women show strikingly poor ability to predict in advance which

characteristics of their speed-dating partners will inspire their romantic desire at the events. In other words, people may not know what they initially desire in a romantic partner.

Conclusion

Although speed dating is only a decade old, it has already substantially influenced the relationship initiation process for millions of singles and the scientific methodology employed by scholars of romantic attraction. It will be interesting to see whether speed dating's popularity continues to expand over the next decade and whether speed dating proves more or less effective than other methods at spawning meaningful, long-term romantic relationships.

Eli J. Finkel and Paul W. Eastwick

See also Commercial Channels for Mate Seeking; First Impressions; Initiation of Relationships; Internet Dating; Interpersonal Attraction; Reciprocity of Liking; Social Relations Model

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STAGE THEORIES OF RELATIONSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Theories of relationship development try to explain how partnerships change over time. Such theories highlight the dynamic process of evolution across

the life span of relationships. *Stage models* are one class of theories of relationship development. Stage models propose that relationship development occurs as a succession of discrete phases. This entry identifies core assumptions of stage theories, describes examples, and evaluates their strengths and weaknesses.

Assumptions of Stage Theories

One assumption of stage theories is that relationship progression is marked by a series of delineated phases that partners must negotiate over time. A *stage* is an idiosyncratic period in the life span of a relationship that is noticeably different from adjacent periods. According to stage theories, partners experience a unique constellation of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors in each phase. Stage theories seek to (a) identify the phases that occur across the trajectory of relationship development and (b) describe the defining attributes of each phase.

A related assumption is that relationship development is punctuated at irregular intervals by events that transform the nature of the partnership. Stage theories portray relationship progression as sporadic, abrupt, and revolutionary. They argue that relationship-transforming changes occur at irregular intervals. Although stage theories recognize that later phases are linked to previous ones, they do not require adjacent stages to resemble one another.

Major Stage Theories

Many stage theories exist in the literature. Although they are united by common assumptions, the theories differ in the number and nature of stages they identify. The following subsections summarize prominent stage theories in approximate chronological order of their origin.

Wheel Model of Love

The wheel model of love, advanced by Ira Reiss, describes four stages in romantic relationship formation. During the *rapprochement stage*, individuals establish understanding and common ground. Next, in the *self-revelation stage*, partners engage

in self-disclosure to convey private information about themselves. This self-disclosure prompts the *mutual dependency stage*, during which partners provide important rewards for one another. The model asserts that couples who successfully negotiate the rapport, self-revelation, and mutual dependency phases enter the *intimacy need fulfillment stage*. This stage is when partners feel romantic love for each other. Thus, the wheel model uses a four-stage structure to depict how relationships progress from acquaintance to romantic love.

Filter Theory of Relationship Development

The filter theory of relationship development, constructed by Alan Kerckhoff and Keith Davis, argues that romantic couples must satisfy three filters en route to marriage. First, individuals appraise the extent to which potential partners possess *desirable social characteristics*, such as ethnic background, religious beliefs, and socioeconomic status. The filter theory contends that people will form a relationship with a partner who meets or exceeds their standards. Couples encounter a second filter when they begin to embark on a relationship. People assess their *similarity of attitudes and values* at this stage. If partners conclude that their perspectives are enough alike, the *need complementarity* filter becomes salient. Individuals evaluate whether their partner is capable of fulfilling their long-term needs. Accordingly, the filter theory identifies social characteristics, attitude similarity, and complementary needs as filters that determine relationship progression.

Stimulus-Value-Role Model

Bernard Murstein's stimulus-value-role model expands the filter theory by incorporating principles of social exchange. During the *stimulus stage*, people form romantic relationships with partners who possess rewarding characteristics, such as physical attractiveness, intelligence, and agreeableness. Once individuals have selected a romantic partner, they progress to the *value comparison stage*, where they examine the degree of compatibility between their values. Self-disclosure increases as partners exchange information to assess their similarity. During the *role compatibility stage*, people evaluate their mate's potential to fulfill

their role expectations into the future. Although individuals probably conduct stimulus, value, and role assessments throughout the life cycle of romantic relationships, the model argues that one reward filter is most relevant to each stage.

Premarital Dyadic Formation Framework

The premarital dyadic formation framework, proposed by Robert Lewis, identifies six processes that partners must fulfill as romantic relationships develop. First, individuals perceive *similarities* in their backgrounds, interests, and preferences. Next, people establish *rapport* within the relationship. During the third stage, partners engage in *self-disclosure* to reveal intimate information about themselves. Fourth, individuals empathize with each other's views in the *perspective-taking* stage. The fifth stage, *interpersonal role fit*, requires partners to evaluate how well they will complement each other over the long term. During the final stage, *dyadic crystallization*, people build commitment and integrate their routines. The premarital dyadic formation framework argues that partners must successfully complete each process before proceeding to the next one.

ABCDE Model of Relationship Development

According to George Levinger's ABCDE model, relationships develop and decay in five stages. During the *acquaintance stage*, people evaluate the attractiveness, availability, and desirability of potential partners. The *building stage* occurs when individuals assess their compatibility, increase their involvement, and discover their similarities. The *continuance phase* involves mutual commitment, expanded investments, increased love, and heightened predictability. As couples grow apart during the *deterioration phase*, they place more emphasis on independence, focus on individual outcomes more than joint outcomes, and have difficulty communicating effectively. During the *ending stage*, people cultivate alternative identities and begin new partnerships. The ending stage encompasses relationship termination.

Staircase Model of Relationship Development

Mark Knapp posited a staircase metaphor to describe the process of coming together and

coming apart. Five stages depict relationship formation. During the *initiating stage*, individuals seek to make a good impression and reduce uncertainty about each other. Their communication is cautious and conventionally scripted. During the *experimenting stage*, partners exchange demographic information, engage in small talk, and search for common experiences. This stage is marked by casual, relaxed, and pleasant communication. The *intensifying stage* involves a heightened awareness of the relationship. People engage in personal self-disclosures, employ informal forms of address, coordinate their behavior, and express their affection. During the *integrating stage*, individuals become a single unit often by sharing their responsibilities and integrating their social networks. Their communication accentuates togetherness and promotes understanding. The *bonding stage* occurs when partners complete a public ritual that formalizes their commitment (e.g., engagement, marriage, civil union). The bonding stage is the highest point of relationship development.

Five stages of Knapp's model portray relationship decline. The *differentiating stage* happens when people start to focus on their differences rather than their similarities. They assert their independence, perhaps through complaining or arguing. During the *circumscribing stage*, the relationship may appear healthy to outsiders, but partners limit the amount and depth of communication. They avoid topics that will spark conflict and instead discuss superficial issues. During the *stagnating stage* individuals are pessimistic about their ability to engage in pleasant interaction. They evade talking about the relationship because they do not believe that change is possible. The *avoiding stage* is marked by physical and emotional separation between partners. Individuals try to disentangle each other from their lives. During the *terminating stage*, one or both partners decide to stop communicating altogether. The end of the relationship may occur as a slow drifting apart or an abrupt termination.

According to the staircase model, relationship progression can involve forward movement, backward movement, and within-stage movement. Movement is always to a new location because people experience repeated stages differently. Although stages can be skipped, movement is typically orderly

and sequential. Fuzzy boundaries surround the stages because some behaviors overlap.

Family Development Theory

Family Development Theory contends that families experience predictable shifts in composition over the life cycle. The theory defines stages as family structures comprised of unique roles and behaviors. Initial versions of the theory concentrated on the trajectory of the traditional family form, but more contemporary renditions accommodate both nontraditional family forms and heterogeneous trajectories.

Family Development Theory argues that families progress from a qualitatively distinct stage to a transformative event to another qualitatively distinct stage. Transformative events include marriages, births, job changes, geographic moves, divorces, and deaths. When transformative events occur, family members shift their roles in response to the changes. Family development theory suggests that progression is predictable by the nature of the previous stage and the length of time the family spent in it.

Structural Helix Model

The structural helix model was created by Richard Conville. The model proposes that relationships cycle through stages by repeating similar, but not identical, experiences. It argues that relationships undergo four phases defined by two competing tensions: (1) the tension between security and alienation and (2) the tension between disintegration and resynthesis. The *security stage* involves pleasant and satisfying interaction between partners. During the *disintegration stage*, people notice, observe, and question their involvement in the relationship. The *alienation stage* occurs when one or both partners reject their roles within the partnership. During the *resynthesis stage*, individuals renegotiate and redefine their relationship. The structural helix model assumes that relationships continually cycle through these phases over their life span.

Strengths, Weaknesses, and Directions for Future Theorizing

Like all theories, stage models possess strengths and weaknesses. One strength is that stage

theories are richly descriptive. They provide detailed information about what people typically think, feel, and do across the trajectory of relationships. A second strength is that stage theories highlight the transformations that relationships undergo over time. Indeed, they offer considerable insight into how critical events permanently change the complexion of relationships.

Stage theories also have limitations. One weakness is that they do not pinpoint exactly *when* relationships will progress from one stage to another. Another limitation is that they are vague about *what* sparks movement between phases. Indeed, they are relatively silent about the circumstances that mark the end of one phase and the beginning of another. A related criticism is that stage theories do not identify *why* progression occurs. In fact, stage theories are more descriptive than explanatory. Other theories try to avoid these limitations by focusing on how variables like intimacy, commitment, self-disclosure, and uncertainty shift incrementally over time.

A direction for future research is to clarify whether relationship development is linear or cyclical. For example, the wheel model of love and the filter theory of relationship development suggest that relationships progress linearly through a fixed sequence of stages. In contrast, the staircase model and the structural helix model argue that relationships progress through stages in a cyclical fashion. This issue is the subject of considerable debate and remains unresolved.

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See also Change in Romantic Relationships Over Time; Deteriorating Relationships; Developing Relationships; Developmental Designs; Family Life Cycle; Friendship Formation and Development; Turning Points in Relationships

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STALKING

Stalking, also referred to as criminal harassment, is a pattern of unwanted pursuit, intrusion, or harassment that causes a reasonable person fear or sense of threat regarding self or family. Given that a significant portion of stalking emerges from prior relationships, and that many stalkers seek reestablishment or enhancement of intimacy, it is closely related to issues of courtship, relationship breakup, and disjunctive or asymmetric types of relationships. When unwanted stalking and stalking-like activities are explicitly intended to reestablish intimacy with the former partner, it is referred to as obsessive relational intrusion, unwanted relationship pursuit, or obsessive relationship pursuit. The history, nature and prevalence, processes, effects, and forms of coping with stalking are examined in this entry.

History

Different jurisdictions and statutes specify different features, but there are several common conditions of stalking. There must be a course of conduct or pattern of behavior that typically requires that more than one behavior is involved

across more than one time and place. The behavior must be unwanted. The characterization of harassing, pursuing, intrusive, or violent behaviors indicates that the behaviors are not forms of protected speech and serve no other legitimate purpose such as sales or picketing. In some laws, this means that the pattern of behavior must be intended to cause fear. Some statutes clarify the requirement that the threat is credible, indicating that even if the threat is not imminent, it is intended to cause fear.

The process of stalking has been identified in ancient narratives, but its modern representation has been closely tied to Hollywood characterizations of the stalker in violent dramas (e.g., *Play Misty for Me*, *Cape Fear*, and *The Fan*). Stalking first became a crime in 1990 in the state of California. Within a relatively short time after the 1990 law, dozens of state and national jurisdictions passed legislation criminalizing this conduct. Stalking laws recognize the possibility that a course of conduct may not involve actual communicated threats, but as a collective pattern of behavior may amount to a threatening experience. Stalking often involves a campaign of writing letters; making telephone calls; showing up at work, at school, or at a place of worship; waiting on a doorstep; leaving odd gifts; leaving tokens on a car windshield; and other such intrusive attempts at contact. If these last for months, or even years, it is the collective impact of such behavior that becomes threatening in its relentless persistence and deviance in the face of clear messages to cease and desist.

Nature and Prevalence

Research across many studies and countries indicates that 75 to 80 percent of stalking emerges from some type of preexisting relationship, and approximately half of stalking cases represent the vestiges of a previously romantic relationship. Studies vary considerably in their methodologies and populations and, thus, their estimates of prevalence. Conservatively designed studies indicate that less than 5 percent of men and 6 to 12 percent of women will be stalked in their lifetime, whereas many other studies indicate that approximately 17 percent of men and 25 percent of women have been stalked, and higher percentages

of both have experienced unwanted relationship pursuit. Research indicates that approximately 75 percent of stalking victims are females, and approximately 75 percent of stalkers are male, with the vast majority of stalking being both heterosexual and within ethnic group. In contrast, studies of unwanted relationship pursuit, especially studies of college samples, tend to find little evidence of sex differences.

Stalking and unwanted relationship pursuit display considerable behavioral variety, but descriptive meta-analytic research identifies the following general strategies. Hyperintimacy behaviors are forms of excessive or deviant courtship and flirtation. Contact behaviors represent attempts at mediated (e.g., e-mail, instant messaging, telephone) or face-to-face interaction. Surveillance behaviors involve synchronizing schedules, monitoring, and following and keeping track of a person. Invasion behaviors reflect attempts to enter the property or personal space of a person or illegitimately obtain that person's possessions or information. Given the rapid evolution of technologies for contact and surveillance, the term *cyberstalking* has emerged to describe the use of GPS, hidden cameras, the Internet, and other media for unwanted pursuit. Harassment and intimidation behaviors are patterns of activity that corrupt or threaten a person's self-concept, reputation, or economic health. Coercion behaviors are messages that communicate a threat, whether to self or others, pets, family or friends, property, job, sexual security, or life. Violence is any action that attempts to or actually causes physical harm to a person, property, or associates. Across studies, approximately a third of stalking cases involve violence, and over half when the prior relationship was sexual in nature. Finally, proxy stalking is the use of intermediary parties for any of these other forms of pursuit and harassment.

Stalkers are considered a relatively heterogeneous population. Theories tend to conceptualize stalking as an individual pathology, such as borderline personality disorder or erotomania (i.e., the delusional belief that another person is in love with self), as a product of personality traits such as preoccupied or insecure attachment, or as a product of disordered cognitive information processing. Other theoretical approaches are more cultural in nature, proposing that stalking is an extension

of distorted gendered societal expectations for the process of courtship. To the extent that societies create socializing and media images promoting courtship persistence in the face of rejection and idealize romantic visions of the perfect partner, people may pursue prospective partners beyond the pale of appropriate courtship.

Effects and Coping

Research indicates that being the victim of stalking is significantly associated with a variety of deleterious states, including impaired physical health, physiological health, psychological health, emotional health, social health, spiritual health, and economic health. A few studies indicate that small percentages of people who have experienced unwanted relationship pursuit also attribute ambivalent feelings to the experience, such as feeling attractive or more resilient and self-sufficient.

Victims attempt to avoid or deter such harassment in a variety of ways. Victims may move away from the harassment by attempting to relocate, alter schedules, and become more anonymous. Victims may move with the harasser by attempting to negotiate a mutually acceptable definition of the relationship or acceptable boundaries of interaction. Victims may move against the harasser by deterring, threatening, or attempting to harm the pursuer. Victims may move within themselves by focusing on self, meditating, seeking spirituality, redefining the experience, seeking distraction, or seeking self-actualizing activities. Victims may move outward to sources of social support, consultation, or expert or professional intervention, including victims groups or law enforcement. The fact that the average case of stalking lasts for more than 1 1/2 years suggests, however, that many of these coping strategies are attempted, and few are generally effective. There appears to be no typical way in which stalking eventually ends. The most common reasons reported for why stalking ends include asking or telling the pursuer to stop, contacting police, moving away, entering a new relationship, the stalker being arrested, a restraining order, and taking a variety of security measures. No particular sequence of these coping responses has yet been demonstrated consistently to provide the best protection, although expert advice

consistently advises tactics in the moving away and moving outward categories.

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See also Abuse and Violence in Relationships; Dissolution of Relationships, Coping and Aftermath; Obsessive Love; Obsessive Relational Intrusion

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STEPFAMILIES

Stepfamilies are a prevalent family form in the United States, with one in three American children living in a stepfamily during their childhood. Stepfamilies represent a broad and complex set of members and circumstances, growing from combinations of first, second, or third (or more) adult cohabitations and/or marriages. The children that adults bring to stepfamilies may come from one or more of their previous relationships or may result from the union of the current parent and stepparent. Children may be living in the stepfamily full time or part time, ranging from regular to no contact with their nonresidential parent. Due to the increasing number of stepfamilies, research on this family form has multiplied, springing from clinicians working with stepfamilies to include scholars from a variety of disciplines, including communication studies, family studies, psychology, sociology, and social work. To follow, this entry describes how stepfamilies are often viewed from a deficit model. The remainder of this entry focuses on stepfamily development and types, stepfamily relationships, and stepfamily boundaries.

Deficit Model

Because of the many complexities of stepfamilies, they are a challenging type of family to understand

and study. Lawrence Ganong and Marilyn Coleman pointed out that many clinicians and researchers use what they called a deficit comparison model when studying stepfamilies. This means that stepfamilies are often compared to traditional, intact families and found lacking or problematic.

Cultural and societal stereotypes, especially those related to biological sex and gender, also include how stepfamilies are viewed and understood. For example, the stigma of the wicked stepmother continues to permeate both classical children's tales such as *Cinderella*, *Hansel and Gretel*, and *Snow White* and more modern, contemporary media images of stepfamily life. Not surprisingly, researchers have found that this stigma negatively influences stepmothers' attempts to relate to their stepchildren despite their attempts to challenge the wicked stepmother myth. Stepchildren who identify a stepmother as their primary stepparent often view their stepfamilies as functioning less well than stepchildren who identify a stepfather as their primary stepparent. The effects of stepfamily living on children also depend on the biological sex of the child, although these findings are somewhat less clear. Some researchers have found that boys in stepfamilies have more internalizing and externalizing behavior problems than girls, whereas others have reported that girls have more adjustment problems than boys, but only when living with stepfathers. Clearly, societal, cultural, and gendered beliefs about stepfamilies are likely to influence not only more general attitudes toward stepfamilies as a social unit, but also beliefs about the role of the stepparent and the communication dynamics that emerge among same-sex and cross-sex dyadic partners in the stepfamily system. Again, the deficit model may be in place when stepfamilies are compared to intact families, rather than on their own terms. Many scholars have called for viewing stepfamilies as a unique family form on their own terms and trying to understand their strengths as well as their challenges.

Stepfamily Development and Types

In an effort to understand stepfamily dynamics, researchers and clinicians have advanced a number of developmental models and taxonomies to classify stepfamilies and to examine differences in

family functioning and communication among different stepfamily types. For example, Patricia Papernow proposed a seven-stage model of stepfamily development highly regarded in clinical circles. Stepfamily development includes the (a) fantasy stage characterized by unrealistic and idealized expectations, (b) immersion stage in which challenges of stepfamily life confront expectations, (c) awareness stage in which members attempt to make sense of their confusion, (d) mobilization stage in which members attempt to manage difficulties, (e) action stage where new agreements create a foundation on which to build, (f) contact stage in which positive emotional bonds form, and (g) resolution stage where a more solid stepfamily unit emerges. Papernow argues that seriously troubled stepfamilies typically do not advance beyond the mobilization stage.

Taking a different approach, communication scholars have investigated the relational turning points and communication processes and messages that differentiate strong stepfamilies from those struggling to develop. Leslie Baxter, Dawn Braithwaite, and John Nicholson identified five stepfamily trajectories, or developmental pathways, using key turning points that transpired during the first 4 years of the stepfamily as members charted how much they "felt like a family." Five pathways emerged: (1) accelerated pathways where stepfamilies moved quickly toward 100 percent feeling like a family; (2) prolonged pathways where stepfamilies progressed to higher levels of feeling like a family, with some up-and-down experiences; (3) stagnant pathways where stepfamilies "never took off" and failed to feel like a family; (4) declining pathways where stepfamilies began with a high level of feeling like a family and then declined to zero usually due to overly high expectations for stepfamily living; and (5) high-amplitude turbulent pathways where stepfamilies experienced dramatic up-and-down shifts in feeling like a family. These findings can help stepfamilies understand that there are multiple ways to become a stepfamily, as well as pathways to avoid. Even for more positive trajectories, there is no one right path that will fit all stepfamily experiences.

Other researchers have examined differences in stepfamily functioning based on communication strategies, activities, and patterns that facilitate stepfamily development and healthy

stepparent–stepchild relationships. Tamara Golish examined stepfamily development using systems theory to identify communication strengths and weaknesses that differentiate strong from struggling stepfamilies. Strong stepfamilies were more likely to spend quality time together, establish unity through enacting family rituals, engage in everyday talk, and manage conflicts through family meetings, open communication, and compromise.

More recently, Paul Schrodts identified five different stepfamily types based on stepchildren's reports of stepfamily functioning and the stepparent relationship. Low levels of family dissension and avoidance and relatively high levels of family involvement, flexibility, and expressiveness characterized bonded and functional stepfamilies. In bonded stepfamilies, stepchildren were more likely to refer to their primary stepparent as "Mom" or "Dad," whereas in functional stepfamilies, stepchildren were more likely to view the stepparent as a friend. The third type, ambivalent stepfamilies, was characterized by stepchildren's general ambivalence toward the stepfamily, with above-average levels of stepfamily dissension and avoidance and slightly below-average levels of stepfamily involvement, flexibility, and expressiveness. The final two types, evasive and conflictual stepfamilies, were both struggling with stepfamily life, although for different reasons. Evasive stepfamilies experienced a lack of open communication between stepparent and stepchild and in the stepfamily as a whole, and conflictual stepfamilies had higher levels of expressiveness and dissension and the lowest levels of stepfamily involvement and flexibility. Using this approach, Schrodts found that meaningful differences emerged in perceptions of communication competence and mental health symptoms among stepchildren in all five stepfamily types.

Stepfamily Relationships

Most researchers have focused on the subsystems and dyads within the stepfamily home, starting with the marital couple. Stepfamilies often form quickly as couples cohabit or remarry relatively soon after they start dating. Marilyn Coleman, Lawrence Ganong, and Mark Fine examined studies of the quality of remarried relationships, finding mixed results, with some couples more satisfied

and others less satisfied than first marriages. More conflict and disagreement tends to exist in remarriages, especially over stepchildren. Overall, marital quality is lower when the adults both bring children to the relationship. Kenneth Cissna and colleagues stressed that remarried couples must establish the credibility of the stepparent in the eyes of the children by communicating a unified front. All this is complicated by the relationship with the nonresidential parent, which may help or hinder development of the stepparent role.

Researchers have studied the triangulation of relationships that may occur among the parent, stepparent, and stepchild(ren). Stepparents who work at creating and maintaining close relationships with their stepchildren are more likely to see a positive response to their efforts. Most stepchildren report that they want a close relationship and to be open with their stepparent; at the same time, they often feel disloyal to their nonresidential parent if a close relationship forms. Parental authority and discipline are often challenging for a stepparent. Stepchildren reveal that they desire guidance and discipline from stepparents, yet they often remain resistant to these efforts. Studies on stepchildren's psychological and social adjustment have produced mixed results. Overall, researchers have discovered that stepchildren are more at risk for problems (e.g., depression, lower school achievement, and drug abuse) than children in first-marriage homes, although the differences tend to be relatively small and about on par with children from single-parent families.

Of all the relationships in the stepfamily, stepsiblings have been studied the least. Although parents and stepparents are coming together out of love, stepsibling relationships are most often involuntary. Stepsiblings are dealing with the loss of their original family and are more likely to be disengaged emotionally. Researchers are studying ways that parents can help stepchildren reduce conflict and feel more positive about their stepsiblings and the stepfamily as a whole.

Stepfamily Boundaries

Although researchers have examined the various relationships within the stepfamily household, they are also studying boundaries and relationships

with those outside of the household. One important relationship is the postdivorce couple coparenting the children. Some coparents are able to negotiate healthy working relationships for the sake of the children, whereas others are continually acrimonious. One concern for children is being “caught in the middle” between their parents. Although children want to know what is happening with their parents and be included in decisions that affect them, often parents tell them more than they want to know, especially when criticizing the other parent. Many parents avoid contact with each other and obtain information about their coparent or pass along information (e.g., about finances, schedules, or a new romantic relationship) through children. Whereas parents often report this to be an efficient and less conflict-prone way to communicate, children often find being in the middle difficult. On the positive side, scholars are looking at how to help children to feel centered in the family without feeling caught between their parents.

Researchers are also studying the complexities of the relationship of children and their nonresidential parent. Children’s contact with their nonresidential parent is greatly influenced by the relationship between this parent and their former spouse. Although most children desire a close relationship with their nonresidential parent, they often find it challenging due to distance, the time it takes to interact enough to remain close, and the loyalty conflicts they experience while trying to have a relationship with both parents.

The relationship with extended family members is also important to stepfamily members. This includes members of the “old” extended family (e.g., grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins), as well as stepchildren and stepsiblings from previous marriages. It can be difficult to figure out who is part of the family and who should be included in family rituals such as graduations, weddings, and holidays. While adjusting to the new stepfamily, members must adjust to new relationships with extended family and friends who are now part of their lives. To date, the research on the “old” and “new” external family has been limited.

Recently, scholars have also begun to consider the various ways in which stepfamily functioning differs when the stepfamily is formed after the death of a parent. Although our understanding of

stepfamilies formed postbereavement is partial at best, there is preliminary evidence to suggest that a deceased parent fundamentally alters the experience of stepfamily life for remarried adults and stepchildren in these stepfamilies.

Dawn O. Braithwaite, Paul Schrod, and Rebecca DiVerniero

See also Discipline in Families; Ex-Partner and Ex-Spouse Relationships; Extended Families; Family Communication; Family Routines and Rituals; Postdivorce Relationships; Remarriage

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STORYTELLING

Storytelling is the act of constructing an account of a set of events that communicates who was involved,

what happened, where and when it occurred, why the events happened, and their significance. Although storytelling may occur about fictional events, this entry focuses on storytelling about autobiographical experiences. Researchers across a wide variety of disciplines and subdisciplines examine storytelling and its role in relationships.

Building and Maintaining Relationships Through Stories

Storytelling helps to build and maintain social relationships over time. For example, people exchange stories in the beginning of a relationship because doing so is a way to get to know one another by sharing important information about the past. As relationships become well established, two different features of storytelling activities have been examined.

First, people develop stories that characterize their relationships. In this work, the relationship is the context within which stories develop and change. For example, couples often share stories about “how we met” or about important relationship experiences with others, which can restore or enhance feelings of warmth and intimacy with the partner even when the partner is not present. Such stories develop over time within relationships as partners practice telling them over and over again and incorporating new events into their story. As pairs and families interact and engage in storytelling, one person may take on the primary role for telling a particular story, with others in the family providing helpful commentary. Research shows that narrating a family story allows a person to make sure that other family members share his or her memory and perspective on an important family event. As relationships become truly well established, as in long-term marriages, the way people share responsibility for telling relationship stories can evolve. Stories are also implicated in the dissolution of relationships, as people build an account of their relationship that justifies and explains why the relationship ended.

Second, some relationship stories are more adaptive than others. There is good evidence that telling stories that emphasize closeness and positivity, and perhaps even idealize the relationship partner benefit the longevity and quality of a relationship over time.

Idealizing one’s partner may help people to get through imperfect periods in a relationship, give partners the benefit of the doubt, and facilitate working together in stressful transitions, such as becoming parents. Creating stories that idealize one’s partner is one way that idealized images can be created and maintained, and thus provide these benefits. Telling a more complete story about the ending of a relationship also is associated with a greater sense of control and recovery from a breakup.

Storytelling as a Context for Fulfilling Relationship Functions

People in relationships also exchange their individual stories. This kind of storytelling has many functions and is seen in nearly all relationships—parent–child, friend, romantic, and family. This type of storytelling provides the partner with information about the person’s experiences, thus maintaining intimacy and connections. Because one of the most common patterns in the exchange of stories is to relate series of common experiences, this type of storytelling creates intimacy via both sharing and building a sense of a similar history. People also use this type of storytelling to seek validation of their beliefs about themselves and the world, to seek emotional support and reassurance, and sometimes to resolve problems in other parts of their lives. For example, spouses sometimes argue with each other about the stories they tell. Such disputes are less likely to concern what happened than to concern what the experience meant—or its larger significance. Similarly, parents and children don’t always concur about how the child felt during a particular experience—with the child telling the story about sadness, for example, and the parent telling it with an emphasis on anger. In both cases, the process of storytelling allows the pair to reach a common understanding of experiences that, under ideal circumstances, includes and validates multiple perspectives on a single event.

Storytelling and Socialization

Broadly, storytelling is a way of passing on culturally shared beliefs and ideas all over the world, and psychological studies have examined how this

process looks in parent–child relationships. Parents help structure the telling of stories and personal experiences for young children, effectively teaching them how to think about and tell personal events. This process varies across individual families, as well as by culture and gender. For example, American mothers vary in how they help children tell stories. When mothers help young children recall richness and detail in stories, children eventually produce more detailed, rich narratives of their own. Similarly, parents vary in whether they emphasize providing information about time and place in stories or help children create coherent and emotional stories. Over time, children whose parents were more likely to emphasize time and place in stories, or whose parents created more coherent and emotional stories, also come to tell better stories.

Cross-cultural comparisons also support the idea of storytelling as fulfilling socialization goals. American parents tell stories with their children more often and differently than do Asian parents. American parents' storytelling style tends to be more detailed and focused on the individual child when contrasted with Asian parents, whose reminiscing style tends to focus on moral behavior and the context of the larger community. As a result, American children produce longer, more detailed, self-focused narratives than their Asian counterparts. These differences may reflect the larger cultural emphasis on American individualism versus Asian collectivism.

Gender roles and expectations are also transmitted through storytelling. For example, parents tend to discuss emotions more with daughters than with sons. By the time they are school age, girls' stories contain more emotional content than do boys,' consistent with Western stereotypes of men as less emotional than women. Other work also suggests that peer storytelling, as well as parent–child storytelling, expresses and socializes conceptions of masculinity and femininity. Collectively, these variations (individual, cultural, and gendered) in storytelling have implications for variation in the way that individuals remember their past and conceive of themselves; this is the way in which storytelling creates a *self-in-relation*.

In summary, storytelling is a relatively new area of focus within the study of human relationships, but one that complements and extends many existing findings about the way relationships

develop and the way relationships influence individual development.

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See also Accounts; Communication Processes, Verbal; Discourse Analysis; Kinkeeping

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STRANGE SITUATION

The *Strange Situation* is a semistructured laboratory procedure for assessing individual differences in infant attachment security. It provides information about an infant's confidence in its caregiver's availability and responsiveness and about its skill at using the caregiver as a secure base from which to explore and as a haven of safety in naturalistic settings. Psychologist Mary Ainsworth (1913–1999) developed the Strange Situation procedure to illustrate the influence of context on infant attachment behavior and to measure individual differences in infants' attachment security. The procedure consists of eight brief episodes designed to simulate exploratory behavior and responses to separation and reunion that are part of an infant's everyday life. The Strange Situation is not a test of whether the infant or child is attached to the mother or of the "strength" of the

infant–caregiver bond. This entry discusses the background, procedure, scoring, and developmental significance of the Strange Situation.

Psychoanalysts were among the first to emphasize the importance of early experience on personality development. They tended to view the infant and young child as needy and dependent, seeking its mother as a means through which to reduce instinctual drives. Modern attachment theory (sometimes referred to as ethological attachment theory) stems from British psychoanalyst John Bowlby's important reformulation of this traditional view. He emphasized that infants and young children are both competent and inquisitive about their surroundings and that the hallmark of the child–parent bond is using the mother as a “secure base from which to explore.” Ainsworth worked closely with Bowlby in developing this perspective and grounding it in careful observations of infants and mothers in naturalistic settings. Reflecting this emphasis on naturalistic observation, they often described their work as an ethological attachment theory.

While a professor at Johns Hopkins University, Ainsworth, in 1962, undertook a detailed longitudinal study of 23 infant–mother dyads systematically observed in their homes from 3 weeks to 54 weeks of age. The Strange Situation procedure was developed as a semistandardized adjunct to the naturalistic observations made in this study. The goal was to confirm Bowlby's view that infants, instead of focusing primarily on internal drive states, are highly motivated to explore their environments and that confidence in the mother's availability and responsiveness makes her a valuable secure base from which to conduct such explorations, as well as a haven of safety to which the infant knows it can retreat when necessary.

The Strange Situation Procedure

The Strange Situation procedure consists of eight episodes: 1 minute to introduce mother and infant into the experimental room and then seven 3-minute test episodes. The entire procedure is recorded on videotape.

Episode 1 (Introduction to the room, 1 minute). Mother and baby enter the room. Mother sits on a chair. Baby plays with toys.

Episode 2 (Free play). Mother sits quietly. Mother responds to baby's bids for attention or interaction. This provides a baseline against which to compare baby's play in subsequent episodes.

Episode 3 (Stranger enters). Female research assistant enters and is seated on a chair. She sits quietly for 1 minute; she talks to mother for 1 minute and then begins to engage the baby. This episode provides a gentle introduction to the “stranger.” It provides an opportunity to observe the baby's interest in and style of approaching the new person. The stranger is not introduced in order to frighten the baby. Indeed, babies are less likely to cry when left with the stranger than when left alone.

Episode 4 (First separation). A knock on the wall signals mother to leave room. She is instructed to say “I'll be right back” and to leave in a manner familiar to the baby. Once she has left, she joins the experimenter observing the infant and stranger through a one-way window. Fewer than 50 percent of healthy home-reared infants cry in response to this separation. If the baby cries hard for a full minute, the episode is abbreviated.

Episode 5 (First reunion). Mother knocks on the door from outside, calls baby's name, and enters. She pauses just inside the door and extends her hands, offering the baby a chance to approach or be picked up. If the baby is crying, she can pick the baby up and comfort it as she would in other contexts. Many babies simply greet the mother across a distance, in which case she returns the greeting and returns to her chair. Once the reunion is established, the stranger leaves the room.

Episode 6 (Second separation). A knock on the wall signals mother to leave room as in the first separation. She exits and joins the experimenter observing the infant through the one-way window. Infant is alone. Approximately 50 percent of healthy home-reared infants cry in this episode. If the infant cries hard for a full minute, this episode is abbreviated. Importantly, crying is not an indicator of the infant's attachment behavior at home and is not the focus of Strange Situation scoring.

Episode 7 (Stranger enters). Stranger returns to the room. If the baby is playing, she sits quietly responding to bids for attention or interaction. If the baby is crying or seems distressed, she offers comfort in the form of holding, physical contact, soothing words,

or by offering toys. If the baby cannot be comforted, this episode is abbreviated. This episode provides an opportunity to observe the baby's preference for the mother as a source of comfort.

Episode 8 (Second reunion). Mother knocks on the door from outside, calls baby's name, and enters. She pauses just inside the door and extends her hands, offering the baby a chance to approach or be picked up. If the baby is crying, she can pick the baby up and comfort it as she would in ordinary contexts. Otherwise, she acknowledges any greeting and returns to her chair. She remains responsive to any bids for contact or interaction.

Normative and Individual Difference Results

Ainsworth examined both normative behavior averaged across the entire sample and individual differences in patterns of response. The normative results confirmed Bowlby's view that infant attachment behavior is characterized by a balance between exploration away from the mother and intermittent proximity and contact seeking. Instead of being controlled by the ebb and flow of internal drive states, infant behavior proved exquisitely sensitive to context. Exploration of the unfamiliar environment predominated when the mother was available. It declined dramatically in quantity and quality when she was absent. Although the stranger's presence often diminished distress, it rarely did so completely and rarely led to full recovery of active exploration. Mother's return elicited proximity and contact seeking, which in most cases promptly reduced distress and tipped the balance in favor of renewed exploration.

Patterns of Attachment

Overlaid on these normative patterns, Ainsworth noticed distinct patterns of individual differences. Infants who were most effective at using the mother as a secure base during Ainsworth's home observations (approximately 70 percent of the sample) actively explored the Strange Situation environment when mother was available, reduced play when she was absent, actively greeted or approached when she returned, and readily returned to active exploration. These infants were designated Group B (secure, confident in mother's

availability and responsiveness). The remaining infants, most of whom had been less effective in their secure base behavior at home, were designated insecure (less confident in mother's availability and responsiveness). They fell into two distinct patterns. Insecure-avoidant infants (Group A) may or may not have cried during the separation episodes, but were markedly avoidant of the mother during the first minute of the separation, ignoring her greeting, approaching her and then turning away, or playing distractedly with a toy while she tried to interact. Insecure-resistant/ambivalent infants (Group C) were in every case distressed by separation and yet responded with either anger or passivity, or both, when she returned, typically continuing to cry, falling limp when picked up, calming when held, and then struggling to be put down only to cry again without reaching for further contact. The validity of these classifications as indicators of the quality of the infant-mother bond is based on their links to secure base behavior at home. This link has been replicated in cross-cultural studies and is an important criterion when the Strange Situation is used in new populations.

Recent research on children at significant social or physiological risk for later developmental problems led to the discovery of a fourth, "disorganized" (Group D) pattern of Strange Situation behavior. Infants and young children in this group tend to behave inconsistently from episode to episode and often show "odd" behavior, such as freezing, odd postures, or other responses antithetical to secure base behavior during reunion episodes.

Validity

Infant attachment patterns are largely independent of infant temperament measures, and the fact that attachment classifications with mother and with father are not significantly correlated indicates that the Strange Situation assesses the child's relationship with the specific person who accompanied them in the Strange Situation, not a generalized personality trait or behavioral style of the infant. Numerous well-replicated studies have demonstrated that the ABCD patterns of attachment can be quite stable throughout childhood and are significantly related to analogous patterns

of insecure-dismissing, secure-coherent, insecure-preoccupied, and unresolved attachment assessed using the Adult Attachment Interview. Adult attachment classifications are, in turn, significantly related to secure base use and support in marriage, to important aspects of childrearing, and to care for elderly parents, as well as to personality structure and adjustment.

For observations in the Strange Situation to be useful, the infant must be at least 1 year old, an age at which most healthy home-reared infants have established a bond to one or a few primary caregivers, have good locomotor skills, and have achieved the level of object permanence necessary for mother's departure to be meaningful. The procedure can be conducted with toddlers up to 2 years of age and, with minor adaptations, with children as old as 5.

The Strange Situation is primarily a research tool. It provides useful information in research comparing one group of infants with another. Although proven useful for evaluating a variety of enrichment and intervention programs, it may not have the precision necessary for making clinical judgments or custody decisions about individual infants. In addition, both Bowlby and Ainsworth emphasized that expectations about a caregiver's availability and responsiveness are open to revision in light of experience throughout infancy and childhood. That early experience is often predictive of later development does not imply that early experience is destiny.

A 2002 survey of research child psychologists ranked Ainsworth's work with the Strange Situation third among the most revolutionary influences on modern child psychology.

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See also Attachment Theory; Attachment Typologies, Childhood; Parenting; Security in Relationships; Temperament

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STRESS AND RELATIONSHIPS

When considering the association between social relationships and health, scholars and lay people alike often think about the positive effects that close connections with others can have on psychological and physical well-being. However, relationships can be difficult to establish, conflict can arise, and dissolution can occur. Therefore, relationships come with potential costs; stressors can be ubiquitous in the context of interpersonal processes. For example, the lack of close personal bonds is a significant stressor for many individuals, leading to feelings of loneliness and social isolation. Not all close relationships are harmonious, and those characterized by conflict, criticism, or contempt can serve as a source of stress. Additionally, experiencing the dissolution of relationships through divorce or death is considered among the most stressful life events. Research in health psychology has demonstrated the wide range of negative effects that experiencing stressful situations can have on emotions, physiology, and mental and physical health. Therefore, understanding the role of stress in relationships can help elucidate not only the situations in which social ties can be beneficial, but also when they have negative health consequences. This entry describes the ways in which relationships can function as a source of stress, such as when social relationships are absent or deficient, when social relationships are conflictual, and when social relationships come to an end. These contexts can activate stress-related processes and lead to negative effects on psychological, physiological, and physical health.

Loneliness as a Stressor

Because the presence of social relationships confers a number of benefits, the lack of relationships may act as a stressor. *Loneliness* is a strong feeling of emptiness or social isolation. Lonely people often feel disconnected from others and may find it difficult to form social relationships.

Loneliness is associated with three factors that may influence disease: negative health behaviors (e.g., eating high-fat foods, smoking), insufficient bodily repair processes (e.g., sleep), and increased emotional and physiological reactivity to stressful events. However, the effects of these pathways on disease occur over a long period of time. For example, eating a single high-fat meal does not immediately increase one's risk for cardiovascular disease, but a consistent high-fat diet could have a cumulative negative impact over a prolonged period.

Social relationships may indirectly affect health by influencing lifestyle and health behaviors (e.g., exercising, cessation of smoking). Lonely individuals tend to engage in more health-compromising activities and behaviors than those who have more social relationships because they do not have as many people encouraging positive health behaviors (e.g., eating healthy foods, getting enough sleep) and discouraging the negative behaviors (e.g., restricting smoking and eating fatty foods). Loneliness may also influence normal restorative processes. For example, lonely individuals have poorer sleep efficiency, and during sleep, repair, restorative, and growth processes take place. Additionally, those who are deprived of sleep also experience more negative mood and impaired cognitive functioning. Finally, loneliness may also influence disease by affecting the ways in which people react to stressful situations. Repeated and frequent exposure to stressful situations may be beneficial to a point so that individuals can develop resistance to them, but excessive stress may leave individuals vulnerable to disease. For example, recurrent exposure to stress can create opportunities for people to develop coping strategies to deal with the stressors, but too much stress can be overwhelming and leave people susceptible to developing negative health behaviors or insufficient bodily repair processes, both of which can lead to disease. Having supportive social relationships may buffer individuals against this stress. For example, an

encouraging friend or partner when one is stressed may diminish physiological and emotional reactivity to the stressor.

Stressors Within Relationships

Although in some cases social relationships can provide invaluable resources that protect against stressors, close relationships can also be a source of stress; for example, disagreements and conflicts commonly arise among friends, family, and romantic partners, which can impair physiological functioning and health. A large body of laboratory research has shown that negative or non-supportive interactions with strangers, such as criticism or unhelpful support attempts, can lead to robust increases in stress hormones (e.g., cortisol) and cardiovascular indices (e.g., blood pressure, heart rate). Chronic experiences of conflict and/or consistent exposure to unsupportive others could therefore lead to repeated activation of these physiological systems, which can lead to negative health outcomes.

Other studies have examined physiological reactivity to conflict discussions within a close relationship, such as marriage. In these studies, couples are brought into the laboratory and asked to discuss an area of contention or a problem in their relationship. There is evidence that this type of conflict discussion affects couples physiologically. Couples that exhibited high levels of negative behavior had significantly greater elevations in stress hormones (e.g., cortisol) and decreases in immune system functioning (e.g., natural killer cell activity), compared with couples that had less negative behaviors during the discussion task. Other studies have found that couples that displayed more hostile behaviors took 60 percent longer to heal a wound compared with low-hostile couples; this suggests an association between relationships characterized by hostility and conflict and the *in vivo* functioning of the immune system, which could have profound implications for health. Interestingly, many studies have shown consistent gender differences: Women are more biologically reactive than men to negative marital interaction. The negative behaviors and biological changes exhibited by these couples contain important information

about the dynamics of the marital relationship. For example, research has shown that patterns of biological responses to conflict can predict couples' levels of marital satisfaction and even who gets divorced. Greater increases in adrenocorticotrophic hormone, which boosts the synthesis of cortisol in response to conflict, predicted more troubled relationships 10 years later, and larger elevations in epinephrine (a hormone reflecting sympathetic nervous system activity) during the conflict task predicted divorce 10 years later.

Marital conflict is not just a stressor for couples; it can also affect their children. Conflict in the home as well as harsh, cold parenting styles can lead to a variety of negative effects on children, which can alter their health trajectories. Early childhood environments can alter how one reacts to stressful situations and can predict mental and physical health outcomes over the life span. For example, adults who experienced cold, harsh, or neglectful parenting during childhood show altered physiological stress responses and are more likely to be diagnosed with depression and a wide range of physical health disorders.

Sometimes stressors may not stem from a relationship per se, but from situations faced by the couple, family, or social network. For example, dealing with a child's or spouse's chronic or terminal illness can be an extremely stressful and taxing activity and can have a profound effect on lives of the family, affecting health, economic, and social domains. Caregiving has been associated with higher rates of depression, declines in cognitive functioning, and greater incidence of disease. For example, caregivers reporting high levels of strain exhibit a 63 percent higher risk of mortality compared with noncaregiver controls. This could be due, in part, to changes in the immune system and stress-regulatory systems; a number of studies have shown that caregiving is associated with decreases in immune function and increases in stress-responsive markers.

End of Relationships

Relationship Dissolution

The end of a relationship is a stressor that may greatly affect individuals, both psychologically and physiologically. Few life events bring about

as much psychological distress as relationship dissolution. The process of marital dissolution cannot only increase the level of day-to-day conflict, but can simultaneously reduce the size of social support networks. Individuals may potentially lose the support of shared friends and family who are suddenly no longer part of their social circle. Indeed, compared with married individuals, those who are separated or divorced report experiencing greater levels of psychological stress symptoms such as anxiety, depression, and unhappiness. Separated and divorced individuals have an elevated risk for suicide, auto accidents, mental and physical illness, homicide, and mortality. Divorced individuals also experience significant changes in sleep patterns. One study found that people undergoing marital separation experienced less delta wave sleep (deep, slow wave sleep that is most restorative for the body) than those not experiencing this stressor. Additionally, people whose divorces remained unresolved at the study follow-up continued having lower delta wave sleep and shorter rapid eye movement sleep latency than participants whose divorces were finalized.

Certain resources may facilitate adjustment to divorce or buffer the effects of divorce. For example, people with strong social support networks (aside from their spouse) and high socioeconomic status (e.g., high levels of education and income) tend to adjust to divorce more easily than those lacking these resources. People with high levels of predivorce income are less likely to experience great economic adversities after divorce than their peers who have low levels of predivorce income. High levels of education may also buffer the effects of divorce on individuals, such that highly educated people may have developed successful coping skills through their educational opportunities or may utilize their education to find more lucrative employment opportunities after divorce. Thus, although relationship dissolution can bring about stress and negative feelings, personal resources may buffer against the harmful effects of relationship dissolution.

Bereavement

Experiencing the feelings of loss due to the death of a loved one, friend, or family member is

referred to as *bereavement*. Similar to those coping with relationship dissolution, bereaved individuals may experience other major life changes as well, including adapting to new roles in the family (e.g., becoming a primary caretaker), becoming the sole employed individual in the family, or relocating to a new city. These changes, coupled with bereavement, can make the grieving process stressful.

Bereavement has been shown to be associated with several biological changes. Widows and widowers show changes in sleep patterns and sleep efficiency, which can influence their mental and physical health. Bereavement from the sudden death of a healthy child has been associated with significant decreases in immune functioning. Likewise, some widows and widowers experience decreased immune functioning within the first 3 months following bereavement. Decreased immune functioning may leave bereaved individuals vulnerable to illness. As a result, the stress of losing a loved one can affect mental and physical health, resulting in, for example, increased rates of depression and greater susceptibility to illness.

Conclusion

Individuals can be negatively affected by feelings of loneliness and social isolation, disagreements within relationships, caregiving, and relationship dissolution. Despite the negative consequences that stressful relationships may have on the health of individuals, humans are resilient. For example, people may utilize different coping skills to handle daily and chronic stressors within the context of personal relationships. Much attention has been focused on the pathways in which positive relationships may confer health benefits. To fully understand how stress within relationships “gets under the skin” to affect physiological reactivity and health outcomes, the negative effects of stress must also be examined.

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See also Bereavement; Conflict, Marital; Dissolution of Relationships, Coping and Aftermath; Loneliness; Social Support and Health

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SUBSTANCE USE AND ABUSE IN RELATIONSHIPS

Substance use ranging from nicotine to alcohol to other drugs usually occurs in the context of interpersonal relationships. Even among those who abuse these substances, this activity is rarely solitary, but usually involves other people, including friends, intimate partners, and other family members. This entry discusses the selection of friends and intimate partners with similar substance use patterns and the influence by friends and partners on one's own substance use. The relationship between the use of these substances, particularly alcohol and illicit drugs, and the quality of and conflict within these relationships is also described.

In addressing these issues, the term *substance use* is used to describe use of tobacco, alcohol, or illicit

drugs. When any specific finding pertains primarily to one of these classes of substances, the specific classes are noted. The term *substance abuse* is used to denote the occurrence of social, interpersonal, and/or legal problems associated with the use of substances. Finally, the term *substance dependence* describes a pattern of substance use marked by excessive use, difficulties in quitting, perceived need for the substance, and physiological adaptations (tolerance, withdrawal symptoms).

It is useful to consider two broad issues: (1) the relationship between a person's substance use and the substance use of those in one's social network and (2) the relationship between substance use and the nature/quality of those relationships.

Substance Use and the Social Network

There is often substantial similarity between an individual's substance use and the use by his or her friends and intimate partners. There are two broad explanations for this similarity: influence and selection. Influence refers to substance-using friends and partners leading the individual to change his or her substance use. This may involve peer pressure, in which peers actively encourage substance use, although this is not as common as one might expect. However, influence may encompass other processes, such as associating with peers who use substances, which may lead to changes in norms or expectations about these substances. Influence may also occur because some adolescents view a substance user in a positive light and may use substances to be like that person or because they believe they will be more accepted by their peer group. It is important to recognize that influence may decrease use, rather than only increase use. The second broad explanation—selection—suggests that similarity exists because individuals choose to affiliate with similar types of individuals. Selection may not necessarily be based on substance use per se, but may be based on other risk factors associated with substance use, such as sensation-seeking or tolerance of deviance.

Peer and Own Use of Substances in Adolescence

Much of the early research demonstrating similarity in substance use with peers was interpreted as

peer influence. In the mid-1980s, researchers argued that the impact of peer selection had been underestimated. They noted that research was cross-sectional and could be interpreted as peer selection or peer influence. They also noted that research usually assessed the participant's perception of the peers' substance use, rather than a direct assessment of the peers. Consequently, it was argued that some of the similarity with peers' substance use may have been due to "assumed similarity," in which the adolescent's substance use influenced the perception that his or her peers were using substances.

Throughout the past 20 years, there have been numerous longitudinal studies of adolescent substance use addressing both of these issues. Although some studies have found evidence only for selection or only for influence, most studies have concluded that both processes are important. More recent research has attempted to identify the nature of these processes more precisely. One key point is whether there are factors that increase an individual's susceptibility to select or to be influenced by substance-using friends. In general, adolescents who do not value conventional behavior or who are tolerant of deviant behavior appear to be more likely to select deviant friends and more likely to be influenced by these friends to use substances. In addition, peer influence is strongest among close friends or best friends and is weaker among acquaintances or relationships with high levels of conflict. Adolescents can also be influenced by their sibling and their siblings' friends. Although romantic partners become important in adolescence, there is little research examining their impact on substance use. Finally, although peer substance use is an important influence on adolescent substance use, these effects can be minimized by warm parent-child relationships and parental monitoring of the adolescent's activities and friends.

Peer and Own Use in Adults

Although studies of college populations have examined peers and peer norms, only a few longitudinal studies have examined influence or selection, mostly focused on the transition to college. Similar to adolescence, there is evidence that heavy drinking college students select peers with similar levels of drinking. This occurs with respect to new

friends, but also with respect to becoming involved in the Greek system. For example, individuals who drink heavily before college are more likely to become involved with a college fraternity/sorority than light drinkers. Additionally, involvement with fraternities and sororities is associated with increased drinking and alcohol problems. Finally, particularly in the college years, individuals begin to develop “drinking buddies” (i.e., individuals who get together primarily for drinking and drinking-related activities), and these drinking buddies have an additional influence on drinking independent of the overall effect of the social network.

Studies of adults after college, although uncommon, have also found evidence for both influence and selection effects. However, one issue arising in adulthood that is not typically examined among adolescents is the role of an intimate partner. Considerable research documents that couples have similar patterns of substance use at the time of marriage. Although this is sometimes viewed as evidence that individuals select similar partners, a process called assortative mating, it may also reflect partner influence prior to marriage. However, there have been findings that married couples report similar histories of substance use in adolescence before they met or began dating, supporting an assortative mating explanation.

Research also supports an influence process among intimate partners. Studies of newlyweds have found that women, but not men, are influenced by their partners’ drinking over the transition to marriage, and that this effect is stronger among women with strong dependency needs. However, after the first year of marriage, both husbands and wives appear to influence each other. Partner influence has also been documented for tobacco and marijuana use. Finally, one may wonder who has the greater influence on substance use, intimate partners or peers. At this time, there is no clear answer to this question. The few available studies suggest that intimate partners and peers both have an influence, and it may be necessary to consider the quality of the relationships.

Partner and Peer Influence After Substance Abuse Treatment

Friends and family members who use substances can influence the outcomes of treatment for

individuals with substance dependence. Because substance use by individuals with substance dependence is typically viewed as biologically driven, the impact of social influence has often been overlooked. Findings across all substances indicate that the presence of individuals in the social network who utilize the specific substance facilitates relapse after treatment. Research has not addressed the reasons for this, but it is likely due, in part, to the availability of and exposure to substances that such individuals would provide. Conversely, the emotional support provided by nonusers in the network may help the individual with temptations to relapse. In addition, peer and partner use are associated with change in substance abuse for substance-dependent men and women, and even among dependent individuals who do not seek treatment. Support for abstinence in the social network is predictive of posttreatment sobriety and is one of the factors responsible for the effectiveness of self-help groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous.

Relationship Functioning and Substance Use/Abuse

The Impact of Relationship Quality on Substance Use

Excessive drinking declines among individuals as they become engaged to marry and transition into marriage, likely in response to changes in social/recreational activities and normative views about drinking after marriage. Similar findings have been reported with respect to illicit drug use, but not with respect to tobacco use. The transition to marriage is protective even for those with significant alcohol problems. In a parallel manner, divorce is associated with increased drinking and alcohol-related problems. The one exception may be among those who divorce a partner with an alcohol problem.

The quality of the intimate relationship may also influence substance use, although most of the research focuses on alcohol. Marital satisfaction is protective against alcohol problems in longitudinal studies of the early years of marriage. However, the strongest evidence is seen among alcoholics in treatment. Long-term prognosis after alcohol treatment is enhanced if the alcoholic reports high marital satisfaction. This has led to the coupling of

marital therapy with substance abuse treatment to improve therapy outcomes, and research has supported this coupling.

The Impact of Substance Use/Abuse on Relationship Functioning

Violence

Substantial evidence links substance use/abuse to violence within intimate relationships. This evidence is strongest for alcohol, having been observed in clinical samples, general population samples, and other community samples. Meta-analyses of this literature suggest that the risk of violence among moderate to heavy drinkers is twice that of nondrinkers and light drinkers, but there is also evidence that the risk for violence increases dramatically among frequent binge drinkers (having five or more drinks at one time at least once a week). Women's drinking and their experiences as victims or perpetrators of partner violence have also been linked in several studies, although some studies have failed to find a relationship after controlling for the partner's drinking. Moreover, there is some evidence that the configuration of a couple's drinking patterns is an important predictor of violence, with high rates occurring among couples in which one member is a heavy drinker and the other member is not.

The few studies of illicit drug use also indicate a relationship between drug use and partner violence. However, when other factors such as alcohol use and partner's use of drugs or alcohol are controlled, the relationship between an individual's illicit drug use and partner violence is not always significant.

Relationship Quality

Heavy drinking is often one of the reasons given for divorce, is a common source of disagreements among couples in marital therapy, and is often associated with marital unhappiness. The literature on the impact of illicit drug use on relationships is considerably smaller. There have been contradictory findings with respect to marijuana use, but there have been studies linking illicit drug use to separations and divorce. Although there is no doubt that heavy drinking and drug use have a causal influence on marital unhappiness and divorce, the

nature and strength of that causal influence is not clear for several reasons. For example, heavy drinkers and drug users often have other disorders such as antisocial personality and depression that correlate with marital satisfaction. Also, few longitudinal studies have examined this issue, and the results are not entirely consistent. Similar to partner violence research, some research suggests that discrepant drinking patterns and discrepant drug use are related to marital satisfaction and divorce.

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See also Abuse and Violence in Relationships; Alcoholism, Effects on Relationships; Interpersonal Influence; Marriage and Health; Socialization, Role of Peers

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SUICIDE AND RELATIONSHIPS

Suicide refers to deliberate self-harm eventuating in death. Historically, suicide, attempted suicide, and deliberate self-harm have been conflated in

the psychological literature, which has emphasized motives. Examples include Sigmund Freud's concept of the death instinct, Karl Menninger's search for the common motivational themes driving all health-damaging behaviors (e.g., alcoholism, attempted suicide), and, in more recent years, Roy Baumeister's assertion that the distinction between attempted suicide and suicide was "tangential" to the focus on motives. By conflating death by suicide with self-harm behavior, scholars may illuminate motivational issues, but at the risk of reaching inaccurate conclusions that could misdirect treatment and prevention efforts. This entry focuses on the epidemiology of suicide and on clinical considerations.

Epidemiology of Suicide

The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that 1 million lives are lost to suicide worldwide on an annual basis. Once the province of religion and then the law, suicide has been recast as a public health problem. The U.S. Congress passed resolutions in 1997 and 1998 declaring suicide a national problem, and a U.S. National Suicide Prevention Strategy was released in 2001. These initiatives have resulted in an exponential increase in the quantity and quality of research worldwide.

Geographical Differences in Suicide Rates

Rates of suicide differ markedly across the globe. Ever since Émile Durkheim's 1891 seminal publication *Suicide: A Study in Sociology* established the field of Suicidology, Eastern Europe has shown the highest rates of suicide worldwide. Today, suicide rates remain relatively high in Eurasia (13 deaths per 100,000 population members), more moderate in North America and Oceania (6.5–13 deaths per 100,000), and low in Central and South America (less than 6.5 deaths per 100,000). The global quality of surveillance systems differs dramatically; little data are available for much of the African continent.

In the United States, the Mid-Atlantic and New England states have suicide rates nearly half those of the Mountain states. Regional differences may be partly due to religious practice and denomination, ethnicity, availability of firearms, geographic

isolation, degree of community cohesiveness or social capital, and access to mental health care.

Age, Sex, and Race Differences

Older adults have among the highest rates of suicide worldwide. The "gender paradox of suicide" describes the fact that, in most countries worldwide, women more commonly attempt suicide and yet men more commonly die by suicide. The exception is China; women have higher suicide rates than men in that country largely due to the high rates of suicide among young women in rural areas. Numerous explanations have been offered for the sex difference in suicide rates, including speculation about sex differences in socialization, social integration, attitudes toward receiving mental health care for emotional difficulties, and interactions with primary care physicians and other health care providers.

In the United States, suicide rates for men increase with age, but women's rates peak in midlife and remain stable or decline slightly thereafter. Middle-age men account for the majority of suicide deaths. Whites have higher rates than Blacks across the life span. White men more than 85 years of age have suicide rates nearly six times the nation's age-adjusted rate.

Marital Status and Living Arrangements

Durkheim reported higher suicide rates for single, divorced, or widowed people than for married people. More than a century later, this is still true in most countries worldwide. Widowhood may be a more potent suicide risk factor in younger versus older adults, given that it is off-time and thus an unexpected event in young adulthood. Little is known about the protective effects of remarriage following divorce or widowhood. Data suggest that living alone may confer increased risk for suicide perhaps due to social isolation, loneliness, and lack of encouragement to seek treatment for physical and emotional problems. Conversely, relationship conflict with spouses, children, and others may increase the risk for suicide.

Socioeconomic Status

Media accounts of suicides by writers (Ernest Hemingway, Sylvia Plath, Hunter S. Thompson),

artists (Vincent Van Gogh), musicians (Kurt Cobain), and business moguls (George Eastman) might lead some to believe that suicide is more prevalent among those with greater status. In reality, suicide knows no economic boundaries, and rates are higher among those with lower incomes and lower levels of education. The economically disadvantaged typically have poorer access to quality health care and less mental health literacy, and they are more likely to encounter stigma toward mental health care and chronic exposure to life stressors and strains.

Clinical Considerations

Clinical suicide prevention initiatives typically hinge on accurate risk identification and timely care provision. The statistical rarity of suicide precludes prediction of individual deaths by suicide.

Clinical Risk Markers

Recognizing that few studies have been conducted with sufficient rigor to conclude that any putative risk marker is a truly independent risk factor, a brief summary of the current state of knowledge is as follows.

Mental Illness. Most people who die by suicide have an active mental illness at the time of death. Mood disorders, even those that are relatively mild, have been shown to confer suicide risk, as do psychotic disorders, especially schizophrenia. Personality disorders, particularly borderline personality disorder, antisocial personality disorder, and avoidant personality disorder, also confer risk.

Substance Misuse. People who struggle with alcoholism are at greater risk. The same is true for people who abuse or are dependent on other substances, including cocaine and heroin. Interestingly, alcoholics who die by suicide are more likely than others who die by suicide to have been involved in a conflictual relationship prior to death. People with histories of alcoholism but who are currently sober might also be at elevated risk.

Life Events Stressors. Relationship issues lay at the heart of most events that drive suicide risk. Family discord, relationship conflict and disruption,

bereavement, and exposure to humiliating events are important risk markers. Financial stressors also drive risk, in part, because monetary concerns can cause family problems.

Physical Illness and Functional Limitations. Cancer, neurological disease, chronic lung disease, visual impairment, physical incapacity, and pain all elevate suicide risk. Relationships are often key to understanding suicide risk in physically ill people, as some patients may choose suicide because they fear they have become too much of a burden on family members or friends. This may be especially true among older adults.

Prior Suicidal Behavior. Prior suicide attempts, the extent to which prior attempts were planned or impulsive, lethality of prior suicide attempts, and chronic or acute suicide ideation and/or a wish to die are all important risk markers and warrant careful assessment.

Resiliency and Protective Factors

Degree of religious conviction mitigates suicide risk. Durkheim opined that the lower risk groups experienced greater social cohesion and greater religious commitment. Alternative explanations include religious proscriptions against both suicide and excessive alcohol consumption. Nonetheless, even individuals who regularly engage in religious practice might be at risk for suicide, particularly if their religious community involvement is minimal or if their faith community is relatively small or peripheral or discourages mental health treatment. Some individuals turn to religion when in emotional distress. Although religious practice can help inspire hope, it is rarely sufficient on its own to eliminate risk for suicide. Increasing social integration and belongingness may bolster resiliency, as might enhancing one's sense of hope, purpose, and meaning in life.

Clinical Interventions

Treatments for mood disorders, schizophrenia, or substance use disorders are now considered vital components of suicide prevention efforts. Suicide in alcoholism is known to be preceded by relationship

disruptions. Interventions focusing on alleviating or reconciling relationship conflict can help reduce suicide risk, as can those focusing on alleviating perceived burdensomeness on others due to physical, financial, and/or psychological impairment.

Service Delivery Parameters

Suicide risk among adults hospitalized for a mental disorder is high during initial hospital admission and transfer between hospital units or services and after discharge. Suicide risk may be increased by poor continuity of care; discharge stress; aborted or otherwise incomplete treatment; return to a dysfunctional, conflict-laden, or highly emotive family environment; and the tendency of some patients to conceal their suicide plans to care providers in order to facilitate prompt discharge. Poor communication among treatment providers has been shown to contribute to suicide in outpatients. Poorly integrated health care delivery systems, in valuing technical procedures over personal relationships, may unwittingly enhance mortality risk.

Survivor Issues

Suicide is often a solitary act, but family and friends are almost always left behind to grieve and try to make sense of the loss. Social support after any type of loss appears to be a crucial factor after loss, and this may be especially true of suicide. Grassroots networks of survivors have developed worldwide and are important support resources.

Need for Prevention and Treatment

Interventions have been developed that specifically target individuals with one or more risk factors and/or lacking in resiliency. However, this classic clinical research strategy, although potentially effective with patients engaged in the health care system, is not foolproof: It fails to reach individuals outside the system. Many at-risk individuals do not avail themselves of treatment, and few treatments are tailored to individual needs and preferences, threatening adherence to care. Public health prevention programs could indirectly reduce suicide rates by modifying attitudes about mental health treatment, shifting cultural norms concerning the acceptability of suicide, restricting access to

firearms and other lethal means, and increasing mental health literacy and health-promoting behavior. However, some so-called universal interventions, such as screening for suicide risk and firearm control, will not reach all at-risk individuals. Of course, the long-term goal is not to bring the suicide rate down to zero, an unrealistic goal in a free society, but rather to do whatever can be done to protect at-risk individuals from the belief that suicide is their only option. This will require better treatments *and* better prevention programs, targeting individuals, families, and communities.

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See also Depression and Relationships; Mental Health and Relationships; Psychopathology, Influence on Family Members; Social Support and Health; Substance Use and Abuse in Relationships

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SURVEY METHODS IN RELATIONSHIP RESEARCH

Survey methods are among the most popular approaches used by researchers to study human relationships. Survey methods refer to a type of research in which data are collected from a sample drawn from a population through the use of a questionnaire. Surveys entail asking questions of respondents directly, either orally or in writing. Beginning with a set of objectives, researchers using survey methods make decisions regarding the study design, the sample, the questions to be asked, and the survey mode to maximize their ability to answer research questions and minimize the cost of the study. In this entry, we review these

decisions and provide examples to show how relationship researchers use surveys effectively to address important relationship topics.

Survey Study Design

There are two standard survey designs that will be reviewed in this section: cross-sectional and panel. *Cross-sectional surveys* entail collecting data from a sample at a single point in time. Although researchers are not able to study change over time when using a cross-sectional design, they are able to examine the associations between variables at a given time. Cross-sectional surveys are often used by relationship researchers because they are a cost-effective way to fulfill research objectives. For example, sometimes relationship researchers are interested in knowing the association between two variables at a given time (e.g., how the current level of perceived need fulfillment is associated with the current level of satisfaction with a relationship). In such cases, cross-sectional designs are preferred because they provide data relevant to a researcher's hypotheses at minimal cost and effort.

However, there are many instances when researchers are interested in how a relationship changes over time. In such instances, panel surveys are used. *Panel surveys* are a type of longitudinal study in which the same respondents are asked questions at two or more time periods. Researchers using panel surveys are able to examine how changes in one variable over time are associated with changes in another variable (or variables). Thus, panel studies may provide researchers with some insight regarding the influence of one variable on another (although it must be noted that only an experiment, properly conducted, has the possibility of yielding definitive causal information). It is also possible to examine the stability versus change of variables over time with panel surveys. Panel surveys have the disadvantage of relying on respondents to answer questions at more than one time point. Although many people are willing to participate in one cross-sectional survey, fewer are willing to commit to participating in multiple surveys without some incentive (e.g., cash payment). In addition, it can be difficult to retain people in a study if they have moved away from the original site of the investigation or if their relationship has

ended or taken a negative turn. Moreover, panel survey respondents may become aware of what is being studied after participating in the initial survey, and this awareness may influence their responses to subsequent surveys.

Once a study design is selected, researchers must decide from whom they will attempt to collect data by selecting a sample.

Survey Sample Selection

There are two broad approaches to selecting a sample for a survey. First, one may collect data from a *probability sample*, in which each individual in the population of interest has an equal, nonzero chance of being selected. This sampling approach has many advantages. The most pronounced advantage is that findings can be generalized to the entire population from which the sample was drawn. However, a major disadvantage is that it requires full knowledge of and access to a population, which can be quite difficult and resource-intensive. Imagine a relationship researcher who was interested in studying conflict styles in married couples around the world. To have a true probability sample, the researcher would have to ensure that every married couple in the world had an equal, nonzero chance of being sampled. For some research objectives, attempting to survey the entire population may be necessary (e.g., a government agency seeking definitive information on marital divorce rates over time). However, there are many instances in which research objectives do not require such generalizability, especially when theory building is the primary goal of a study. There is a less resource-intensive option for those instances: the nonprobability sample.

A *nonprobability sample* is not randomly drawn from the population as a whole. Moreover, some members of the population have zero chance of being selected. For example, a researcher may choose to select students who are enrolled in an undergraduate course at his or her home institution as respondents. People who are not in that course have no chance of being selected to participate. This is often referred to as a convenience sample because it is selected out of convenience to the researcher. The major limitation of using a

nonprobability sample is that the results cannot be generalized to an entire population. Often researchers make the decision to use a nonprobability sample because the objective of their survey does not require a probability sample (e.g., hypothesis testing). For example, survey research by Christopher Agnew and colleagues involving a nonprobability sample of undergraduate college students found that those who reported that they were highly committed to their relationship partner also tended to think about their relationship in more pluralistic ways (e.g., they wrote sentences about their relationship featuring a greater use of plural as opposed to singular pronouns). This finding was consistent with the researchers' hypotheses concerning how people involved in committed relationships think about their partners. Although the finding cannot be generalized to the entire population, such hypothesis testing does not require a probability sample.

Survey Questions

After selecting the survey design and the sample, researchers must develop their questions. The questions may be combined to form a written questionnaire or an oral interview guide. Research objectives guide this stage of survey research in terms of which questions to ask and in which form to ask them. A major advantage to survey studies is that all respondents may be presented with identical instructions and questions, meaning that any differences observed among answers result from actual differences in respondents. Of course, this advantage is realized only when questions are worded unambiguously and all respondents understand them. For this reason, researchers should present questions to respondents in ways that are short and simple to ensure comprehension of the questions and to minimize any fatigue respondents may feel in answering the questions. Researchers also should try to avoid jargon specific to their field (unless required and explicitly defined), so that each respondent is not put in the position of having to interpret question meaning. Fortunately, many constructs of interest to relationship researchers (such as equity, love, and commitment) can be measured reliably with scales containing questions that have been

developed and validated by researchers in previous research.

In addition to selecting questions, researchers must also decide on the response options available to respondents. Some surveys feature open-ended responses, some feature closed-ended responses, and others feature both kinds. An *open-ended response* allows respondents to answer a question in their own words, whereas a *closed-ended response* requires respondents to choose from pre-selected options. When delving into a new area of research, researchers often start with open-ended questions to help them get a sense of the kinds of answers that respondents generate without prompting from the researcher. One example is a study of forgiveness conducted by Jill Kearns and Frank Fincham. Out of a desire to incorporate how "regular" (or lay) people think of forgiveness with how researchers conceptualize it, Kearns and Fincham asked respondents to list what attributes they thought of when they think of "forgiveness." From 208 respondents, 477 separate attributes of forgiveness were generated. This scenario points to one disadvantage of open-ended responses: Although they do provide a richness of information about a topic, they can be unwieldy to analyze. It is often preferred to offer closed-ended response options, particularly when a researcher is testing a specific hypothesized association between variables.

In developing closed-ended response options, researchers must decide, if using a response rating scale, which words to use as response scale anchors (e.g., *good-bad* or *strongly agree-strongly disagree*). Research indicates that respondents, when fatigued, not paying attention, or confused, are more likely to agree than disagree and to say something is good rather than bad. To ensure that this does not taint data, researchers typically ask more than one question about a given construct and average the responses across a given variable. In addition, including some questions that are worded as opposites of others (called item reversals) is standard procedure. One example of this is the commitment subscale of the Investment Model Scale (IMS), crafted by Caryl Rusbult, John Martz, and Christopher Agnew. Instead of asking one question to assess relationship commitment level, the IMS asks seven questions and averages the responses to create a measure of general commitment level.

Of the seven items, five are written as positive indicators of commitment (e.g., “I want our relationship to last a very long time”), and two are item reversals (e.g., “I would not feel very upset if our relationship were to end in the near future”).

An additional consideration that researchers make when constructing survey questions involves attempting to control for possible response bias. For example, it may be embarrassing for a person to admit that he or she is involved in a physically abusive relationship. Whether this is due to the fact that individuals may deceive themselves and others about negative aspects of their relationships or because people prefer to respond in socially desirable ways, it is important to assess because it poses a problem for the validity of survey data. Various survey instruments, such as Timothy Loving and Christopher Agnew’s Inventory of Desirable Responding in Relationships, can be administered so that those respondents prone to answering in socially desirable ways can be identified. However, as previously discussed, additional survey questions may increase respondent fatigue, which reduces the quality of responses, so additional measures should only be included if the researcher believes that the potential for socially desirable responding is high.

Survey Mode

Finally, a decision must be made concerning the mode in which the survey will be administered. The most common modes are interview and self-administered. Interviews are usually conducted on the telephone or face to face. Both afford the advantage of being able to probe incomplete or ambiguous answers to open-ended questions. Interviews also have the advantage of being used to collect data from populations that cannot read or write or may need additional explanation regarding survey questions. One disadvantage to interviews is that they can be expensive to conduct.

A less costly option is the self-administered mode, which includes paper-and-pencil and online surveys. Self-administered surveys are an excellent option if the questions being asked are sensitive in nature because respondents may be disinclined to share private information with an interviewer. Paper-and-pencil surveys can be mailed to potential

respondents, but the process of mailing surveys, waiting for responses, and sending follow-up mailings can take considerable time. A newer (and generally much faster) self-administered option is the Internet survey. Internet surveys can reduce the cost of sampling a large, diverse population, and they are more flexible than traditional paper-and-pencil surveys as they allow for question branching (i.e., certain questions can be asked only of some respondents depending on their previous responses). Internet surveys do not require human transcription unlike some other modes, making them potentially less error prone. However, the sample derived from an Internet survey is limited to those who have access to and use the Internet. Furthermore, Internet surveys typically have high rate of drop-outs (e.g., respondents who begin a survey but do not complete it), which potentially introduces self-selection biases to the data.

Conclusion

Survey methods are commonly used in human relationship research. Researchers make decisions regarding survey design, sample, questions, and mode to maximize their ability to meet the objectives of their study and to minimize associated costs. When properly designed and executed, a survey can yield information that answers a broad range of research questions. For that reason, they represent one of the most popular research methods used to study relationships.

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See also Developmental Designs; Experimental Designs for Relationship Research; Peer Report Methods; Qualitative Methods in Relationship Research; Quantitative Methods in Relationship Research; Questionnaires, Design and Use of, in Relationship Research

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SYMBOLIC INTERACTION THEORIES

Symbolic interactionism is a sociological perspective on social life based on the ideas of George H. Mead and other pragmatists in the early 20th century. It is a broad theoretical perspective that has spawned a number of important variations and some specific theories. This entry reviews the main features of symbolic interactionism, identifies the major variations and theories associated with this perspective, and briefly discusses some of the research on interpersonal relations generated by symbolic interaction theories.

The basic premise of symbolic interactionism is that human life is inherently social and symbolic. As the label *symbolic interactionism* suggests, the key elements of this theoretical perspective are the importance of social interaction and symbolic communication. Human language is comprised of symbols, culturally derived social objects having shared meanings that are created and maintained in social interaction. Symbol-based communication is a qualitative evolutionary leap from sign-based communication, characteristic of other social animals (e.g., bees, wolves). Much of what we consider essentially human—mind, self, society, culture—emerges from and is dependent on symbolic interaction for its existence.

Importance of Meanings

The label *symbolic interactionism* was coined by Herbert Blumer, one of Mead's students who did much to shape this perspective by developing one of its main variants, the "Chicago School" of

interactionism. Blumer's guiding premise is that humans act toward things and people on the basis of meanings. The focus here is on *meaning*, which is defined in terms of action and its consequences. The meanings of things and relationships are likely to vary from person to person and over time. However, the meanings we associate with the symbols we use in communication depend on some degree of consensus between two or more persons. The meaning of the word *wife*, for example, depends on the consensual responses of those who use it. If consensus is high, the meaning of a symbol is clear; if consensus is low, the meaning is ambiguous and communication is problematic. Within a culture, there is general consensus on the meanings associated with various words or symbols. However, in practice, the meanings of things are highly variable (especially for abstract terms such as *love*, *equality*, and *justice*) and depend on processes of interpretation and negotiation.

The interpretive process entails what Mead called *role taking*, which is the cognitive ability to take the perspective of another. It is a critical process in communication because it enables actors to interpret one another's responses, thereby facilitating greater consensus on the meanings of the symbols used. But the determination of meanings within a specific interaction also depends on negotiation—that is, on mutual adjustments and accommodations of actors. Role taking or perspective taking is the cognitive process that enables persons to take each other's perspectives into account in negotiating meaning. It is important to note that power relations are relevant to this process. In interactions between subordinate and superordinate (say, between a boss and an employee), the subordinate in a relationship tends to be better at role taking the superordinate than the reverse because the subordinate is under greater pressure to adjust and accommodate in this relationship than is the superordinate. However, for meaningful communication to take place, both (all) interactants must engage in role taking to some degree.

Definition of the Situation

The importance of meaning is reflected in W. I. Thomas' famous statement: "If situations are defined as real, they are real in their consequences."

The *definition of the situation* states that people act in situations on the basis of how they define the situation and its various components. For example, whether the situation is defined as “playful” or “dangerous” will matter for our actions. Definitions, even when at variance with “objective” reality, have real consequences for people’s actions and events. Whether dragons, angels, or witches actually exist is less important in a situation than people’s beliefs in their existence because our actions will be guided by our beliefs.

Defining a situation is not a static process. An initial definition based on past experiences or cultural expectations may be revised in the course of interaction. For example, an initially festive situation (such as a birthday party) may turn somber, a serious situation may become humorous, or a business relationship may become romantic. As the overall definition of the situation changes, so do the relevant identities of the people involved (*friend* may become *enemy*, *brother* may become *competitor*).

Much of the negotiation in social situations entails an attempt to present the self in a favorable light or to defend a valued identity. Erving Goffman’s insightful analyses of impression management, staging operations, use of deference and demeanor, as well as research by Terri Orbuch and other symbolic interactionists on the use of excuses, motives, justifications, and accounts, speak to the intricacies involved in situational definitions. Here as well, disparities in power and status affect whose definition of the situation is more likely to prevail.

The presentation of identities is an important aspect of defining situations. The determination of who we are (e.g., which identity to present) and who we think the other or others are in the situation is highly relevant to the interaction that will take place. In formal or highly structured situations, the determination of relevant identities may not be problematic or contested (e.g., “teacher” and “student” are typically considered highly relevant in classroom situations). But even in such formal situations, other identities come into play that might be more problematic (e.g., *strict teacher*, *unfair teacher*, *good student*, *lazy student*, *troublemaker*), and these may be further qualified by age, gender, and racial identities. In less formal situations, such as families and friendship groups, identity dynamics are even more

complex. For example, in a conflict situation between a husband and wife, it might not be clear as to which identities are being invoked, that of spouse, parent, or personal identities. Even if the situation starts with one set of identities, it could easily shift to other identities for one or the other person.

The identity presented in a situation is not necessarily the same as the identity assigned by others in the situation. For that matter, some situations generate skepticism about the identities presented (e.g., the *honest salesman* in a used car lot). Deviant identities are often products of this type of negative labeling (e.g., *bad kid*, *delinquent*, *pervert*). This process of imputation, in combination with interactionist ideas about self-concept formation, is the basis of the *labeling theory* of deviance (discussed next).

Self, Self-Concept, and Identity

Along with symbol, meaning, and interaction, the *self* is a foundational concept in symbolic interactionism. The essential feature of the self is that it is a reflexive phenomenon characterized by the interplay of the “I” and the “me,” the subjective and objective aspects of the self. Reflexivity enables humans to act toward themselves as objects (i.e., to reflect on themselves, argue with themselves, evaluate themselves, etc.). This human attribute (although gorillas, chimpanzees, and other social animals also show some indication of self-awareness) is based on the social character of human language and the ability to role take. Reflexivity and role taking enable persons to see themselves from the perspective of another and thereby to form a conception of themselves—a self-concept. The *self-concept* consists of the totality of our thoughts and feelings about ourselves and who we are, who we were, or who we aspire to be.

Much of the content of our self-concepts consists of identities. *Identity* refers to who one is, to the various meanings attached to oneself by self and others. For symbolic interactionists, there are several important types of identity: identities based on role relationships (e.g., professor, father), group memberships (American, Libertarian), values and character traits (environmentalist, honest person), physical characteristics (out of shape), and personal identity based on one’s name and biographical self.

Identities based on social roles and group memberships have received the most research attention. They are considered important because they situate persons in social space by virtue of the social relationships that they imply. These identities are not only important components of people's self-concepts, but they are also part of the public domain that structures social interaction.

Selves and self-concepts emerge from and are maintained in social interaction. The importance of others in the formation of self-concepts is captured in Charles Cooley's influential concept *the looking-glass self*. Using the metaphor of a mirror, Cooley proposed that individuals come to see themselves as they think others see them. For example, how a son thinks his father sees him affects how the son sees himself. This process is also called *reflected appraisals* and is the main process emphasized in the development of selves and identities. It is part of the more general process of *socialization*, which deals with the development of persons and the transmission of culture.

A major theme in the interactionist conception of self-concept is that the content of self-concepts reflects the content and organization of society. This is most apparent with regard to the roles that are internalized as role identities (e.g., *mother*, *student*). Roles, as behavioral expectations associated with a status within a set of relationships, constitute a major link between social and personal organization. Much of socialization, particularly during childhood, involves learning social roles and associated values, attitudes, and beliefs. Initially, this takes place in the family (e.g., parent-child relationships) and then later in larger arenas of the individual's social world (e.g., friendships and romantic relationships).

For symbolic interactionists, socialization is not a passive process of role learning and conformity to other's expectations. The self is highly active and selective, having a major influence on its environment and itself. Consequently, when people play roles, role making often is as evident as role learning. In role making, individuals actively construct, interpret, and uniquely express their roles. When they perceive an incongruity between a role imposed on them and some valued aspect of their self-conception, they may engage in role distance, the disassociation of self from role. The self is an active agent even in its own socialization.

Varieties and Theories of Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic interactionism has several major varieties and a number of specific theories. Although symbolic interactionists share the belief that humans rely on shared symbols to construct their realities, and the methodological requirement that to understand human behavior the researcher must "get inside" the reality of the actor, there are substantial divisions within this perspective. The main division is between those who emphasize process and those who emphasize structure in studying human realities. The former, associated with Herbert Blumer and the "Chicago School," advocates the use of qualitative methods in studying the process of reality construction within natural social settings. The latter, the structural version, is associated with Manford Kuhn and the "Iowa School." Structural symbolic interactionism advocates the use of quantitative methods in studying the products of social interaction, especially self-concepts. The differences between these two "schools" of symbolic interactionism reflect the fundamental division in the social sciences between humanistic/interpretive orientations, which align with history and the humanities, and positivistic/nomothetic orientations, which align with the physical sciences.

A third important variation, somewhat closer to the Chicago School than the Iowa School, is Erving Goffman's dramaturgical perspective on social life. Goffman's guiding metaphor of social life is the theater, in which actors are performers on the stage of life. Social situations are viewed as analogous to theatrical productions. Goffman shows us how our attempts to construct realities are not much different from the reality construction efforts in a theater or play. Not surprisingly, the dramaturgical perspective has been frequently used in studies of dating, courtship, and other situations where making a "good impression" is important.

Symbolic interactionism (SI) has generated a number of more specific theories, some more closely aligned with one or another of the three major variations. These theories tend to be more limited in scope than the "schools" described earlier, and they tend to focus on a particular concept or process important to SI. The most prominent of these are role theory, labeling theory, and several types of self-theory.

Role theory emphasizes the importance of social roles in organizing and explaining social interaction, and it has generated considerable research on such topics as how persons are socialized into specific roles and how the meanings and content of roles such as *husband* and *wife* change over time and over different stages of the life course (e.g., parenthood). Much of this research is grounded in processual symbolic interactionism and emphasizes the processes of role making, role taking, and role negotiation, but some draws on structural symbolic interactionism and uses survey methods to study role relationships.

Labeling theory is an application of the process of reflected appraisals to the development of deviant identities. Developed mainly within the processual version of SI, labeling theory proposes that society's reaction (especially by persons in positions of authority, such as police, judges, and teachers) to a person's initial deviant behavior is the major factor in the development of deviants because it alters the self-concept and social identity of the person labeled. Research on child socialization, especially with regard to the development of juvenile delinquency and other deviant behaviors in families and in schools, provides some support for this theory. However, labeling theory has been criticized for overstating the influence of reflected appraisals and understating the effectiveness of resistance efforts on the part of those labeled with a negative identity.

The concept of self has generated the largest number of SI theories. Most of these self-theories derive from the structural version of SI, where identities are linked to social roles. Sheldon Stryker built on this foundation in developing his Identity Theory. In Stryker's Identity Theory, differential commitment to the various role identities that a person holds provides most of the structure and organization of the self-concept (i.e., a salience hierarchy of identities). To the extent that a person is committed to a particular role identity (which in turn depends on the degree to which the identity is enmeshed in social relationships), the more consequential the identity is for the person's conduct. Identity Theory has spawned several other self-theories: Peter Burke's *Identity Control Theory*, which focuses on the self's adjustment processes when receiving discrepant feedback regarding a particular identity; and *Affect Control*

Theory, developed by David Heise and colleagues, which incorporates affect and emotion into the role-identity model. All three of these self-theories were developed by structural symbolic interactionists at Indiana University—the “Iowa School” has evolved into the “Indiana School” of symbolic interactionism.

Considerable self-theorizing also has occurred beyond the Indiana School of SI, focusing on other aspects of the self-concept besides role identities. Important theorizing has focused on self-esteem, self-efficacy, self-motives and self-defenses, real selves and false selves, self-narratives and biographical selves, and the dynamics of self-presentation. The concept of self has provided fertile ground for symbolic interaction theories and for research on human relationships. How people see themselves and how they see each other is clearly important for individual well-being and for the nature of social relationships.

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See also Accounts; Beliefs About Relationships; Communication, Norms and Rules; Perspective Taking; Self-Esteem, Effects on Relationships; Self-Presentation; Socialization

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SYSTEMS THEORIES

Although human relationships scholars often refer to *systems theory*, as if there were only one, there

are, in fact, several systems theories that are relevant to understanding human relationships. Some systems theories examine large groups of people, such as societies, but this entry focuses on systems theories as they have been applied to intimate or close relationships. A general definition of a *system* is any entity together with relationships between the various parts of the entity and between their attributes.

The conceptual roots of systems theories may be found in a diverse array of disciplinary backgrounds. Although systems theory concepts are not new, predating modern times (e.g., one of the most well-known systems' propositions, "The whole is greater than the sum of its parts," may be attributed to Aristotle), the development of systems theories can be traced to the mid-20th century. Immediately before World War II and in the decade or so after the war, social and behavioral scientists from psychology (e.g., Kurt Lewin), sociology (e.g., Talcott Parsons, Walter Buckley), family therapy (e.g., Donald Jackson, Nathan Ackerman), communications (Jay Haley), and anthropology (e.g., Gregory Bateson) began borrowing systems concepts from biologists such as Ludwig von Bertalanffy, mathematicians such as Claude Shannon and Warren Weaver, and engineers such as Norbert Wiener and applying these concepts to developing theories about human social systems.

These social and behavioral scientists believed that the principles underlying nonhuman biological systems (e.g., wetlands, frog communities, and even organisms such as bacteria) could be applied to human social systems. Research conducted by Norbert Wiener and others during World War II that focused on the cybernetic, or self-correcting, capabilities of robots and weapon systems also stimulated new thinking about human systems. The definition of systems as any entity whose parts relate to each other and to elements outside of the entity reflect these multidisciplinary roots. Such definitions may indeed apply to frogs and other nonhuman organisms, to inanimate systems, and to intimate human relationships.

Systems theories share certain fundamental assumptions about interpersonal relationships, although they may differ in their focus (i.e., families, social organizations, friendships) and in the relative importance of selected concepts (i.e., power, communication patterns, and goals). The

following ideas typically are postulated as universal properties of human social systems by these theories.

Human Social Systems Are Open

Systems are open to *inputs* from outside of the system. Human systems are involved in continual exchanges of energy, matter, and information with the external environment. The open nature of systems means that elements outside of the social system continually influence the system's operation. At the same time, elements within the social system influence the environment; these are known as *outputs*. Because of the dynamic nature of systems that results from the continual exchange of inputs and outputs, systems theories are interested primarily in processes, such as how systems adapt to inputs and how they generate outputs. For instance, systems scholars might wonder how the unexpected firing of the major wage earner in a family (an input) affects family members' behaviors and relationships, including the socialization of children (a system output). Although some attention is paid by systems theorists to the structure of systems (e.g., how many members are there in a system), far more attention is focused on system processes.

The focus on system processes implies that systems theories are interested in change, which is hard to evaluate without observing system dynamics over time, either clock time (i.e., seconds, minutes, and hours) or calendar time (i.e., days, weeks, months, and years). For example, a photograph of a couple may suggest what is happening at the moment the picture was taken, but it would be difficult, or maybe impossible, to infer patterns of interactions and system inputs and outputs from the photo. A videotape of the couple would provide more information about their patterns of interacting than the photo would, and having several days of videotapes would yield even more information about the couple as a system.

Human Systems Are Self-Reflexive

Systems theories view human groups as goal-seeking and adaptive systems. Like all cybernetic systems that have feedback loops, human systems

are self-monitoring and self-aware of how they are behaving. Although systems theorists disagree about the extent to which human systems are capable of being aware of setting purposeful goals and planning actions to meet those goals, according to Carl Broderick, most systems theorists recognize that individuals are able to self-reflect, and such reflexivity distinguishes human systems from other systems.

Interdependence

All parts of human social systems are connected with all other parts. Any change that affects one person in a social system influences all other persons and relationships in the system. For example, in a family, a seriously ill child may mean that mother and father rearrange their work and leisure activities to devote time to caring for the sick child. Older siblings may not participate in caregiving, but may be affected nonetheless because the parents are not available to interact with them and the family routines change. Because of the interdependent nature of systems, changes in how parts of the system interact have indirect effects on all other parts of the system. Interdependence means that causal effects in systems are complex—individuals directly affect each other, they are indirectly affected by the interactions of others within the system, and they influence and are influenced by inputs from the external environment.

Wholeness Principle

Also known as *nonsummativity*, the well-known dictum that “The system is greater than the sum of its parts” means that relationship systems have unique characteristics that emerge from the interactions of individuals in those relationships. Human systems have properties that may be observed only at the level of the system; they cannot be inferred from knowing about the personalities or other individual characteristics of the system members. When individuals come together to form relationships, a social system is created that is more complex than the sum of the individuals in that relationship. System characteristics are called *emergent* properties because they are evident (emerge) only at the system level and

cannot be inferred from knowledge about the component parts of the system. For instance, knowing Susan and Brian well as individuals does not mean that one knows how they will relate to each other in a dating relationship; the entity of the couple is more than the sum of Susan’s and Brian’s characteristics as individuals.

Ongoing Systems Are Rule Governed

Human social systems that last for days, weeks, or longer, such as dating couples and families, exhibit regular, repeated patterns of interactions. Over time, these patterns may be observed, and the rules governing the system may be inferred from those observed patterns. Systems theorists assert that these patterned interactions are regulated by rules designed to organize the system. Some rules are explicit and known to people both within and outside of the system. For instance, a sorority may have explicit rules about when and where men are welcome in the sorority hours; these rules may be posted and may be part of the orientation of newcomers to the sorority. Of greater interest to systems theorists, however, are the implicit rules that govern behaviors. System members may not be aware of implicit rules; these rules develop over time in the course of interactions among system members and transactions with the environment. Some theorists have proposed that systems rules are organized in a hierarchical manner, with some rules applying more generally than others or applying only certain conditions. For example, in a college classroom, there are posted signs that say there will be no eating or drinking, an explicit system rule. An observer may notice that some students regularly bring food and beverages into the classroom (an implicit rule that eating and drinking are acceptable), but not every day. On days when the dean is likely to walk by the classroom, students are less likely to bring food or they bring only water; the observer may infer that, despite the explicit ban, clear fluids are always acceptable, and other beverages and food are okay when classroom outsiders aren’t around.

Subsystems

Social systems are often comprised of smaller units called *subsystems*. Usually, these subsystems

contain more than one person, although some theorists consider individuals to be the smallest possible subsystem of a larger system. Subsystems exist to perform specific functions for the system and for members of the subsystem. Subsystems operate under the same principles as systems do (e.g., wholeness, patterned interactions). Subsystems are differentiated from other parts of the system by rules known as boundaries.

Relationship systems are usually embedded within larger systems called *suprasystems*. For instance, family systems are often part of neighborhood suprasystems, and neighborhoods are systems within community suprasystems.

Boundaries

Rules that specify who is a member and who is not a member of a system or subsystem are called *boundaries*. Boundaries also regulate the transfer of inputs and outputs between a system and its environment, and boundaries control such transactions between subsystems. Boundaries vary in clarity (i.e., how clear is membership in a system) and rigidity (i.e., how easy or difficult is it to transfer inputs or outputs).

Equifinality

System goals may be met in multiple ways and from different starting points. There are many paths that lead to the same destination. For instance, couples that want to marry and want to be sure they are compatible partners could read books about marriage, participate in premarital counseling, date for several years to allow ample time to get to know each other, live together, separate for a time to date others to be sure the partner is “the one” for them, or do all of these things to prepare.

Feedback Mechanisms

Systems processes are complex combinations of interconnected positive and negative feedback loops. Positive feedback loops occur when a system member’s action has a consequence that increases the probability of those actions being

repeated or increasing in intensity. Positive feedback loops result in system changes over time (*morphogenesis*) as reinforced behaviors are amplified. Negative feedback loops occur when a system member’s new behaviors are met with consequences that reduce the probability that the behavior will happen again or, if it occurs, that it will have less intensity. Negative feedback loops discourage system change and result in system *homeostasis* or *system equilibrium*.

Positive and negative feedback do not refer to the nature of the responses to a behavior, but to the entire sequence of actions—if the feedback loop results in changes in system patterns, it is a positive feedback loop. If new behaviors decrease or intensity diminishes in response to the system’s reactions, it is a negative feedback loop because the system patterns will not change. For instance, as children enter adolescence, they seek greater autonomy from parents; when parents respond in ways that allow their children more freedom, they are engaging in positive feedback; when they resist, it is negative feedback. An adolescent who stays out past curfew is initiating system change, parents who punish the adolescent but make the curfew an hour later in the future are reinforcing the system change, and parents who punish the adolescent with no future curfew alterations are resisting change.

Criticisms of Systems Theories

Some scholars have criticized systems theories for being too general and ambiguous, not readily lending themselves to the development of testable hypotheses and propositions. Systems theories are seen by some critics as so abstract and broad that they are not theories as much as descriptive metaphors that describe close relationships. In the past, feminists and African-American scholars have charged systems theorists with ignoring gender-related power dynamics in social systems and of implicitly supporting conservative views of interpersonal systems that place women and ethnic minorities in submissive roles in social systems. These criticisms have been met with rejoinders by systems scholars, and to a large extent these complaints have diminished.

Application of Systems Theories

In the past several decades, systems theories have been heavily used by helping professionals (e.g., social work, nursing, counseling, and family therapy) and by relationship scholars in communications, family studies, and psychology. Systems theories have been applied in particular to the study of families and family relationships. There is a large body of literature on family functioning and interpersonal processes in family systems dating back to the 1960s. More recently, systems theories have been employed by researchers interested in other types of close relationships. Ecological systems theories, for instance, have been used to study relationships within families, schools, work settings, housing, health care organizations, criminal justice, social organizations, sports teams, small groups, and friendship networks. Statistical procedures such as hierarchical linear modeling and structural equation modeling have made possible quantitative analyses of propositions from systems theories, and these new procedures have greatly facilitated the application of systems theories to the study of relationship issues. The growth of qualitative research methods also has facilitated the use of systems theories

because such methods are well suited to examine systems processes.

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See also Cohesiveness in Groups; Conflict Patterns; Family Routines and Rituals; Family Therapy; Intergenerational Family Relationships; Kinkeeping; Qualitative Methods in Relationship Research; Rules of Relationships

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TABOO TOPICS

U.S. residents tend to be inundated with messages that relational partners and family members should be completely open with one another. For instance, popular women's magazines are often filled with messages (i.e., "Ten ways to get your man to open up to you!") that suggest that partners should reveal everything to one another if they want to have healthy and satisfying relationships. Yet, people often avoid talking about certain topics and have good reasons for doing so. People are especially likely to refrain from talking about topics that they consider taboo or "off limits" in a relationship. This entry describes topics that tend to be taboo, identifies the reasons why people tend to refrain from talking about them, and discusses some of the implications of these choices for individuals' personal and relational health.

What Are Taboo Topics?

Researchers often refer to the research on topic avoidance, disclosure, and secrets as "information regulation." Typically, avoidance, disclosure, and secrets are analyzed as ways in which people regulate or manage the amount and type of private information they give to, and receive from, others. However, it is important to differentiate among these different types of information regulation. With topic avoidance, people refrain from talking

about a topic that the other person knows exists. For instance, if Jenny is dating someone her parents dislike and they simply choose not to talk about him, it would be considered avoidance. If, however, Jenny is engaged to her partner and she has not told her parents about it, it would be a secret. Because secret-keeping involves concealment, it usually takes more effort to keep the information private and has more negative ramifications than does topic avoidance if the information were to be revealed.

Taboo topics are often considered to be topics that are highly avoided, but they can also be secrets. As Leslie Baxter and Bill Wilmot note, topics that are taboo are considered "off limits" in relationships. These topics tend to be too sensitive or emotionally laden to discuss. Often these topics are declared taboo by the people in the relationship, but other times, they are implicitly taboo when norms and relationship rules make them inherently off limits for discussion. For instance, it might be known in your family that religion and politics are off limits for conversation because of conflicts that have occurred in the past as a result of discussions about them. In this example, the topics of religion and politics are not introduced in conversation and, thus, would be considered topic avoidance. In other instances, topics could be kept secret because they are condemned by one's family or society. For example, Anita Vangelisti identified three different categories of secrets in families: taboo secrets, rule violations, and conventional secrets. *Taboo topics* usually involve behaviors or activities that are stigmatized by society. Some

examples of taboo secrets include marital difficulties, substance abuse, mental health, or illegalities. Taboo secrets are often the most commonly reported type of family secrets. *Rule violations* involve breaking family rules, such as premarital pregnancy, drinking or partying, breaking curfews, and cohabitation. *Conventional family secrets* are secrets that are judged as inappropriate for discussion. These topics often include religion, politics, death, conflicts in the family, and dating partners.

Relationship Types and Motivations for Taboo Topics

The topics that are considered taboo may also depend on the type of relationship. For example, the current state of one's relationship is often taboo in cross-sex friendship because to talk about this topic might change the dynamics of the relationship. Likewise, children from divorced families and stepfamilies often avoid talking about the state of their family relationships. Stepchildren refrain from talking about their new family relationships for fear that it will alter the status quo of their family or that the new information that could be gleaned from discussing the topic would make things worse. However, children whose parents are divorced also tend to make the topic of their parents' relationship taboo because they are afraid of being caught in the middle of their parents' disputes. Finally, dating partners often avoid talking about issues such as their previous dating partners to prevent conflict and feelings of jealousy.

People declare certain topics taboo in their relationships for many reasons. Regardless of whether topic avoidance or secrets are the focus of investigation, people tend to refrain from introducing topics for protection reasons. More specifically, people avoid talking about certain topics with others to protect themselves, protect their relationships, or protect other people. For self-protection, people often refrain from talking about certain topics because they are afraid of being vulnerable—that they might be judged, ridiculed, looked down upon, and that the information might be used against them in some way. They also long to protect their relationships from changing, becoming stressed or conflict-ridden, or losing a close bond that they have developed. Individuals also desire to

protect the other person or other family members from becoming hurt, angry, or sad if they talk about the topic. In general, people are less likely to reveal secrets that are taboo because of the negativity and stigma associated with the topic.

Personal and Relational Implications

What type of an effect do taboo topics have on one's self and one's relationships? In general, concealment tends to hinder one's physical and mental health and revealment tends to benefit one's health. For instance, James Pennebaker has found that when people write down their secrets or tell them to someone else, it improves their immune functioning. Disclosure tends to be cathartic because it releases the pressure that can build up as a result of hiding or suppressing important information. Keeping secrets, especially if they are taboo, can drain a person emotionally because people often have a desire to rid themselves of the deception, guilt, and pressure that secrets can invoke.

Avoidance and secret-keeping also tend to be associated with dissatisfaction in relationships. When people feel as though they are avoiding or keeping secrets from others or that others are keeping information from them, it tends to be associated with dissatisfaction. Research has found that even if your partner says that he or she is not avoiding you, if you think that your partner is avoiding you, it is dissatisfying. Perception may matter more than actual avoidance tendencies. Topics that can be declared taboo more covertly or without a person realizing it are also less dissatisfying than are topics that are declared taboo more overtly.

Nevertheless, in some situations avoidance could help maintain or perhaps enhance one's health and relationships. For instance, research on the disclosure of HIV status suggests that patients' cell counts can improve or deteriorate depending on how the recipient of the information reacts to the revelation of the patient being HIV positive. Similarly, research suggests that avoiding trivial topics with one's marital or dating partner can prevent unnecessary strain and conflict. Some things may be better left unsaid—especially if they are unimportant and would only

hurt one's self or one's partner. Therefore, the impact of taboo topics on relationships and one's personal well-being depends on a host of factors and circumstances, including the importance of the topic.

Tamara Afifi

See also Privacy; Secrets; Self-Disclosure

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TEACHER–STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS

There is growing consensus that the nature and quality of children's relationships with teachers play a critical and central role in motivating students to learn, and teaching them what they need to know to become knowledgeable and productive citizens. Effective teachers are typically described as those who create relationships with students that are emotionally close, safe, and trusting, that facilitate provisions of instrumental help and communication of positive and high expectations for performance, and that foster a more general ethos of community and caring in their classrooms. In general, theoretical perspectives and empirical research supports the notion that these relationship qualities support the development of students' emotional well-being and positive sense of self, positive motivational orientations for social and academic outcomes, and actual social and academic skills.

This entry describes the theoretical perspectives most often used to guide research on teacher–student relationships, a summary of findings relating teacher–student relationships to social and academic outcomes at school, and issues in need of further study.

Theoretical Perspectives

Researchers have adopted multiple theoretical perspectives to study the affective nature and qualities of teacher–student relationships including those of Attachment Theory, Self-Determination Theory, and social support and person–environment fit frameworks. Central to these perspectives is the notion that the affective quality of teacher–student relationships is a critical motivator of student adjustment, and that aspects of teacher–student relationships have a causal effect on children's school-related competence, primarily by promoting a positive sense of self and emotional well-being.

Attachment Theory has provided the strongest impetus for work on teachers' relationships with young children. According to this theory, the dyadic relationship between a child and caregiver (usually the mother) is a system in which children experience various levels of felt security, safety, and responsiveness to their basic needs, with predictable and sensitive responses being associated with secure attachments that foster curiosity and exploration of the environment, positive coping skills, and a mental representation of one's self as being worthy of love and of others as being trustworthy. Although teacher–student relationships are not typically viewed as primary attachment relationships, Attachment Theory principles would suggest that they would be fairly concordant with the quality of parent–child attachments and therefore, related to children's intellectual curiosity, positive sense of self, and emotional well-being. In turn, these intrapersonal outcomes are believed to contribute to the development of positive social and cognitive skills at school.

Self-Determination Theory posits that students will engage positively in the social and academic tasks of the classroom when their needs for relatedness, competence, and autonomy are met. Contextual supports in the form of interpersonal involvement, structure, and provisions of autonomy (e.g., opportunities for choice and self-direction) are believed to be essential to this process, with teacher involvement (e.g., demonstrating genuine interest in students' well-being and providing emotional support) and students' corresponding sense of relatedness being most frequently associated with the study of teacher–student

relationships. Feelings of relatedness are believed to facilitate students' adoption of goals and interests valued by teachers and desires to contribute in positive ways to the overall functioning of the social group. Feeling related to teachers has been studied most often in relation to academic motivation and engagement during the elementary and middle school years.

Social support perspectives on teacher–student relationships reflect the notion that students' subjective appraisals of teachers' support have implications for their subsequent adjustment to school. Similar to Attachment Theory, social support perspectives focus on students' mental representations of relationships, with perceived emotional support from teachers serving as a buffer from stress and anxiety. However, whereas Attachment Theory focuses on interpersonal relationships reflecting dyadic systems with fairly stable histories of interactions, social support perspectives typically consider relationships as personal resources that can range from highly familiar and stable (e.g., an elementary school teacher who teaches all subjects to the same students for an entire year) to relatively impersonal and fleeting (e.g., a semester-long instructor in one subject).

Person–environment fit perspectives are based on the notion that adaptive functioning occurs when there is a good match between the needs of the individual and what the environment can contribute to the fulfillment of those needs. Therefore, a distinguishing characteristic of this approach when applied to school settings is a focus on multiple provisions that are central to the educative process, such as a structured environment in which expectations are communicated clearly, resources contribute directly to learning, and a physically and emotionally safe classroom. Although the quality of dyadic relationships is not always the explicit focus of discussion, researchers assume that ongoing student–teacher interactions reflect a form of social reciprocity that provides students with opportunities to pursue their own goals but also to learn about and then actively pursue those social and academic goals that are valued by others at school.

This broader socialization perspective is supported by students' and teachers' qualitative descriptions of caring and supportive teachers. For example, middle school students describe caring

and supportive teachers as those who demonstrate democratic and egalitarian communication styles designed to elicit student participation and input, who develop expectations for student behavior and performance in light of individual differences and abilities, who model a “caring” attitude and interest in their instruction and interpersonal dealings with students, and who provide constructive rather than harsh and critical feedback.

Teacher–Student Relationships and Student Outcomes

The empirical literature supports a conclusion that the affective nature and qualities of teacher–student relationships are related significantly to a broad range of positive student outcomes. For example, preschool- and kindergarten-aged children who enjoy emotionally secure relationships with their teachers are more likely to demonstrate prosocial, gregarious, and complex play and less likely to show hostile aggression and withdrawn behavior toward their peers. Close, secure teacher–child relationships also have been related positively to school readiness scores, whereas teacher–child conflict has been related negatively to positive work habits and readiness scores. Researchers who have studied the same preschool-aged children over a number of years report that teacher–child closeness in preschool is associated positively with children's language skills, sociability, and attention in kindergarten and first grade, and negatively with forms of internalizing and problem behavior. Other longitudinal studies have documented that qualities of teacher–student relationships in kindergarten predict similar social-emotional outcomes as much as 8 years later.

In samples of adolescent students, the affective quality of relationships with teachers also has been related to classroom grades and dropping out of school, as well as to motivational outcomes such as academic goal orientations, values, interest, and self-efficacy. Some young adolescents report declines in the nurturant qualities of teacher–student relationships after the transition to middle school that correspond to declines in their academic motivation and achievement. Students' appraisals of supportive relationships with teachers also have been related to social outcomes

including pursuit of goals to engage in positive forms of social behavior, prosocial actions, and aggressive, delinquent behavior. Perceiving emotional support from teachers also has been related positively to adolescents' emotional well-being and negatively to internalizing problems such as depression and emotional distress.

Finally, researchers have examined teachers' relationships with students along multiple dimensions to include emotional support as well as communication of expectations, instrumental help, and safety. Empirical evidence indicates that multiple dimensions of support predict aspects of students' social and academic adjustment to school in Caucasian, African-American, and Latino samples. However, qualitative findings also suggest that specific dimensions of support are beneficial as a function of students' ability and race. For example, students from high-ability tracks tend to value teachers who challenge them, encourage class participation, and express educational goals similar to theirs. In contrast, students from low-ability tracks tend to value relationships with teachers marked by kindness, fair treatment, academic help, and effective classroom management. Racially mixed groups of middle school students highlight the importance of teachers who are responsive to individual differences and needs, provide students with autonomy and choice, show interest in students as individuals, help with academics, encourage students to work up to their potential, and teach well and make subject matter interesting.

Unresolved Issues

Despite consistent findings that teacher–student relationships play an important role in students' social and academic lives at school, several issues remain unresolved. First, research indicates that students' characteristics might enhance or detract from their ability to benefit from supportive relationships with teachers. In the elementary school years, positive teacher–student relationships tend to be more beneficial for ethnic minority and at-risk students than for Caucasian students. In addition, relations between perceived emotional support from teachers and student adjustment tend to be influenced by socioeconomic status (SES) and race such that students from lower SES

backgrounds and members of minority groups tend to benefit more from close relationships with teachers than do other students. School-level factors such as safety, racial homogeneity, SES of the student body, and composition of instructional teams also appear to moderate relations between perceived teacher support and student outcomes. Although speculative, school-related outcomes of students at risk because of special needs, SES, or ethnicity might reflect feelings of discrimination or alienation because of their minority status. If so, close and positive relationships with teachers might provide these students with a secure base for developing a more positive sense of self and corresponding social and academic skills.

An additional issue worthy of note is whether relationships with teachers have a meaningful impact on students when other sources of support are taken into account. For the most part, when children rate the importance of their relationships with mothers, fathers, siblings, teachers, and friends, they typically report being very satisfied with their relationships with their teachers, and rank teachers as most important for providing instrumental aid and informational support at levels comparable with instrumental help from mothers and fathers. However, on dimensions such as intimacy, companionship, nurturance, and admiration, teachers are routinely ranked by children as the least likely source of support when compared with parents and peers. Moreover, although these relative rankings remain stable from childhood into adolescence, the overall importance of teachers in students' lives appears to decline with age.

Most conclusions concerning the importance of teacher–student relationships and interactions are based on studies that have not considered the contribution of other relationships that might contribute to students' adjustment to school. However, research on the concordance of students' attachment relationships with parents and teachers indicates that continuity across contexts is not always evident, and aspects of teacher–student relationships often predict student outcomes beyond similar aspects of parent–child relationships. The effects of teacher–student relationships on student outcomes appear to be strongest when parent–child relationships are less positive than are teacher–student relationships. In this regard, teachers have the opportunity to provide social

and emotional supports to children when they are not available from parents and, therefore, have a greater impact on these children's school-related functioning.

Findings also suggest that the effects of perceived emotional support from teachers are likely to be domain specific, with teacher support being related most strongly to those outcomes to which teachers contribute most, such as academic interest and classroom behavior. Identifying specific ways in which these relationships can actively and directly promote the development of positive motivational orientations toward learning and academic competencies, independently of other relationship supports from parents and peers, remains a challenge for researchers in this area. Similarly, identification of ways in which students contribute to the formation and maintenance of relationships with their teachers also remains a significant challenge for the field.

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See also Attachment Theory; Belonging, Need for; Goal Pursuit, Relationship Influences; Parent–Child Relationships; Self-Concept and Relationships; Social Support, Nature of

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TECHNOLOGY AND RELATIONSHIPS

This entry explores the ways in which information and communication technologies—such as e-mail, instant messaging, text messaging, and other Internet-based exchanges of information—hinder or facilitate relationships. Research examining the effect of information and communication technology on relationships began as the development and diffusion of computers and Internet technology was adopted by household members. In the late 20th century, personal computers began to be purchased for home use. The U.S. Department of Commerce reported that fewer than 10 percent of households had computers in 1984, compared with more than 60 percent of households in 2003, and Internet access increased from about 18 percent of households in 1997 to more than 55 percent in 2003. The Pew Internet and American Life Project found that about 70 percent of U.S. residents reported going online in 2007. Young adults, Whites, affluent, and better-educated adults were the most likely to be online. Among these groups, about 90 percent reported Internet use.

Some predicted that the introduction of Internet-based communication tools would have positive implications for relationships, arguing that people would develop and maintain stronger social ties. Others predicted that these technologies would lead to isolation and fracture social and family relationships by supplanting face-to-face interactions with computer-mediated communication. The research findings are much more

complex than either of these perspectives would suggest.

Family Relationships

With the advent of Internet communication, a central concern was whether online relationships would have negative implications for off-line family relationships. An early study by Robert Kraut and his colleagues in the late 1990s suggested that those adults who spent more time on the Internet were more socially isolated than were those who spent less time on the Internet. However, this appears to have been only a short-term effect associated with early adopters of the technology because most subsequent research has not replicated these initial findings. In general, researchers have found that Internet use has no relationship with the amount of time spent with family members or the quality of those relationships.

Barry Wellman and his colleagues have begun to take a more in-depth look at how communication technologies are being used by family members. They reported that Internet communications are becoming more common among household members when they are away from each other such as when parents are at work and children are at home. Most of the e-mail communication is between the adults in the household. Although parents mostly use the telephone to stay in contact with their children, parents do report e-mailing their children. Their findings indicate that women are more likely to contact children and use the Internet to maintain family ties, which suggests that women are now using the Internet to perform the social networking role that they have long held in families. Another finding by Wellman is that families tend to share time using a single household computer. Husbands and wives report spending 1 to 3 hours per week using the Internet together, and parents report spending from 2 to 4 hours per week using the Internet with their children. Wellman noted that in contrast to concerns about the computer isolating family members, it appears to bring them together. However, this may be a temporary phenomenon. Most households currently have one computer, but as households obtain multiple computers, these sharing activities may disappear.

Romantic Relationships

Dating and Intimacy

Online dating, which can be defined as using the Internet to meet new people with the intention of potentially developing a nonplatonic relationship, has become a popular medium for mate selection during the past decade. Once stigmatized as a dating outlet for the socially inept or desperate, a 2006 report of the Pew Internet and American Life Project found that 74 percent of single Internet users seeking romantic partners had used the Internet to advance their dating interests in some way, and 37 percent had visited an online dating Web site. Moreover, 31 percent of all U.S. residents reported knowing someone who had used a dating Web site, and 15 percent knew someone who had been in a long-term relationship or marriage with a partner he or she initially met online. Online dating has clearly matured beyond its early stigmatization to become a widely used and socially acceptable resource for those seeking intimate partners. In fact, the online dating industry now has more paying subscribers than any other online industry.

One particularly appealing aspect of online dating for many people is the ability to quickly filter through a vast number of potential partners based on demographic or related criteria, such as age, height, education, income, or appearance. Similarly, mate selection practices based on matchmakers and arranged marriages have also benefited from online services. For example, Indians commonly expect couples to share the same dialect and caste, and matchmakers have found that the Internet provides an efficient method of identifying acceptable matches based on these types of criteria.

The length of time that a promising online relationship remains exclusively computer-mediated varies. However, at some point, online relationships typically progress to a period of telephone communication followed by a face-to-face meeting. It remains unclear whether relationships initiated online differ from their off-line counterparts in long-term stability and satisfaction.

Extramarital Relationships

Cybersex has blurred the definition of sexual relations because highly sexualized interactions often take place through the Internet among people

who have never had, nor intend to have, a face-to-face meeting or physical contact with one another. Although definitions of computer-mediated infidelity vary from person to person, most therapists agree that secrecy coupled with sexual excitement forms the key ingredients for feelings of betrayal to emerge in partners following discovery of the behavior. Research has found that, among marital relationships destabilized by a partner's cybersex behavior, about 60 percent involved only computer-mediated interaction with no face-to-face meeting and many of these cases ended in divorce. Accordingly, the sex and relationship therapy literature on cybersex-related behaviors and treatment approaches for Internet infidelity has burgeoned in recent years.

Sexuality and the Internet

The ACE Model of Cybersexual Addiction (anonymity, convenience, escape) and the Triple "A" Engine (access, affordability, and anonymity) have been proposed to explain the appeal of cybersex. Some have also suggested that approximation be added as a fourth component of the latter model to capture the lure of risk-free experimentation associated with cybersex. That is, the sensations associated with sexual behaviors that arouse one's curiosity but would not be pursued off-line can be approximated safely through online fantasy sex. Interestingly, some research suggests that women are more likely to struggle with cybersex addiction than are men. One hypothesis is that the anonymity of computer-mediated communication is more liberating for women because of sociosexual norms that tend to suppress women's sexual expression.

Although Internet pornography and cybersex addiction garners a great deal of attention in both the popular media and scientific literature, positive aspects of sexuality are also associated with the Internet. For example, the Internet is a democratizing agent for the sexually marginalized. Homosexuals, transsexuals, older adults, HIV-positive individuals, and the disabled are among the sexually disenfranchised who have formed online communities to pursue shared interests, including those related to sexuality. Sex therapists have also reported successful experiences conducting therapy for issues such as erectile dysfunction

and premature ejaculation solely through the privacy and anonymity of the Internet.

Families and Social Networks

Scientists have also been interested in how computer-based communication technology helps or hinders children's and adults' ability to maintain social relationships outside of the family.

The primary question addressed regarding social relationships among adults has been whether the Internet results in better or worse relationships with friends. The research findings have been mixed, but more recent longitudinal studies indicate that online communication with friends strengthens these ties. Researchers have theorized that online communication provides a stimulus for adults to communicate more often both online and off-line with friends and suggest that it is easier to maintain these relationships through online communication, which requires less formality and less effort.

The primary issue that has been studied regarding children's Internet use has grown from concern about strangers contacting young people for dangerous or inappropriate activities. Studies in the United States and the Netherlands suggest that relatively few adolescents have contact with strangers online. These studies indicate that 84 to 88 percent of teenagers' online communication is with friends that they know from off-line settings such as school and the neighborhood. Little evidence suggests that online activities diminish young people's off-line social interactions because there is considerable overlap between online and off-line relationships. Janis Wolak and her colleagues conducted a nationally representative telephone survey of teens in 1999 to 2000 to obtain an overall assessment of the degree to which U.S. adolescents were at-risk because of online contact with strangers and found that although most adolescent Internet users occasionally communicated with strangers, those contacts rarely led to close relationships or face-to-face meetings. Rather than being a source of concern, researchers have found evidence that online communication among teenagers can lead to positive social ties. For example, in 2007, Patti Valkenburg and Jochen Peter tested a number of hypotheses regarding the impact of

online communication on relationships and found that online communication by teens with their peers generally led to greater feelings of closeness. Valkenburg and Peter also found that socially anxious teens may especially benefit from the opportunity to develop closer ties to friends through online communication.

Conclusion

Research on technology and relationships is preliminary. A challenge regarding our understanding of the links between relationships and Internet communication technologies is that the technology is rapidly evolving. Research on social phenomena requires many years to develop a clear understanding of an issue, yet new types of technology-based communication interactions are constantly emerging. Likewise, people have increasing experience with Internet tools and are more sophisticated in putting them to use for their own purposes, meaning that the context and consequences of the same communication behaviors change over time.

Regarding theory about technology and relationships, technology affords individuals opportunities, but people also shape how technologies get used. This is most obvious in the use of the Internet by adolescents. Of all the possible things that teenagers might do with a computer, they spend most of their time talking with friends and listening to music. In short, the Internet has mostly replaced the radio and telephone use of a previous generation. Perhaps little has really changed regarding the development and maintenance of social and family relationships; maybe only the tools have changed.

Robert Hughes and Jason Hans

See also Communication, Instant Messaging and Other New Media; Computer-Mediated Communication; Internet, Attraction on; Internet and Social Connectedness; Internet Dating

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TEMPERAMENT

Temperament is the emotional and regulatory core of personality, incorporating traitlike individual differences in emotional, attentional, and motor reactivity and in self-regulation. Temperament is biologically based, present early in life, and develops through a person's interactions and experiences with the environment. As self-regulation develops across childhood, individuals gain more conscious control of their emotions and activity, influencing the expression of temperament. This entry describes dimensions of temperament, stability of temperament, links to personality, measurement, and the role of temperament in human relationships.

Definition and Basic Concepts

Mary Rothbart depicts temperament as having two major components: emotion reactivity and emotion regulation. Emotion reactivity involves individual differences in physiological and behavioral responses, such as exuberance when receiving a gift or fearfulness when meeting new people. Emotion regulation refers to higher-order attentional processes and cognitive control in response to emotion reactivity. Temperamental effortful

control, for example, is the ability to suppress a dominant response to perform a secondary response, such as counting to 10 when angry rather than striking another person. Temperament is rooted in the infant's neurophysiology and shaped by both genetic and environmental factors. With development, individuals gain more conscious control of their emotions and activity. By interacting with the environment over time, temperament evolves into a predictable pattern of behavior or personality style. Thus, temperament is conceptualized as constitutionally based individual differences in emotional and motor reactivity and self-regulation.

The study of temperament has a long history in the field of developmental psychology, and Rothbart's theory stems from the pioneering work of two psychiatrists, Alexander Thomas and Stella Chess. Based on parental descriptions of infant behavior and observations across a number of different contexts, Thomas and Chess identified nine dimensions to describe characteristic ways of responding emotionally and behaviorally to environmental events. These nine dimensions are activity level, rhythmicity or regularity of functioning, approach-withdrawal in novel situations, intensity of emotional expression, overall valence of mood, adaptability to changes in routine, persistence, distractibility or soothability, and threshold of sensory responsiveness.

Thomas and Chess formed three temperamental types from these dimensions: easy, slow-to-warm up, and difficult. Easy children are high in rhythmicity (high regularity in sleep, eating, defecating), high in adaptability (accept change readily), and not overly active, intense, or moody. Slow-to-warm-up children have slower adaptability and higher negative responsivity. Difficult children are characterized by low rhythmicity (irregularity in biological functions), low adaptability, and high negative moodiness. Children classified as difficult are more likely to experience later behavioral problems than are easy or slow-to-warm-up children; however, the prediction depends on the *goodness of fit* with their environment. Goodness of fit refers to the match between the child's temperament and the demands of the situation or expectations of others. A good fit predicts healthy development, whereas a poor fit generates stress and leads to problem behaviors and disorders. For

example, highly irritable children need predictable family routines to assist them in regulating these behaviors, whereas children low on irritability are less sensitive to unstructured environments.

Contemporary empirical studies have demonstrated that Thomas and Chess's nine dimensions of temperament are overlapping; thus, Rothbart's two components of temperament are more typically used in research today.

Stability of Temperament

Temperament is relatively consistent across situations and stable over time, developing through interactions with the environment. In general, temperament has modest stability during infancy and toddlerhood and then shows an increase in stability around age 3, when emotion regulation plays a larger role in behavior. Although attentional orienting is quite stable from infancy on, other dimensions are less stable. In infancy, approach-withdrawal, sociability, shyness, and behavioral inhibition (wariness of new people or situations) are moderately stable, with negative emotionality being less stable in infancy and childhood. Activity level is not stable in infancy, but becomes more so with age.

Twin studies have found genetic influences on temperament account for stability in behavioral inhibition, shyness, attentional orienting, sociability, and activity level. Changes in temperament across childhood appear to result from environmental influences, with shyness increasing when, for example, a child moves to a new school.

By the preschool years, temperament is stable enough to predict adult personality, but there is still some change across middle childhood and adolescence. Temperament is shaped in part by the ways individuals engage and evoke responses from their environments as well as how they interpret their experiences. For example, anxious and irritable children tend to perceive negative events in their lives as more threatening than do other children. Conversely, temperament affects responses from other people. For example, mothers of irritable, difficult-to-soothe infants experience lower confidence and greater depression than do mothers of easy infants, further shaping the development of temperament.

Temperament and Personality

Along with experience, temperament influences the development of personality. Personality is a broader concept, including habits, skills, goals, values, needs, the content of individual thought, and the perception of self in relation to others. Thus, personality is a characteristic pattern of thinking, feeling, and acting. The Big Five Personality factors, Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism, and Openness, can be predicted by early temperament. Specifically, childhood fearfulness and irritability predict adult neuroticism, whereas childhood positive approach behaviors predict openness, agreeableness, and extraversion, and childhood inhibitory control predicts adult conscientiousness. Although temperament and personality are not the same thing, temperament forms the affective core of later personality.

Assessment of Temperament

Temperament is most commonly assessed through parental report, examiner report, or behavioral observation techniques. Behavior observation paradigms include both structured, such as Hill Goldsmith and Mary Rothbart's Laboratory Temperament Assessment Battery, and unstructured paradigms, such as observations on the playground. Each method of assessment comes with advantages and disadvantages. Parental report is inexpensive and taps the extensive knowledge of parents who have observed their children's responses to a variety of stimuli in several different contexts. However, parental report is limited in that parents only observe their children's behavior when in their own presence and children may act differently when not with their parents. Although parents are high-quality informants of their own children's behavior, parents' responses might be influenced by their own personalities or psychopathology or they may adjust their responses to create a particular impression on the researcher. Structured observational assessments, although expensive, allow precise control, but are limited to behaviors that can be elicited in the laboratory setting.

Temperament is hierarchically organized and can be assessed on various levels. Temperament

researchers come from a variety of perspectives, from emphasizing the importance of mother's perceptions of her child's temperament to considering biological indicators or correlates such as heart rate and stress hormone levels. A complete assessment of temperament typically involves a combination of multiple approaches to maximize validity and minimize the weaknesses of any one approach.

Ties to Attachment Style and Relationships

Temperament has an impact on infant attachment to caregivers, and likewise, attachment can affect temperament. Securely attached infants are appropriately soothed and regulated by their caregivers, whereas insecurely attached infants have a less positive and more unstable bond with their caregivers. Although temperament is associated with behavior during the Strange Situation attachment assessment, it does not relate to the attachment classification of secure or insecure. The Strange Situation is a series of parental separations and reunions with their infant that predicts future relationships. With preschool children, negative temperamental reactivity is modestly associated with attachment assessed using Q-sort methods (raters sort descriptive statements into categories indicating how typical the descriptions are of a child). In addition, attachment classification is associated with later temperament, and an interaction of emotion reactivity and attachment classification influences later fear of novelty. Thus, temperament and attachment are different constructs, yet related to the extent that they both influence future relationships.

Temperament plays a key role in forming parental, sibling, peer, and romantic relationships. Children's temperament can elicit different responses from caregivers. An environment that might be a good fit for one child may provide a poor fit for a sibling with a different temperament. For example, difficult children are more negatively reactive to parental punishment. Also, parents who gently discourage shyness have children who are less shy later on. Temperament also influences the quality of the developing parent-child relationship. If the parent or child has higher levels of negative mood, the parent-child relationship can

be marked by increased conflict and decreased warmth and connectedness.

Sibling relationships are also influenced by temperament. Differences in sibling temperament (i.e., withdrawal, unadaptability, mood, persistence, and threshold) have been linked to more sibling conflict. Recent studies show that similarities in difficult temperament are related to more conflict, whereas similarities in easy temperament produce less conflict. When there is a temperament mismatch, regardless of the age and sex of siblings, siblings with strongly active and intense temperaments have more sibling conflict. The positive influence of an easy temperament is stronger if it belongs to the older sibling. Traditionally, the older sibling dominates throughout middle childhood, so an easy temperament in a younger sibling would not have the same effect on the relationship. Older siblings also change the overall family environment and affect the younger sibling's goodness of fit; the same temperament traits that suited the older sibling well may not be as adaptive for a younger sibling.

Temperament also affects the development and quality of peer relationships. High activity level, low regulation, and negative mood result in more negative peer experiences that lead to peer rejection, neglect, and bullying. Through direct modeling, peers play an integral part in social development.

Temperament is also associated with romantic relationships in adulthood. Higher levels of temperamental regularity and adaptability are related to more successful romantic relationships, whereas higher levels of negative moodiness and anger have been linked to dating violence and less successful relationships. Contrary to the popular belief that *opposites attract*, the evolutionary perspective of positive assortative mating holds that *like attracts like*. Individuals are naturally attracted to others who display similar characteristics because of the increased likelihood of successful mating and reproduction. For example, according to this perspective, a well-regulated individual would seek or prefer a partner who also exhibits good regulation. Temperament is a stable individual characteristic that influences all relationships.

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See also Agreeableness; Anger in Relationships; Approach and Avoidance Orientations; Emotion in Relationships; Emotion Regulation, Developmental Influences; Extraversion and Introversion; Neuroticism, Effects on Relationships; Personality Traits, Effects on Relationships

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TOUCH

Human beings cannot thrive without touching one another. This may seem an extreme statement, but ample evidence supports the notion that pleasing (i.e., hedonically positive) physical contact is vital for both mental and physical health, particularly during infancy and childhood. Touching is a powerful form of emotional communication in both romantic and platonic relationships and contributes a crucial dimension to intimacy.

Although the sense of touch provides important information about the texture and location of objects in the environment, this entry focuses primarily on its communicative and regulatory functions in social relationships.

Conceptualization and Measurement

As an aspect of communication, touch has meaning, and various characteristics of the “touch episode” and its participants may alter its meaning and effects. For example, when one person touches another, both experience the physical contact. However, the perceived mutuality of the contact can vary along a continuum from unidirectional (e.g., a hand massage) to completely reciprocated (e.g., a warm handshake). Unidirectional touch may or may not be expected or welcomed, depending in particular on the preexisting relationship between the giver and the receiver of the touch. Another critical factor is which parts of the body are involved in the touch—different areas of the body are considered more or less appropriate for touching by others (e.g., shoulders vs. thighs), depending on the relationship between those involved as well as their sociocultural background. Mechanical aspects of the touch itself (e.g., light stroking versus deep pressure) are likely important because individual differences in tactile sensitivity may lead to differing preferences for the quality of touch. The meaning and effects of touch may vary depending on its frequency of occurrence. For example, someone in a romantic relationship with a high level of physical affection between partners may benefit differently from a massage than would someone who has few avenues for positive physical contact. Last, but certainly not least, attitudes and beliefs about the appropriateness and desirability of touch in various contexts may influence how touch is perceived. For example, an affectionate pat from a spouse might be welcomed within one’s home, but not during a meeting at work. Although all these characteristics are important to fully understand the meaning and effects of touch, little research has been carried out in some of these areas.

Attitudes and beliefs about touch are most often measured using multi-item self-report scales, whereas touch behavior has been assessed with

both retrospective self-report and observation. However, several aspects of touch complicate its measurement. For example, because much interpersonal touch occurs in private, naturalistic observation of some of the domains of touch (e.g., intimate partner touch) is difficult. Sociocultural mores concerning touch limit the ability of researchers to manipulate it in the laboratory, both because of ethical concerns and because its meaning depends on the context. Diary studies, in which participants record information about their environments, behaviors, feelings, or thoughts one or more times per day, are a relatively recent addition to touch research and enable more ecologically valid assessment of the concurrent relations between touch and other behaviors or mental states. Another exciting trend in touch research involves measuring the physiological effects of interpersonal touch (e.g., its ability to reduce cardiovascular stress responses) and its potential health benefits, using both correlational and experimental designs.

Because the effects of touch depend on contextual factors, including sociocultural background, it is important to note that most of the research summarized in this entry was carried out in the United States, Canada, and Europe, with mostly White samples.

Research Findings

The sense of touch is one of several modalities that are typically grouped together as “somatosensation,” and include heat, pain, and itch along with touch. While a primary function of somatosensation is to convey environmental information to the central nervous system, it also has an affective function, endowing that information with hedonic value (e.g., pain is usually hedonically negative). Recent research suggests that the discriminative and affective aspects of touch are conveyed to the central nervous system by different classes of peripheral nerves, further supporting the central importance of this hedonic dimension.

Touch in Infancy

Touch is the most highly developed sense at birth, and extensive evidence indicates that positive

tactile stimulation is essential for human and other social mammals to grow and develop normally. Both animal and human research suggests that nurturant touch is an integral part of a neuroendocrine system specialized to facilitate both maternal caregiving and offspring attachment. Maintenance and reestablishment of physical contact between mother and offspring are highly characteristic of successful maternal care across many species of mammals, and more nurturant touch is associated with more secure attachment in human infants. Giving and receiving touch have beneficial effects and reduce stress responses in infants and their caregivers. Further, psychological and physical health outcomes are poor when human infants receive insufficient nurturant touch. These undesirable outcomes may include behavior problems, attachment disorders, failure to thrive, and even mortality in the severest cases of deprivation.

The ability of touch to regulate and communicate emotion begins early in life, as physical contact influences infants' emotions and their expression. For example, maternal touch can reduce an infant's arousal, particularly when it co-occurs with vestibular stimulation (e.g., rocking, riding in a moving vehicle), and can reduce expressions of distress during painful medical procedures. It also appears that infants are quite sensitive to the stimulus qualities of the physical contact they receive; touching an infant can generate contentment or distress based solely on the quality of the touch (e.g., forceful and abrupt versus gentle and prolonged).

Touch in Adulthood

The meaning of touch depends on a number of factors, including both individual characteristics and the context in which the touch occurs. Researchers have described these contexts and the interpretations of touch associated with them in five categories that range along a continuum from most distant to most intimate as follows: functional/professional, social/polite, friendship/warmth, love/intimacy, and sexual/arousal. Context constrains meaning, that is, a particular form of physical contact (e.g., a hug or a touch on the arm) may be interpreted differently depending on the type of situation in which it occurs.

Not surprisingly, the meaning ascribed to physical contact strongly influences its perceived

pleasantness and desirability. When a touch is perceived as incongruent within its context (e.g., when it violates sociocultural expectations), it is often perceived negatively. Other important moderators of the hedonic value of touch include gender (although same-sex touch is generally perceived as less pleasant than opposite-sex touch, this effect is stronger in men), the relationship between the giver and receiver of the touch (men tend to enjoy equally being touched by female acquaintances or strangers, but women like being touched by male acquaintances much more than by male strangers), and personality variables such as touch avoidance (touch avoidant individuals, in general, feel discomfort and anxiety when being touched) and attachment style (endorsement of positive physical contact is higher in individuals with secure attachment styles than in those with avoidant styles).

Physical contact is essential in both the development and maintenance of intimate romantic relationships. Research suggests that touching is arguably the most important avenue by which partners in intimate relationships cultivate and communicate that intimacy. Although it most often declines in frequency after the first year, the amount of touch reported by partners in a long-term relationship is strongly correlated with their reports of its intimacy and happiness. In addition, physical contact is a fundamental aspect of sexual relationships.

Physical contact promotes compliance in interpersonal interactions. In a number of experiments, different researchers have shown that participants who are touched are more likely to comply with requests to give money, sign a petition, help others in need, increase alcohol consumption, tend a stranger's dog for several minutes, and sample or purchase food. Few studies have investigated the mechanisms by which this effect occurs, but neither attraction to the toucher nor even awareness of being touched appears to account for it. Some have speculated that enhancement of compliance through physical contact occurs because higher-status individuals are more likely to initiate touch (and lower-status individuals are more likely to comply with those having higher status). However, although the belief that higher-status individuals initiate more touch than do lower-status individuals is pervasive, a recent meta analysis of nonverbal behaviors and verticality in social relations

revealed that there is no consensus in the literature about whether this is actually the case.

Physiological Effects of Touch

The immediate cardiovascular effects of social touch (usually a touch on the wrist or forearm) have been investigated in a number of laboratory experiments. The most consistent findings are that physical contact causes heart rate to decrease from baseline and reduces heart rate reactivity to stress tasks; a recent study suggests that this effect likely results from an increase in vagal activation of the heart.

With regard to more intimate or affectionate forms of physical contact, recent research has shown positive associations between “warm partner contact” (comprising both physical affection and positive, relationship-oriented conversation with one’s romantic partner) and reduced cardiovascular responses to stress. For example, both men and women who experienced 10 minutes of warm contact with their partners (including a 20-second hug) before a laboratory speech stressor had lower systolic and diastolic blood pressure and lower heart rate responses to the stressor than did those who did not. Another study revealed lower blood pressure before a stressor and lower heart rate during the stressor in women who reported more hugs with their partners on a daily basis. Another study tested neck and shoulder massage separately from social interaction and found that massage from a cohabiting romantic partner or spouse, but not verbal social support, reduced women’s heart rate and cortisol (a stress hormone) responses to a subsequent laboratory stressor.

Although relatively few studies have been done, most of the evidence suggests that physical contact tends to lower cardiovascular responses from baseline and reduces stress reactivity. However, this research was conducted in laboratory settings; almost nothing is known about the physiological effects of physical affection in daily life outside the laboratory. Recent advances in ambulatory monitoring of cardiovascular function, along with non-invasive methods of measuring cortisol, will improve future research in this area.

Massage Therapy

Massage therapy is a specialized form of touch. Typically, it is unidirectional; a trained practitioner

applies particular types of physical contact (e.g., rubbing, deep pressure) within an agreed-upon healing context, and is compensated for his or her efforts. Thus, it does not fall under the rubric of a friendship or other close relationship—in fact, it is explicitly professional. However, it is relatively well-studied, particularly with regard to physiological outcomes. Massage therapy has shown positive psychological and physiological effects in many studies of both normal and clinical samples. A recent summary of experimental studies in adults found conclusive evidence that (a) single applications of massage therapy reduced state anxiety, blood pressure, and heart rate; and (b) a course of multiple massage treatments significantly reduced chronic pain, anxiety, and depression. In addition, massage reduces crying, improves alertness, and increases weight gain in both pre- and full-term infants.

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See also Affection and Affectionate Behavior; Closeness; Communication, Nonverbal; Emotion Regulation, Developmental Influences; Infant–Caregiver Communication; Intimacy

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TRANSFERENCE

Do past relationships arise to haunt current ones? If so, when might this happen and how? The process of transference is known to arise when a mental representation of a significant other is triggered by the presence of someone who at least minimally resembles that significant other. The result is that this representation then serves as a lens through which the new person is viewed. Perceptions are colored by past experiences, expectations, and emotions. This is so whether the significant other is from one's family of origin (e.g., one's mother) or is from another domain (e.g., one's best friend). The content of the representation is a function of what is known and has previously been experienced in the particular relationship, yet the psychological process generally occurs in the same way across people in the context of everyday interpersonal relations, that is, relative to basic psychological processes. This entry addresses some ways in which prior relationships influence new ones, as well as current conceptions of the self, through the process of transference.

How Transference Works

The emotional and motivational relevance of close others is what renders them as broadly influential as they are. They are linked to the self in memory so that one experiences the self differently depending on the particular relationship. Cognitively, the frequency with which these representations have previously been activated and used leads them to have a special readiness to be used again. In short, they are chronically accessible. At the same time, triggering cues in the form of qualities of a new person will heighten the transient activation of a specific representation, making it more likely to be used at that time. Indeed, anything in the external context that maps onto what is known about the significant other can cue the representation, even if seemingly incidental, such as a style of responding or a first name. This cuing occurs even if the resemblance is outside of awareness.

Historical Background

Historically, transference was conceptualized as a clinical concept largely occurring in psychotherapy

and useful to therapeutic ends. Freud proposed the concept and conceived it as the patient re-experiencing with an analyst the infantile psychosexual conflicts felt with a parent. As reformulated by Harry Stack Sullivan, transference came to be called *parataxic distortion*. Notions of the self and significant other were at the forefront and bound together by the self-other relationship (termed *personifications* linked by *dynamisms*). Transference occurs, then, when material about the significant other is superimposed onto a new person and the learned interpersonal dynamics are experienced anew. The social-cognitive model of transference, formulated by Susan Andersen, is compatible with Sullivan's assumptions, though conceptualized in contemporary terms and in a way that can be examined scientifically. The scientific approach has allowed the first experimental demonstration of this century-old concept.

Procedures Used in Transference Research

In studies of transference, people typically learn about a new person by reading a series of statements about this person. In one condition, a minimal number of the features they learn are ones that they themselves had generated to describe their own significant other in an allegedly independent session several weeks earlier. For example, a feature listed to describe the significant other and then presented about the new person might be "drives a fast sports car" or "bites nails in public." This is how transference is triggered. In a control condition, participants learn the same information about the new person, but this information does not resemble their own significant other. Instead, it resembles someone else's significant other. Thus, there is no significant-other representation triggered in the latter case.

Findings in Transference Research

Inference and Memory

A central finding from this research is that people fill in the blanks about a new person using their significant-other representation when this new person at least minimally resembles this significant other. That is, their inferences about this

new person and their memory of what they actually learned about this person will be biased by what they know about the significant other rather than mainly reflecting the features actually learned. People in the significant-other resemblance condition infer that the new person has features that he or she does not in fact have simply because these features describe the significant other. For example, although the feature “is obsessed with politics,” may not have been presented as a feature of the new person, participants in the resemblance condition will be more likely to remember having learned that the new person “is obsessed with politics,” if it is a quality of their own significant other. That is, they are confident that they learned features about the new person that were not actually presented. This process is triggered implicitly—that is, with participants being unaware or only dimly aware of it—as has been shown using a variety of significant others. It even occurs when the triggering cues themselves are presented subliminally (i.e., so quickly that they cannot be consciously seen).

Evaluation

The literature also shows that people tend to evaluate a new person in line with how they evaluate a significant other if the new person at least minimally resembles that other. More unobtrusively, their facial expressions while learning about the new person also reveal this same overall evaluation. People show more positive facial affect in these initial moments of having a transference experience if the significant-other representation that the new person triggers is of a significant other who is well liked or loved, rather than disliked. No comparable effect is observed in control conditions.

Expectations and Behavioral Confirmation

Along similar lines, if the individual sees the significant other as having been accepting rather than rejecting, expectancies for acceptance will also be evoked in transference. That is, people will expect to be accepted rather than rejected by the new person, and nothing of the kind will occur in control conditions. Beyond this, expectancies influence interpersonal behavior and this occurs in

transference as well. In the transference context, people seem to act on their expectations about what the new person will be like and do so in a way that actually leads the new person to confirm their expectations. If one’s best friend tends to behave in a responsive, caring way, a stranger who shares a few qualities with one’s best friend will be expected to be responsive and caring as well, and this attitude will even tend to evoke a responsive and caring behavior from the new person. Expectations become reality in the behavior of the new person.

Motivation and Interpersonal Roles

Motivation, too, is influenced by transference. The goals pursued with a significant other are stored in memory along with the representation and, as a result, when the significant-other representation is activated, the corresponding goals will be also activated indirectly. For example, in close relationships, the motivation to remain close and connected is profound. Correspondingly, in positive transference (e.g., when a new person triggers the representation of a loved significant other), people are more highly motivated to be emotionally close with the new person than they otherwise would be. Moreover, the interpersonal role one typically occupies with a significant other (e.g., underling vs. authority figure), which is also infused with pertinent relationship goals, is also activated in the context of transference—with the result that a violation of that role is disturbing because goal pursuit would be hampered.

The Self

Even the way one experiences the self shifts in the context of transference. Representations of significant others are linked in memory with what is known about the self. Triggering such a representation will thus indirectly activate the self, and specifically, the version of self typically experienced with that significant other. For example, when a new person is even slightly reminiscent of one’s own mother, one is more likely to see oneself at that moment as one sees oneself while with one’s own mother. In such a transference, one comes to describe the self using the same kinds of terms used to describe the self as when with one’s mother, and the positivity or negativity of these self-descriptive

terms also shifts to reflect one's overall evaluation of the self in the significant-other relationship.

Self-Regulation

The self is involved in transference in the sense that self-regulatory processes are readily provoked once a significant other is activated. For example, if one experiences a threat to the self in transference, the result will often be compensatory self-inflation by bringing to mind self-features that are highly positive, presumably as a means of self-protection. Likewise, when negative information is encountered about a new person who resembles a positive significant other, the affective response to those exact negative features becomes positive. That is, just as people are known to treat the flaws of these loved ones as if they were virtues, people also show unusually positive affect in response to negative qualities of a new person who resembles a positive significant other.

Conversely, people do not always rally their self-regulatory resources when transference involves a conflicted relationship. For example, when transference concerns a parent who holds one to a standard of which one falls short, it activates an emotional vulnerability. According to Self-Discrepancy Theory, formulated by E. Tory Higgins, individuals may experience a discrepancy between a parent's ideals for them and the qualities their parent sees them as having (an actual-ideal discrepancy) or between a parent's sense of who they feel obliged to be and the qualities the parent believes they have (an actual-ought discrepancy). If so, when the mental representation of this parent is implicitly activated in transference, the particular discrepancy should be activated, which should lead the individual to feel dejected or depressed (if it is an actual-ideal self-discrepancy) or to be filled with hostility and have trouble calming down (if it is an actual-ought self-discrepancy). This is exactly what the evidence shows.

For individuals who were physically abused by a parent, activating this parental representation in transference has been shown to lead to profound mistrust of the new person as well as to the expectation of rejection by the new person and, at the same time, emotional indifference about how the new person might feel about them. Recent research has shown that under the circumstance of an

additional threat—for example, when the new person is said to be becoming increasingly irritated and annoyed while waiting for an upcoming interaction with the participant—abused individuals in transference show so little negative affect as compared with participants in other conditions that it may be akin to what is termed “emotional numbing.”

Such distancing may have been functional and adaptive when the individual needed to live and interact with the significant other, but it may be problematic to the degree that it might dampen a response of alarm to potential new threats with the new person. When the new person is in fact benign, the palpable disengagement might prevent a new and positive relationship from forming.

Intergroup Relations

Recent research has extended work on transference from the dyadic domain into the realm of intergroup relations. Activating a significant-other representation indirectly activates not only relational aspects of the self but also group identifications shared with this other. Specifically, when the new person resembles a significant other who shares one's own ethnic background, the new person is in fact assumed to be of this same ethnicity (in the absence of any relevant cues). Moreover, one's own ethnic identity is also activated, as shown by increased intergroup ethnic bias in judgments made about people outside the relationship—if the significant other also has an ethnically narrow social network rather than a diverse one. A diverse social network buffers the effect. This work is provocative both because it suggests a link between relational and social identity in transference and because it appears to be moderated by aspects of the significant other's own social network.

Conclusion

After a century of theorizing about the clinical concept of transference, advances in experimental social cognition have demonstrated that this process is both common and influential in shaping behavior toward others. Evidence suggests that transference is a normal aspect of basic cognitive processes and sets in motion both vulnerabilities

and opportunities deriving from our past personal relationships as they arise in the present.

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See also Cognitive Processes in Relationships; Emotion in Relationships; Goals in Relationships; Motivation and Relationships; Self-Concept and Relationships

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TRANSFORMATION OF MOTIVATION

Transformation of motivation occurs while interacting with others when interaction behavior reflects a motivated shift away from one's immediate, self-interested behavioral impulse. The shift is motivated in that it is driven by a person's broader aims for the given interaction. Many interpersonal situations in the immediate moment elicit an urge to behave a certain way, such as in competitive situations. A shift in behavior occurs, however, because of broader interaction goals with a particular person or broader social considerations (for example, a business competitor versus a spouse). *Transformation of motivation* was coined by the authors of Interdependence Theory, Harold Kelley and John Thibaut, who developed this

theory to explain and predict thoughts and behaviors in interpersonal interactions.

Transformation of motivation is conceptualized as the mental process that, in many situations, shapes the nature of a person's interaction behavior, making it a central concept in understanding interactions in relationships. This entry discusses goals or “motives” people have in interactions, when and how such motives direct behavior in interpersonal situations, and the benefits of having this concept.

Interaction Motives

Before developing the concept of transformation of motivation, prevailing models predicting behavior were based on simple economic assumptions. These models suggested that in interactions with others, people are motivated to maximize their own gains—that is, their sole goal or motive is pursuing their own self-interest. The concept of transformation of motivation allows for the possibility that not all behavior is driven by immediate self-interest and, indeed, interaction motives may vary; a person is likely to have different goals when interacting with a potential relationship partner, a cooperative coworker, a friendly neighbor, or a competitive sibling.

The various motives people have in interacting with others can be understood in terms of different patterns of resources or “outcomes” each person obtains relative to the interaction partner. In studies where people make decisions about their own and another's outcomes (both the benefits and costs), people typically display one of four motives: maximizing one's own outcomes (self-interested motives), maximizing the partner's outcomes (altruistic motives), adopting the action that yields the highest own and partner outcomes (communal motives involving maximizing the pair's joint outcomes), or adopting the action that maximizes the difference favoring one's own outcomes *relative to* the partner outcomes (competitive motives).

Some interaction motives become more prevalent than others in specific types of relationships. Parents often act in ways to maximize what is best for their children, even when it means they themselves could have obtained better outcomes from alternative actions; friends often act in ways to

maximize their joint outcomes, unless they become involved in a friendly rivalry (e.g., in playing games or sports), in which the aim might become to do better than the other, even if an alternate action would have allowed both to do well. Individuals in well-functioning relationships typically do what is best for both of them or for the partner; those in distressed relationships may behave in more selfish ways (knowingly disregarding the partner's outcomes and instead acting to maximize their own outcomes).

When people face similar situations repeatedly, motive-consistent behavior may become relatively automatic. This is the case when one automatically enacts a social norm, rather than behaving in a purely self-interested manner. For example, when a man in an office setting is rushed and yet is greeted by a coworker ("Hey, how's it going?"), the man is likely to give little thought to greeting the coworker back ("Fine, thanks! How are you?") as he rushes by.

Before these responses became automatic, they would have required a more conscious transformation of motivation to override the temptation to respond to the given situation by ignoring the greeter. A person who is unfamiliar with office norms may indeed ignore the greeter on one occasion and find that this has unpleasant consequences—the greeter might scowl rather than smile in a future greeting opportunity. The greeter may then try another response, perhaps engaging the greeter in lengthy conversation, only to be avoided by the greeter in the future. Thoughtful acts that worked well (i.e., yielded satisfactory outcomes) in a specific type of situation—in this case, a situation in which the two people affect each other minimally and it is easy for each to invoke the greeting norm—become favored over those that result in unpleasant experiences, and repeating acts that work well give way to automatic tendencies.

When Are Interaction Motives Relevant?

When does behavior shift as a result of a transformation of motivation? Transformation of motivation is likely to occur when the given situation is such that the actions of each partner affect the other, and the initial, self-interested impulse to act

is one that will not serve broader interaction goals. Characteristics of a given situation will tend to elicit relatively uniform, short-sighted responses when one does not consider social norms, one's values about how to treat others, or concerns about how to treat a specific person. Once such considerations come into play, the uniform response is changed into a response tailored for those specific considerations. As such, the response of what would be a self-interested generic person—someone with no interest in or concern for another—is transformed into the response of someone with specific interaction motives.

To illustrate, imagine that Harry and Sally are a happily married couple. Sally had a long and trying day at work, but she takes refuge in knowing that she is almost home. Harry arrived earlier and had promised to cook and clean the kitchen, but he became sidetracked when a friend called on the phone. When Sally arrived, the situation she faced was that she was tired and hungry, no food was ready, the kitchen was a mess, and Harry was laughing on the phone.

Sally's initial urge, and that of most people faced with this situation, is to yell at Harry; in the immediate moment, most people would prefer—that is, attach a higher outcome to—yelling than to saying nothing. This is a situation, however, where a shift in motivation may occur, given that yelling undermines the interaction motives of happily married couples. As such, her preferred action—the one likely to yield the highest outcome for her—may shift from yelling toward whispering to him, "I'm a wreck; please get off the phone in the next minute or so." As for Harry, his initial impulse may be to say, firmly, "No way! I'm in the middle of a conversation!" Upon considering that she is a "wreck," however, he might shift toward ending his conversation quickly and turning his attention to Sally. Transformation of motivation conceptually accounts for the fact that each response moves beyond the "given" situation once Sally and Harry consider each other (and their relationship). Their underlying motive shifts from being self-interested to interaction motives that reflect broader interpersonal and social considerations.

What evidence is there that an actual shift occurs in how one is inclined to act? Is there any proof that people actually engage in a transformation of their motivation? Evidence indicates that in many

situations, actual behavior reflects a shift away from a generic response driven by self-interest. For instance, the many studies observing marital interaction have shown that the individual preferences that spouses describe before a problem-solving discussion are often compromised to promote cooperative solutions that are responsive to the needs of both partners. The cost of interdependence is that Sally may have to agree to attend *Harlequin Romance* with Harry when she would personally prefer to see *Terminator III*. The gain is that her more important motivation is to spend time with Harry and enjoy his company.

Similarly, when individuals in dating relationships are asked to recall a time when the partner behaved badly, the responses they report having considered enacting are more destructive than the responses they actually enacted. Also, when individuals consider hypothetical instances in which their dating partner behaves badly, having less time to respond or being distracted with other matters causes more destructive responses than having more time. This suggests that (a) actual behavior does not match initial behavioral inclinations, and (b) there really is an intermediary psychological process that involves transforming the situation by reflecting on broader social and interpersonal considerations.

To summarize, interaction motives become relevant when a given situation is likely to elicit behavior that would be socially inappropriate for the given interaction—it might violate social norms, go against the grain of one's personality or values, or undermine how one wants to be with a specific interaction partner. Evidence supports the idea that a process of transformation of motivation immediately precedes actual behavior.

Transformation of Motivation as a Useful Concept

The concept of transformation of motivation has been useful for understanding several aspects of human interactions, two of which are highlighted here. One is that it can be used to predict and account for interaction behavior. Provided with a precise account of an interaction situation—relevant physical, social, and personal characteristics, such as occupying a tight space with an acquaintance, or

interacting with demanding others when one is already exhausted—and provided with the broader considerations or goals one has for a given interaction, it becomes possible to better predict a person's behavior than from his or her individual characteristics. For example, a son-in-law who has had an exhausting day and feels ready to snap may react several different ways to the demands of an overbearing mother-in-law. If he is highly committed to his wife, one would predict that he will acquiesce to the mother-in-law's demands. The account for why a person engaged in a specific behavior would rest on the motive that was invoked.

Transformation of motivation is also a useful conceptual tool in understanding how people discern information about others—their norms, values, and desires for a specific relationship. Behavior is only partly attributable to features of a given situation, and largely attributable to what a specific person “makes” of the given situation. For example, office settings make for situations where coworkers typically greet one another. If one person greets another and stands very close, smiles a lot, and engages the other in flirtatious conversation, people would discern that the person is romantically interested in the other. The more a behavior departs from what might be expected given the situation, social norms, and the general type of interaction, the more that behavior provides rich, diagnostic information about specialized motives driving a person in that situation. As such, behavior that goes against what might be expected or predictable in a given situation conveys motives that are unique to a given person in a particular setting.

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See also Accommodation; Commitment, Predictors and Outcomes; Interdependence Theory; Trust; Willingness to Sacrifice

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TRANSGRESSIONS

“All’s fair in love and war”—or so the saying goes. In real life, however, both love and war are bound by codes of proper conduct. When bad behavior violates the code of proper conduct in a close relationship, it is a relational transgression. When a stranger makes a rude or insulting comment, we feel annoyed and insulted, but there is no long-term cost because there is no emotional investment in the relationship. However, when a friend betrays or deceives us, the emotional response is much deeper and more troubling. Likewise, to learn that a romantic partner has been unfaithful is to experience waves of hurt, anger, fear, and jealousy. This entry more fully defines relational transgressions and explores the factors that influence their effect on relational quality and stability.

Defining Relational Transgressions

Although most people know intuitively what a relational transgression is, scholars use specific definitions to guide their research. The most widely used definition is that relational transgressions are *behaviors that violate implicit or explicit*

norms or rules that constitute the definitional terms of a relationship. Implicit norms and rules are not formally negotiated; they are simply the taken-for-granted assumptions that guide expectations for appropriate behaviors in most relationships (e.g., we will not say hurtful things, we will not display violent behavior, we will provide emotional support when needed). Explicit norms and rules are established as relationships develop or ambiguous definitions are negotiated (e.g., a dating couple makes an explicit commitment to be sexually and emotionally exclusive or cross-sex friends agree to have sex but not display jealousy if one partner begins dating). Explicit norms and rules are also established when some event requires a couple to clarify expectations (e.g., an ex-partner reappears and a rule is established that he or she is not to be included in the partner’s social network).

Importantly, these norms and rules are not simply regulatory guides for appropriate behavior. They are the defining features (or definitional terms) of close relationships. That is, whether explicitly acknowledged or not, the assumption that a certain set of expectations will be met, like a “moral code,” is the basis of trust in another person. When trust is established and maintained, we feel safe and become open with our thoughts and feelings. This openness contributes to the special feelings we call *relational closeness* or *intimacy*. Ironically, the emotional vulnerability that follows the development of trust also opens partners to the painful consequences of a transgression when trust is violated. Indeed, some scholars prefer to use the term *betrayal* rather than *transgression* to underscore the role of broken trust.

In sum, when scholars study relational transgressions, they are studying behaviors, actions, and messages that violate the norms and rules that underlie assumptions that a particular other person can be trusted—trusted to protect the relationship, show goodwill, keep private information private, and privilege the relationship as special. This perspective allows researchers to separate “bad behavior” from true transgressions. For example, some people are chronically late. This behavior may be annoying to network members, but would not be considered a relational transgression because it does not violate implicit or explicit norms or rules that are part of a relationship’s definition.

This entry now discusses the types of behaviors scholars have identified as relational transgressions and draws primarily from the research focused on close relationships such as friends, family, dating partners, or spouses. Although transgressions can occur in professional settings when a coworker violates a norm of appropriate conduct, these transgressions are not typically as personally devastating as is the transgression committed by a close relationship partner.

Types of Relational Transgressions

Scholars have delineated the types of actions and behaviors that are typically included within the broad category of relational transgression. Although not the most common in frequency of occurrence, the most serious transgression is generally considered to be relational infidelity, both sexual and emotional. *Sexual infidelity* is defined as engaging in sexual behaviors outside of a relationship when explicit or implicit rules prohibit it. Perceived severity depends on the context (e.g., a one-night stand with a stranger versus repeated occasions with the same person) and the extent of involvement (e.g., kissing, petting, or sexual intercourse). *Emotional infidelity* is defined as emotional involvement with and strong affection for another person that includes the investment of time and attention, either in face-to-face or mediated interactions (e.g., telephone or Internet) without the knowledge of one's partner.

When considering the question of which type of infidelity is perceived to be the most distressing, the answer depends partly on how researchers collect their data. One method of collecting data (called "forced choice") involves giving respondents three options (e.g., imagine that your partner has committed sexual infidelity, emotional infidelity, or both) and asking them to select the situation they would find the most upsetting. In these studies, respondents usually pick the situation with both types of infidelity as the most upsetting. When only two scenarios are provided, one with sexual infidelity and one with emotional infidelity, most men select the sexual infidelity as the most upsetting and most women select the emotional infidelity as the most upsetting. Some scholars explain this pattern as a function of the evolutionary differences

in the reproductive goals of men and women. Specifically, men want to be assured that any child born within a relationship is their own, whereas women want to be assured that the resources provided to them and their children by their partner will not be diverted to another woman. Other scholars explain the differences as the result of socialization for men and women. That is, because women are socialized to practice a restricted orientation toward sex and to link sex with emotional commitment, their partners may be threatened by their sexual infidelity because they assume that it also includes emotional attachment—a presumed double threat to the relationship. However, because men are socialized to practice an unrestricted orientation toward sex, their partners may be less threatened by their sexual involvement with another woman because they do not assume it suggests any emotional commitment.

A different method of collecting data, however, does not yield this pattern of gender differences in response to infidelity. When respondents are asked to rate the degree to which they would feel specific emotions such as anger or hurt rather than to pick the most upsetting type of infidelity, both men and women feel more total negative emotion over sexual than emotional infidelity. In addition, both men and women report feeling more anger over sexual infidelity, but feeling more hurt over emotional infidelity. Finally, even when using the forced-choice method, researchers find that women and men who have actually been the victims of a partner's sexual infidelity rate it equally distressing. In short, research continues to explore the nature and consequences of sexual and emotional infidelity, especially whether gender differences exist in responses.

A second type of transgression that is commonly reported by relational partners, and often associated with infidelity, is deception. *Deception* is communication intended to lead a partner to believe something that the deceiver knows is untrue. It is not misspeaking or accidentally forgetting—it is strategically designed to mislead a partner. Deception is accomplished in three general ways: omission, falsification, and equivocation. *Omission* is simply not informing a partner when that information is obviously relevant. *Falsification* is an explicit lie, usually forced by a partner's question. *Equivocation* is also forced by

a partner's question but contains some element of truth that allows the deceiver to sidestep the purpose of the question. For example, if a woman believes that her husband might be interested in a coworker and asks why he is working late so often, an equivocal response would be, "I told you I have year-end reports to finish." This response sidesteps the issue implied in the question but is somewhat true in that he does, in fact, have reports to finish up. If, however, she asks if he is spending time after work with another woman and he says absolutely not, when he is in fact doing so, he has lied to his wife. Deceptive communication, as a relational transgression, is damaging because it violates the expectations of a relationship to be honest and open.

Although infidelity and deception represent perhaps the prototypical relational transgression, many other types exist. For example, hurtful messages that devalue the relationship or the partner are commonly mentioned by research participants as a transgression they have experienced. Inappropriate or rude behaviors are often reported as a relational transgression, especially in sensitive contexts such as during conflict. Lack of sensitivity, such as thoughtless, disrespectful, or inconsiderate behavior, is also considered a relational transgression. Other transgressions include actions that show disregard for the relationship such as choosing other people or activities over the partner, breaking important promises, violating privacy such as looking at another's e-mail messages, being verbally or physically abusive, and abruptly terminating the relationship without warning or explanation.

Consequences of Relational Transgressions

A transgression's effect on relationship quality and stability depends on several factors. Two factors related to the transgression itself are severity and frequency or repetition of occurrence. For example, sexual infidelity is certainly a serious challenge for a romantic relationship, but it becomes even more severe when it has happened more than once and when it is embedded within a series of lies. And emotional infidelity is certainly more serious than a hurtful message or an act of disregard. However, if repeated over time, even

transgressions that appear to be less serious begin to erode the quality of a relationship because a partner feels more devalued, hurt, and resentful.

Two other factors that affect the quality and stability of a relationship are how the transgression is revealed and the explanation provided by the offender. When the transgressor voluntarily reveals the transgression, the consequences are less severe than when the offended person hears about it from others or discovers the transgression by him- or herself. In addition, the way the transgressor explains (or fails to explain) his or her actions is an important predictor of how the transgression will affect the relationship; it will either intensify the feelings of betrayal or will facilitate forgiveness. Specifically, if the transgressor offers a sincere apology, accepts responsibility for his or her action, and does not try to minimize the severity of the transgression or blame the victim in some way, the offended person is more likely to forgive the transgressor. To the extent that the transgressor's open acceptance of responsibility and expression of regret encourages forgiveness from the offended person, continued communication may reaffirm mutual commitment to the relationship and enhance qualities of trust, satisfaction, and openness.

Of course, forgiveness does not necessarily mean that the relationship will remain intact. Forgiveness is an emotional transformation—letting go of hurt, anger, and negative feelings toward the transgressor and actually transforming them into positive regard. Despite these positive feelings for the transgressor, however, an offended person may realize that the relationship has been damaged beyond repair and reconciliation is simply not possible.

Concluding Remarks

Relational transgressions play an important role in the quality and stability of a relationship. Maintaining the principles of honesty, fairness, and loyalty is essential for a satisfied and committed relationship. Relational transgressions test, and sometimes shatter, the trust that characterizes close relationships. Some relationships continue but trust is never fully restored. Some relationships terminate with rancor and lingering negative emotions. Fortunately, for relationships in which

productive communication facilitates forgiveness, reconciliation is possible. Even when the victim of a transgression does not choose to continue the relationship, forgiveness for the transgressor is a healthy emotion because it enables the offended person to move forward without lingering negative emotions.

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See also Deception and Lying; Deteriorating Relationships; Dissolution of Relationships, Causes; Hurt Feelings

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TRUST

Imagine a hypothetical couple, Chris and Susan. Susan has just decided she wants to pursue her dream of going back to school to become a psychologist, and she is preparing to tell Chris about her plans. How will Chris react? Can she count on

him to support her decision, even if it entails costs for Chris? Should she worry that he may not be willing to make the sacrifices necessary for her to follow her dream?

This example illustrates principles of interpersonal trust, which is an important phenomenon in the daily lives of virtually all couples. Morton Deutsch, one of the founders of interpersonal trust research, defined *trust* as the confidence that one will find what is desired from a partner rather than what is feared. Trust reflects the juxtaposition of people’s loftiest hopes and aspirations in relation to their deepest worries and fears, and it might be the single most important ingredient for the development and maintenance of happy, well-functioning relationships. Several major theories, including John Bowlby’s Attachment Theory and Erik Erikson’s Theory of Psychosocial Development, are built on the premise that greater trust experienced early in life lays the psychological foundation for happier and better-functioning people and relationships in adulthood.

This entry describes some basic definitions of trust and trust-relevant social situations, reviews a new dyadic model of trust in relationships, discusses conditions under which greater trust could have negative effects on close relationships, and notes how trust is linked to other variables in relationships.

Conceptualizations of Trust

Interpersonal trust has been studied with two traditions in psychology. Earlier work adopted a dispositional view of trust in which trust was viewed as a property of individuals similar to personality traits such as shyness or extraversion. According to this approach, trust involves beliefs and attitudes about the degree to which other people in general can be depended on to be reliable, cooperative, and helpful. In the 1980s, conceptualizations and measures of trust became more partner-specific and relationship-specific. According to this dyadic or interpersonal view, trust is a psychological state or orientation of an individual (the truster) toward a specific partner (the trustee) with whom the individual is interdependent (that is, the truster needs the trustee’s cooperation to obtain valued outcomes or resources). According to this perspective, the

extent to which an individual trusts one person has no necessary association with how much she or he trusts another person. What makes interpersonal trust especially difficult to study is that it involves three components: “*I trust you to do X.*” In other words, trust depends on properties of the self (I), the specific partner (you), and the current situation (to do X).

Social psychologists Roderick Kramer and Peter Carnevale have further proposed that trust involves a set of beliefs, expectations, and attributions about the degree to which a partner’s actions are likely to support one’s long-term self-interests, particularly in situations in which one must count on the partner to provide unique benefits or critical outcomes. Such trust-relevant situations typically activate two cognitive processes: (1) feelings of vulnerability, and (2) expectations of how the partner is likely to behave across time. When a partner promotes an individual’s best interests instead of his or her own, *both* parties are likely to feel and report greater trust. Trust is also likely to be higher when (a) each partner’s self-interested outcomes match (are similar), (b) both partners have self-interested outcomes that match those that are best for the relationship, or (c) both individuals believe that their *partner* will act on what is best for the relationship, even when the partners’ personal self-interests are at odds.

Two types of trust-relevant situations have been described in the psychology literature. John Holmes and his colleagues have focused on “strain-test” situations. Strain-test situations occur when one individual wants a specific outcome that requires investment from his or her partner, but the needed actions differ from what would benefit the partner. For example, if Chris supports Susan’s desire to change her career even though he must make personal sacrifices to support her while she is in school, he most likely has “passed” a strain-test and, as a result, Susan should trust him more than before the test. Strain-test situations can be used intentionally or unintentionally to gauge the level of trust an individual should place in his or her partner. If, for example, Chris starts spending more time with his friends and less time with Susan, she may feel less confident about Chris and how he feels about the relationship. In this situation, Susan could gauge the level of trust she has in Chris by seeing how he reacts in this situation. She might ask him to go to a movie with her, knowing that

doing so would mean Chris would have to forgo a valued night out with his friends. If Chris gladly goes to the movie, Susan’s level of trust in Chris ought to increase. Deliberate or intentional attempts to create strain-test situations should be more likely when important, unexpected, or suspicious events lead individuals to question whether they can truly trust their partners. Though potentially diagnostic (an accurate gauge of trust), premeditated tests are probably conducted rather infrequently, and they could damage relationships.

Based in a game theory approach, Harold Kelley and his colleagues have investigated a second interpersonal trust situation. Similar to strain-tests, trust situations occur when partners are highly interdependent (that is, the actions of each partner strongly affect the other), partners have established rules for the coordination and exchange of behavior that maintain their interdependence, and partners have somewhat noncorresponding (dissimilar) outcomes. Whereas strain-test situations diagnose the level of trust that one can place in a partner at critical times in relationships (e.g., during important life transitions), trust situations may be used to determine the level of trust an individual should place in his or her partner during more mundane, everyday interactions so that trust situations may be the primary context in which trust gradually develops in relationships across time.

Consider another example. Suppose that Chris and Susan have a deck in their backyard that is a good place to spend quality time together. The deck, however, needs major repairs, and the upcoming weekend might be a good time to work on this project. There are four possible outcomes for this prototypic trust situation. In one outcome (outcome 1), Chris and Susan could both decide to work on the deck together, which would produce the maximum reward—the task gets done quickly and they also spend time together. In a second outcome (outcome 2), Chris decides not to work on the deck, whereas Susan does. In this case, Chris experiences some gains because progress is made on the deck, but Susan experiences some losses because she is saddled with all the work. Outcome 3 is the reverse of outcome 2, with Chris being saddled with all the work, yielding slightly more positive outcomes for Susan but slightly poorer ones for Chris. In outcome 4, neither Susan or Chris work on the deck, and no benefits are gained

or lost since no progress is made on the deck and they don't spend time together. According to Kelley and his colleagues, trust should increase when relationship partners repeatedly choose outcome 1 (mutually beneficial decisions) that yield the maximum rewards for *both* partners.

Trust situations have three unique properties. First, cooperative behavior by both partners always yields better outcomes compared with when partners do not cooperate. Second, the best outcome always occurs when both partners make the cooperative choice. Third, cooperative choices are risky because, if one's partner makes a noncooperative choice, the cooperative choice generates the *worst* possible outcomes for the individual. If this happens, the individual is likely to feel exploited, which should erode interpersonal trust.

Based on a recent review of the interpersonal trust literature, Jeff Simpson has identified four basic principles of interpersonal trust:

1. Individuals often gauge the degree to which they can trust their partners by observing whether their partners make sacrifices for the good of the individual or the good of the relationship in *trust-diagnostic* situations (that is, in trust or strain-test situations).
2. Trust-diagnostic situations (e.g., strain-test situations) often occur naturally and unintentionally during the ebb and flow of everyday life. Depending on circumstances, however, individuals may sometimes enter, transform, or occasionally create trust-diagnostic situations to test whether their current level of trust in a partner is warranted.
3. Individual differences in attachment style (secure versus insecure), self-esteem, or self-differentiation (the extent to which individuals have varying "selves" and roles with others) may affect the growth or decline of trust over time in relationships. People who are more securely attached, have higher self-esteem, or have more differentiated self-concepts should experience higher levels of trust and increases in trust in their relationships over time. In contrast, individuals who have lower self-esteem, have less differentiated self-concepts, or are less securely attached should be less likely to experience heightened trust and may experience decreases in trust as their relationships progresses.

4. Neither the level nor the trajectory of trust in relationships can be fully understood without considering the dispositions and actions of *both* relationship partners, especially in trust-diagnostic situations. Trust, therefore, is a truly interpersonal phenomenon.

Dyadic Model of Trust

Research on interpersonal trust has been guided by dispositional *or* interpersonal perspectives, rarely both. Dispositionally oriented work has documented that individuals who are more insecurely attached, have lower self-esteem, or have more poorly differentiated self-concepts (self-concepts that are less diversified, more imbalanced, and poorly tied together) usually trust their romantic partners less. Research has confirmed that trust tends to be higher when individuals believe their partners are more committed to the relationship and harbor more benevolent relationship intentions and motivations. It is also higher when partners regularly display "prorelationship transformations of motivation," that is, turning initial gut-level negative reactions to a partner's bad behaviors into constructive responses that ultimately benefit the relationship.

Transformations of motivation occur within the truster in relation to the trustee. Susan, for example, may refuse to work on the deck. Chris, in turn, may initially feel annoyed or frustrated that Susan is "letting him down," but he may quickly transform this initial negative reaction and protect the high regard that he has for her by giving her the benefit of the doubt. This transformation should also alter how Chris behaves toward Susan, which should result in more accommodative behavior by Susan in response to Chris's accommodative actions.

A model depicting how these core principles may be linked in social interactions is shown in Figure 1. The Dyadic Model of Trust in Relationships includes features of the relationship as well as individual difference (personality) components of both relationship partners. The relationship components of the model are depicted in the five boxes in the middle of the figure. The individual difference components, represented by circles for each partner, reflect the relevant dispositions of each relationship partner (e.g., each partner's attachment

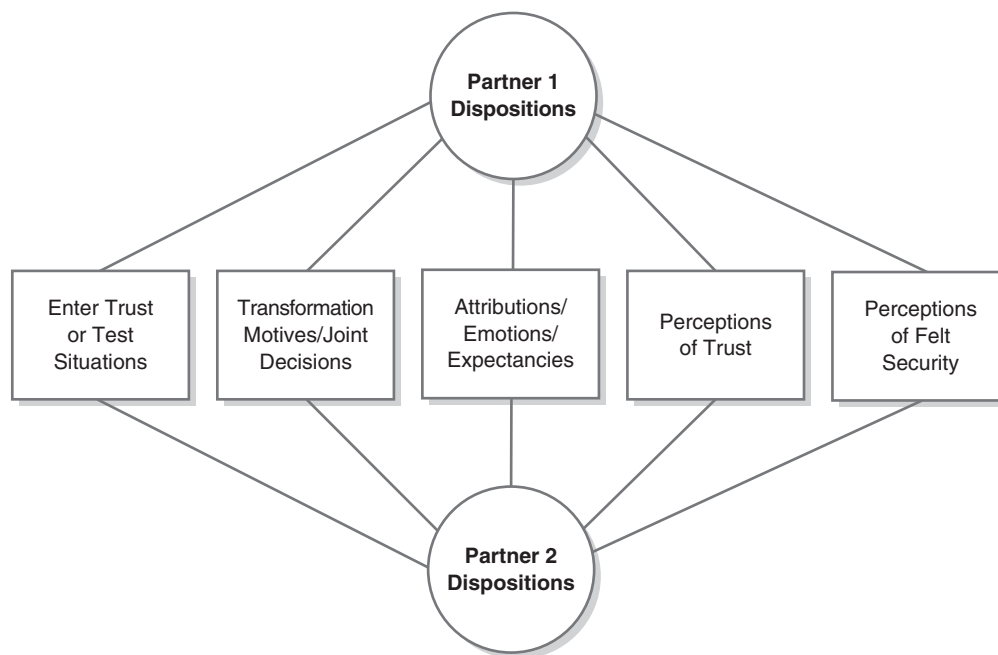


Figure 1 Dyadic Model of Trust in Relationships (Simpson, 2007)

orientation, self-esteem, and self-differentiation) plus their connections to each relationship component in the model. Feedback loops between the individual components and the relationship components are not depicted, but are presumed to exist. According to the model, each individual's perceptions of his or her own *and* the partner's standing on each construct are necessary to explain and understand what happens in the downstream portions of the model.

The model assumes that information about the dispositions of *both* partners is essential to understanding and explaining the growth of trust—or lack thereof—in a relationship over time. The dispositional tendencies discussed should motivate certain people to enter, transform, or sometimes create social interactions that increase trust over time. Dispositional factors also may influence an individual's motivation to gauge the level of trust that can be placed in his or her partner as revealed in trust or strain-test situations. Before these situations can occur, however, one or both partners must have enough confidence to take the interpersonal risks necessary to confirm or reaffirm that their partner *can* be trusted to some degree. Individuals who have more positive working models, namely those who hold themselves and their partners in high regard and value the

current relationship, should be more likely to take these risks.

Once they are in trust-diagnostic situations, individuals who display the transformation of motivation needed to make decisions that benefit the partner or relationship at some cost to the self ought to experience more trust and felt security (see the second relationship component in the figure). Partners who have more positive working models should display benevolent partner or relationship-based transformations more often and more strongly. As a result, they should be more motivated and perhaps more capable of steering trust-relevant social interactions toward mutually beneficial decisions. Such decisions, in turn, should be interpreted positively by both partners. Individuals who have more positive working models may also grant themselves and their partners “fuller credit” for their joint willingness to maximize partner or relationship outcomes over self-centered interests, whereas the reverse should be true of individuals who have more negative models.

This series of events should then generate benevolent attributions of both one's own and the partner's relationship motives. If, for example, Chris makes major personal sacrifices to help Susan fulfill her goal of becoming a psychologist,

Susan should be more likely to infer that she needs and values Chris and the relationship. These attributions should result in more constructive problem-solving by Susan, more adaptive emotion regulation, and more optimistic expectations about future trust-diagnostic interactions. These positive outcomes, in turn, ought to increase perceptions of trust, at least temporarily. Each of these positive effects may be slightly stronger in individuals who have greater dispositional security (more positive working models), and they may be even stronger in relationships in which both partners are highly secure. Perceptions of greater trust should in turn engender perceptions of enhanced security, which may then determine whether or when the next trust or strain-test situation occurs.

Over time, individuals who repeatedly experience mutually beneficial outcomes in the presence of their partners may perceive greater “added value” (heightened rewards simply by engaging in pleasant activities with their partner in particular), especially in trust-diagnostic situations. Such repeated outcomes may encourage individuals and their partners to engage in additional relationship-sustaining or relationship-building acts, such as disparaging attractive alternative partners or perceiving the partner in an especially desirable light. These cognitive processes, in turn, might increase the likelihood of more mutually beneficial decisions and outcomes in the future. Positive effects ought to diminish, however, if one or both partners have dispositional characteristics that are not conducive to trust, repeatedly decide *not* to enter mutually beneficial agreements, or harbor negative attributions regarding their partner’s relationship motives.

This raises a paradox. Early in relationships, greater preresolution transformation of motivation by both partners should be a good barometer of the level of trust that is warranted in the partner, especially when partners are equally dependent on each other for unique or important outcomes or have similar levels of vulnerability or commitment. As relationships progress, however, most individuals blend their partners and relationships with their own self-concepts as their individual plans and goals gradually merge. This means that transformation of motivation should be *less* likely in well-established relationships. Couples in long-term relationships may, therefore, need to identify new

trust-diagnostic situations in which each individual’s self-interests start out being discrepant from what might be best for his or her partner or the relationship. If partners jointly reaffirm their willingness to make large transformations when new trust-diagnostic situations arise, this should sustain or increase trust even in long-standing pairs.

Potential Downfalls of Trust

High levels of trust can, of course, have downsides. For example, trusting one’s partner should be good for individuals and their relationships when an individual is willing to discount, ignore, or forgive isolated or one-time partner transgressions. But what happens when a person gives his or her partner the benefit of the doubt *despite* repeated evidence that the partner isn’t worthy of trust? Individuals who experience a series of failed strain-tests and continue to trust their partners “blindly” may become vulnerable to exploitation or abuse. In these more extreme cases, *dispositional* trust—trusting versus not trusting others regardless of who one’s current partner is or what the current relationship is like—may generate negative outcomes.

Interpersonal trust, which is rooted partly in features of the self, the partner, and the current relationship, emerges from the ebb and flow of daily interactions. When an individual has a disposition that is not conducive to the development and maintenance of healthy forms of trust, interpersonal trust building and gauging mechanisms are likely to be ineffective, derailing the normal process of trust development and maintenance.

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See also Accommodation; Attachment Theory; Attribution Processes in Relationships; Emotion in Relationships; Forgiveness; Interdependence Theory; Interpersonal Influence; Security in Relationships; Self-Esteem, Effects on Relationships

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TURNING POINTS IN RELATIONSHIPS

Turning points are events or relational incidents that are associated with change or transformation in a relationship. For example, participants in romantic relationships commonly report that their first kiss or first date was a significant turning point in their relationship affecting the degree of commitment between partners. Relational turning points were first conceptualized by Charles Bolton in a study examining marital dyads in which he wanted to focus on interpersonal processes that occur over time. Life-history scholars also work with the turning point concept, where it is generally understood as a transformative event in the life of an individual, in contrast to the relational focus provided by Bolton and subsequent relationship scholars. One of the key assets of focusing on turning points is that researchers are able to examine relationships and experiences from a process point of view. This entry discusses how turning points are measured through the Retrospective Interview Technique and findings from the research on turning points.

The Retrospective Interview Technique (RIT) is the most common methodological approach used to gather turning point data. The RIT allows researchers to assess both the magnitude and

valence of significant turning points. For example, the first study to use this method was interested in finding out how premarital relationships change with respect to commitment to marry. The RIT was also useful in developing a relational typology indicating different pathways or trajectories that lead to marriage. Essentially, what was learned was that couples experience different turning points at different times in their relationship, which puts them on a somewhat unique path to getting married.

Using the RIT, turning points are gathered and analyzed in a two-step process that includes a participant graphing exercise accompanied by an interview. Typically, participants are asked to indicate when significant events in a given relationship have occurred since the relationship began by placing them along the x-axis of a graph that is typically marked off in monthly increments. The y-axis of the graph has traditionally been used to position turning points according to varying levels of commitment to the relationship. In past research, participants have been asked to indicate turning points along the y-axis based on how events affected their chance to marry relational partners, influenced their commitment to the relationship, or affected their degree of emotional closeness. More recent research studies have altered the y-axis to assess different kinds of relationship impact, including extent of identification with a work organization for new employees, extent of feeling like a family for stepfamily members, and the degree of commitment to, or chance of, a post-divorce relationship for ex-spouses. Overall, the graphs offer a visual representation of significant events as they have occurred over time and the impact that those events have on various relational outcomes. The open-ended companion interview asks participants to describe the turning points in their own words.

Traditionally, the RIT and turning point analysis were used in studies that evaluated developing romantic relationships. Other studies have since used the technique or modified versions of the RIT to evaluate turning points that occur in other kinds of relationships. Relationships among divorcees, blended families, grandmothers–granddaughters, mentors–mentees, academic department chairs–faculty, parents–children, friendships, and relationships involving intimate partner violence have been evaluated for significant turning points.

Much has been learned from research that has gathered and examined turning points among various types of relationships. As an alternative understanding to stage models of relationships, which frame relational growth and development as a linear process of movement from one developmental stage to another, turning point analysis allows us to see how relationships grow and change in ways that are not so clean and tidy. For example, research conducted on mate selection has identified different pathways or trajectories to marriage such as accelerated, accelerated-arrested, intermediate, and prolonged paths. These pathways capture variations in the rate and turbidity of relationship change, with accelerated pathways representing relatively rapid and smooth progression toward 100 percent commitment, closeness, and so forth, in contrast to the prolonged pathway that represents a roller-coaster-like progression that is slower with turning points that both propel the relationship forward and move it backward.

Furthermore, related research complemented these findings in illustrating that romantic relational turning points occur for various reasons including individual (e.g., a change in how one partner feels about the other), dyadic (e.g., having a fight), social network (e.g., the presence of a rival), and circumstantial influence (e.g., a job transfer). Dyadic and social-network reasons—those grounded in the interaction between relationship partners or in the web of others that surrounds the relationship—often involve occasions when parties grapple with basic underlying contradictions that animate relating. For example, significant junctures in the negotiation of partner independence and autonomy versus partner interdependence or connection often are identified by relational partners as turning points. Turning

points vary in their valence—whether they propel a relationship positively toward a higher y-axis outcome or affect a relationship negatively with regression along the y-axis outcome. Turning points also vary in their intensity, with some resulting in small increments of y-axis change and others characterized by greater degrees of positive or negative change. Turning points often are remembered by relationship parties because they serve as the focus of subsequent storytelling and commemorative rituals. Relationship partners appear to agree in the identification of some turning points, but they also provide unique retrospective understanding of how their relationship changed over time.

Leslie A. Baxter and Bianca Wolf

See also Closeness; Commitment, Predictors and Outcomes; Dialectical Processes; Mate Selection; Stage Theories of Relationship Development

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U

UNCERTAINTY REDUCTION THEORY

Human relationships are fraught with uncertainty. From initial encounters between complete strangers to enduring close relationships, individuals experience uncertainties about their relationship partners as individuals and uncertainties about their relationships. Uncertainty Reduction Theory (URT) assumes that increasing levels of uncertainty makes communication between relational partners more difficult. Because people in relationships communicate to satisfy individual and relationship goals, high uncertainty levels undermine individuals' ability to attain goals, thus increasing the potential for frustration and reduced relationship satisfaction. Communicators must reduce uncertainty in order to tailor their messages to attain their goals.

URT was initially developed to explain why interacting strangers employ relatively ritualistic ways of getting to know each other. In American society, strangers meeting for the first time usually exchange factually oriented biographical information and reserve more private information, for example, attitudes and opinions on controversial issues, for later conversations. During an initial interaction, it probably would be somewhat odd for an individual to utter "I am an ex-convict" within the first minute or two of the conversation. Although people sometimes label background information such as "I grew up in Philadelphia" or "I attended Michigan State University" to be superficial, from URT's perspective, such information is

vital; for individuals experience uncertainty because they are unable to predict and sometimes explain others' attitudes, beliefs, and actions. Uncertainty is reduced when individuals can make accurate predictions about other's attitudes, beliefs, and future actions and when necessary, explain them. Communication rituals have emerged in encounters between strangers precisely because complete strangers are difficult to predict and explain. People persist in using such rituals even as they demean them as being superficial.

Acquiring seemingly superficial background information about individuals aids in the development of predictions and explanations. For example, consider the inferences a hearer would most likely make upon hearing different responses to the superficial question, "What is your occupation?"—the very kind of question typically asked during initial encounters. Suppose one stranger answers, "I am a neurosurgeon," while another answers, "I clean beer vats in a brewery." It would be reasonable to infer that the neurosurgeon has substantially more education than does the beer vat cleaner, although of course the beer vat cleaner could be an ex-neurosurgeon. Relatively confident inferences also could be made about their income levels. Exchanges of background information make it possible to formulate predictions about each other's attitudes, opinions, and actions that are yet to be revealed, thus enhancing the ability to create messages to reach desired goals. Inferences about such attributes as income could be based on the clothes another person is wearing, as well as on other nonverbal information. Thus, the process of

uncertainty reduction can begin well before words are exchanged in encounters between strangers.

It would be a mistake to conclude that high levels of uncertainty occur only in initial encounters between strangers. Uncertainty can arise in relationships when individuals say or do things that violate relationship partners' expectations. In many cases these violations are negative, for example, finding that a heretofore faithful spouse has been cheating or that a close friend has been saying negative things to others behind one's back. Such revelations dramatically increase uncertainty and, not surprisingly, are associated with increases in negative affect, as noted in 1985 by Sally Planalp and James Honeycutt. Positive expectation violations can occur, as when a normally inattentive husband showers his wife with expensive gifts. Of course, such behavior might fuel the wife's suspicions concerning the reasons for the sudden outpouring of positive attention, including the possibility that the husband might be cheating on her. In any case, even when individuals are encouraged to think of positive events that increased their uncertainties about others, they overwhelmingly recall negative events.

Individuals can use a number of strategies to reduce uncertainty. Merely observing others, using passive strategies, is one possibility. Unobtrusively observing a person engaged in interaction with others might reveal important information about the person. Active strategies might involve gathering information indirectly from third parties. Finally, interactive strategies, such as question asking and disclosing information about one's self with the hope that the disclosure will be reciprocated, can be deployed to gather information in social encounters. Of course, information seekers may encounter an array of strategies others use to avoid revealing information.

As noted by communications scholar William Gudykunst, research has found similarities and differences in the ways uncertainty is reduced by people from different cultures. Some have suggested that when potential outcomes are negative, people may avoid reducing uncertainty. For example, spouses who suspect that their mates are cheating on them may prefer not to obtain evidence that this is so. Although ignorance may sometimes be bliss in the short run, it may prove to be relatively nonadaptive over time. Individuals,

relationships, and society are in a constant state of change and flux; consequently, uncertainty can never be fully reduced. Those involved in close relationships at one point in time may become strangers later. Uncertainty reduction is a ceaseless process, even when individuals leave the world. Indeed, the considerable interest people have in tracing family lineages and finding their roots is a testament to the continuing nature of the uncertainty reduction process.

Charles R. Berger

See also Acquaintance Process; Cognitive Processes in Relationships; Perspective Taking; Understanding

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UNCONDITIONAL POSITIVE REGARD

This entry focuses on the concepts of conditional and unconditional positive regard and their implications for healthy psychological functioning. The concept of unconditional positive regard was introduced in the 1950s by Carl Rogers in the context of therapist–client relationships. It refers to the therapist communicating unqualified love and acceptance of the client, regardless of whether or not the therapist approves of the

client's specific actions. Unconditional positive regard is one of three therapist qualities (the other two are genuineness and empathic understanding) that foster positive growth and change on the part of the client. Considerable research substantiates the importance of these general therapist qualities to positive therapeutic outcomes.

In addition to its demonstrated importance in therapeutic settings, unconditional positive regard has been implicated in healthy outcomes associated with parenting, socialization practices, and romantic relationships. According to Rogers, all people have the capacities for healthy personal growth and development, and environments can either support or undermine these natural tendencies toward growth. Rogers asserted that environments that provide people with unconditional positive regard support natural tendencies toward growth and development. Conversely, environments thwart these tendencies by establishing conditions of worth (i.e., conditional positive regard), where love and acceptance are given only when individuals live up to standards established by significant others (e.g., parents and other adult relatives, teachers, friends, spouses). Given that people are extremely motivated to receive the love of important others, they typically become very good at satisfying the others' criteria for love's worthiness. In so doing, however, individuals often sacrifice their own needs, desires, and characteristics, making it difficult for them to function optimally. Moreover, children and adults may rigidly self-apply these standards so that they feel worthwhile only when satisfying these conditions of worth. Stated differently, exposure to conditions of worth leads people to develop contingent self-esteem, which requires continual validation of self-worth through specific behaviors, achievements, or accolades. Contingent self-esteem is fragile, precisely because it may plummet in the absence of continual validation. In contrast, healthy or secure self-esteem reflects the sense that one is inherently worthy by virtue of who one is and not what one accomplishes.

Research on Use of Conditional Regard by Parents

Until recently, scant research specifically focused on outcomes associated with parental use of

conditional versus unconditional regard. Some psychologists have asserted that the use of conditional regard improves children's ability to discriminate between desired and undesired behaviors, thereby increasing the likelihood that they will enact desired behaviors. Other psychologists counter with the assertion that although conditional regard may be a reasonable approach for eliciting desirable behavior, it does so at substantial costs to the recipient and to the relationship between provider and recipient. Recent research supports this latter position. Specifically, recent findings indicate that parental conditional regard relates to greater feelings of internal pressure (because one should, not because one wants) to adhere to parental expectations, pressure which in turn relates to greater performance of the desired behaviors. These findings suggest that even though children perform the desired behaviors, they do not truly internalize the behaviors' underlying values. If they did, they would report wanting to perform the behaviors rather than feeling compelled to do so. Additional findings indicate that conditional regard relates to greater self-esteem fluctuations (unstable self-esteem, another form of fragile self-esteem), heightened feelings of shame and guilt after failure, greater resentment toward one's parents, and feeling more disapproved by them.

Implementing Unconditional Positive Regard

Research and theory suggest a number of guidelines for parents and other individuals who want to utilize principles consistent with Rogers's notions of unconditional positive regard. First, it is important to give affection and love unconditionally rather than conditionally, as already described. Second, when making requests, disciplining the target person, or giving positive or negative feedback, focus on the target's behaviors and the natural consequences of the behaviors and not on the person's character or worthiness. For example, state "I would like for you to sit here quietly," not "I would like for you to be a good girl and sit here quietly." Or state "If you don't finish your dinner, you likely will be hungry later" instead of "If you don't finish your dinner, I will not spend time with you tonight watching television." Importantly, at all times statements should reflect disapproval of

behavior and not that the agent loves the target person any less (e.g., “Although I do not approve of your doing drugs, I still love you very much and want to help you”).

Positive and Negative Conditional Regard and Psychological Control

Recent research suggests that it is useful to distinguish between positive and negative conditional regard. Whereas positive conditional regard involves providing greater than usual attention and affection to an individual for performing a desirable behavior, negative conditional regard involves providing less than usual attention and affection to an individual for acting in an undesirable manner. An example of negative conditional regard is withholding affection and ignoring one's partner for several hours to punish him or her for being late to the movie. Although many of the negative consequences of conditional regard are attributable to negative conditional regard, compulsion to perform desired behaviors, rather than real self-endorsement, is associated with positive conditional regard. Further research is needed, however, to fully understand the consequences of positive and negative conditional regard.

Other research on the negative consequences to children of parental psychological control indicates that it is beneficial for parents to avoid controlling children's unwanted behaviors by arousing guilt (e.g., “If you love me, you will stop making noise in your room”) or by withdrawing their love (e.g., acting cold when their child gets a poor grade on an exam) because they unwittingly create situations in which children feel worthy and valuable when their actions meet others' standards but unlovable and unworthy when their actions do not meet others' standards. As described earlier, children tend to self-apply the conditional approval of important others and only feel worthy when matching those established criteria.

Conclusion

The beneficial consequences of unconditional positive regard generalize to all types of interpersonal relationships, including friendships, romantic relationships, and marriages. Involvement in

relationships where one is loved for who one is and not for what one does or achieves promotes healthy self-esteem, interpersonal functioning, and psychological well-being, regardless of whether one is a child, adolescent, or adult. Likewise, treating others with unconditional positive regard fosters healthy people and healthy relationships.

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See also Attribution Processes in Relationships; Maintaining Relationships; Marital Satisfaction and Quality; Satisfaction in Relationships; Self-Esteem, Effects on Relationships; Sociometer Theory; Warmth, Interpersonal

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UNDERSTANDING

In a relationship context, understanding can acquire two different meanings. First, understanding can refer to a person's knowledge of a partner's dispositions, thoughts, and feelings. This type of understanding is defined as people's capacity to accurately perceive another person. For example, when John perceives Mary as extravert and Mary views herself as extravert, John understands Mary because he accurately knows that she is extravert. Second, understanding can refer to a person's sense of validation and acceptance by a partner. This type of understanding is defined as the feeling that others value, accept, and care for

the self. For example, when Mary discloses that she is nervous about giving a public presentation, John's response is cognizant of her feelings and reassuring, a reaction which makes Mary feel accepted, validated, and cared for. In this case, because John is responsive to Mary's needs, she feels understood. Thus, in the context of the first meaning "I understand you" means "I know who you are," whereas in the context of the second meaning "I understand you" means "I accept, value, and care about you." This entry discusses both types of understanding and examines their role in the maintenance of harmonious and long-lasting relationships.

Often, the two types of understanding are related. Knowledge of the partner facilitates a validating response, and by exchanging validating responses, people may gain knowledge about each other. Nevertheless, the two types of understanding are independent as well: Knowledge of someone's thoughts, feelings, and needs can be used exploitatively, and a validating response can occur even among complete strangers.

Undoubtedly, almost all relationships require both types of understanding. Relationships involve two people who are interdependent. Partners affect each other's thoughts, behavior, feelings, and well-being over time. Not surprisingly, both types of understanding are assumed to be particularly important when partners are highly interdependent, such as in close relationships. Indeed, knowing one's partner is more important when people interact on a daily and intimate basis than when they interact only sporadically. The coordination of life activities simply works better when people know each other. Similarly, feeling validated is more important to people when the partner is close and significant. Thus, both types of understanding should facilitate the maintenance of harmonious and stable relationships with frequent and positive interactions between partners. In the following section, this entry will describe psychological research examining this suggestion.

Understanding as Knowledge

When understanding refers to knowledge, researchers distinguish trait accuracy from empathic accuracy. People who are high in trait accuracy are able

to correctly infer the other's personality traits and dispositions, such as extraversion, shyness, or dominance. Trait accuracy is established by using questionnaires in which partners rate their own personality and their partner's personality. People who are high in empathic accuracy are able to correctly infer the other's thoughts and feelings. Empathic accuracy is established by videotaping interactions between partners who subsequently rate their own and their partner's thoughts and feelings during that interaction. In both cases, accuracy represents the agreement between Partner A's own ratings and Partner B's ratings of Partner A and is conceptualized as knowledge. Thus, people high in trait and empathic accuracy understand their partner because they accurately know his or her personality and thoughts and feelings. Although research often investigates either trait or empathic accuracy, the results of these studies show similar patterns and paint a consistent picture on the role of knowledge in close relationships.

Understanding as knowledge increases with acquaintanceship and closeness in relationships. Dating couples know each other better than friends, and friends know each other better than strangers. To explain the link between closeness and knowledge, researchers have investigated four factors that may contribute to better understanding, namely the good judge (e.g., some people are better at understanding others), the good target (e.g., some people are better understood by others), the good trait or behavior (e.g., some traits are easier to understand), and the good relationship knowledge (e.g., partner-specific memories, shared experiences). Overall, good relationship knowledge emerged as the most important determinant of understanding. Close relationship partners have specific information of how each partner felt, thought, and reacted in the past and can use this knowledge to infer what the other person is thinking and feeling in a given situation or to anticipate how she or he will think or feel in a future situation. So closeness contributes to understanding because it increases both the quantity and the quality of partners' knowledge about each other.

One common belief is that understanding as knowledge contributes to relationship quality. People who know each other well should have more harmonious interactions and fewer conflicts, and indeed, there is empirical evidence to support

this idea. Empathic accuracy promotes prorelationship behavior, such as forgiveness and accommodation (i.e., when one partner acts destructively, to respond constructively and inhibit the impulse to react destructively in turn). Also, when people know what they need to know and what is relevant to the relationship, they have better relationships. Finally, people are happiest in their relationships when they believe that their partner knows their true self, including virtues and faults, and accepts them nonetheless. Thus, the perception that the partner understands and accurately knows the self is experienced as reassuring and enhances relationship quality.

Nevertheless the link between understanding as knowledge and relationship quality is not as straightforward as it may appear. In certain circumstances, inaccurate, rather than accurate, understanding of the partner enhances relationship quality. First, when people feel their relationship is threatened, instead of facing an unpleasant truth, they prefer to misinterpret reality to preserve a positive image of their partner and their relationship. To illustrate, if Mary has a very good looking girlfriend, she may underestimate the degree to which her husband is attracted to her girlfriend, and this inaccuracy helps Mary to maintain high satisfaction with her relationship. Second, when people are especially fond of their partner they show positive illusions. Dating partners and married people tend to systematically overestimate the virtues of their partner, seeing their partner more positively than the partner sees him or herself. This inaccurate understanding of the partner fosters commitment to a relationship and increases relationship stability. Third, inaccurate understanding may contribute to relationship quality when people overestimate the degree to which the partner is similar to the self. People egocentrically assume that their partner's personality mirrors their own and often see similarities that do not exist. This type of egocentrism may be beneficial for the relationship because it elicits the feeling that one's partner is just like the self and therefore able to know and appreciate the true self (as in the case of understanding as validation). Relatedly, inaccurate understanding may contribute to relationship quality when people overestimate the degree to which people see them as they see themselves. Self-Verification Theory proposes that people are

motivated to maintain their self-concept, even if their self-concept is negative, because it allows them to see their social world as predictable and controllable. This type of egocentrism may be beneficial for the relationship because it makes people choose relationship partners who are perceived as knowing the self and who are hence able to verify the self.

Understanding as Validation

When understanding refers to validation, researchers emphasize that it is an inherently social phenomenon. It emerges as the result of two partners interacting with each other and reacting to each other. Mary's disclosure elicits a response from John, a response which conveys that John accepts, validates, and cares for Mary. This response in turn causes Mary to feel that John understands her. Understanding as validation is established by using questionnaires in which people rate the extent to which they feel understood, validated, accepted, and cared for by their partners. Thus, people who feel understood by their partner perceive that their partners are validating and accepting of the self.

The idea that this type of understanding increases with closeness is irrefutable. In close relationships, people open up to each other and share more and more intimate information about themselves with their partner. By revealing personal information about the self, partners become vulnerable because they may potentially be hurt, rejected, ridiculed, or humiliated. To feel safe in the face of this vulnerability, people need to know that their partner will react with acceptance and responsiveness, that is, with understanding as validation. This kind of understanding also includes sympathy, caring, and respect.

Research confirms that understanding as validation is strongly linked to closeness and also to relationship quality. Happy couples carefully listen to each other and respond to each other in an empathic, accepting, and supportive way, whereas distressed couples fail to listen to each other and respond to each other in a rejecting, critical, and disinterested way. An understanding response by the partner communicates recognition and validation of the self and elicits a feeling of being accepted and cared for, hence of being understood.

This feeling of being understood in turn increases closeness and relationship satisfaction. Not surprisingly, understanding as validation is central to the development of all kinds of relationships and contributes uniformly positively to relationship quality. It is crucial not only in relationships between equals, such as romantic partners or best friends, but also in relationships between unequal partners, such as parents and children.

Clearly, the process that leads to the feeling of being understood by one's partner is a social process that starts with one person revealing some aspect of the self (of various degree of intimacy depending on the nature of the relationship). This disclosure then creates an opportunity for the partner to respond. This response can vary in the degree to which it is understanding. What is important, however, is that this response is interpreted by the person, who will subjectively react to (make sense of) it. This latter personal reading determines whether one feels understood and validated.

People's interpretation of their partner's response can be biased, leading to either an overestimation or an underestimation of the partner's understanding. Research suggests that feeling understood is more important than being understood. For example, people who are more satisfied with a relationship report greater partner understanding and validation than is seen by uninvolved observers and even the responding partners themselves. When people overestimate their partner's similarity to the self, as mentioned above, they feel understood by their partner (e.g., "He is like me and thus knows how I feel"), which in turn increases relationship satisfaction. Conversely, when people perceive their partners as not understanding (in the knowledge sense), they may discount their validating responses (e.g., "You just don't understand"), which in turn decreases relationship satisfaction. Certain individual differences may cause people to feel more or less understood by others. For example, people with high levels of rejection-sensitivity or insecure attachment feel less understood by others than people with low levels of rejection-sensitivity or secure attachment. Thus, the mere perception of being understood regardless of the partner's actual understanding can have important effects for relationship quality.

Conclusions

Research and theory demonstrate that understanding in relationships can refer to knowledge of the partner or validation by the partner. Whether knowledge is always beneficial for relationships is uncertain. Generally speaking, a good knowledge of the other enhances harmonious relationships, but under certain circumstances accurate knowledge may reduce relationship quality and people may prefer to have inaccurate knowledge of the partner. Validation is uniformly beneficial to the quality of the relationship. When partners express acceptance, validation, and caring for each other, they foster their mutual sense of closeness and relationship security. This increases interpersonal trust, facilitates the deepening of the relationship, and leads to relationship satisfaction. Thus, although both types of understanding are at the heart of relationships, feeling understood and validated seems more important than being understood and known.

Catrin Finkenauer and Francesca Righetti

See also Accommodation; Attachment Theory; Closeness; Empathic Accuracy and Inaccuracy; Empathy; Forgiveness; Idealization; Intimacy; Rejection Sensitivity; Respect; Responsiveness; Self-Verification; Trust

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UNMITIGATED COMMUNION

Successful relationships require an individual to focus on the needs of others while also attending to their own needs. Many individuals have difficulty striking this balance, to the detriment of their personal and relational well-being. Unmitigated communion (UC) is a construct that describes one form of this imbalance. UC refers to a pattern of focusing excessively on caring for others while failing to assert and protect one's own needs in relationships. This entry will define the construct of UC and review research that demonstrates the importance of UC for well-being and relationship functioning.

Conceptualizing UC

The term UC refers to communion that is not mitigated by an appropriate level of agency. David Bakan originally identified agency and communion as two fundamental modalities of existence. Agency refers to a focus on self and separation, whereas communion refers to a focus on others and connection. Although Bakan identified agency as the male principle of existence and communion as the female principle, he also believed that healthy functioning requires some level of balance between the two constructs in all individuals. UC is one form of imbalance, described by Vicki Helgeson as a pattern of overinvolvement with others and self-neglect in relationships. Consistent with Bakan's ideas and traditional gender role stereotypes, women generally report higher levels of UC than men. It has also been found that self-reports of UC are significantly correlated with

levels reported by peers, suggesting that UC is observable to others. In one study, cardiac patients who had spouses with high levels of UC reported that their spouse engaged in overprotective behavior, such as constantly reminding them about healthy behaviors. Another study found that persons scoring high on UC reported engaging in submissive and self-effacing behavior such as continually apologizing for a minor mistake, tolerating verbal abuse, agreeing that they were wrong even though they were not, and accepting insults. Such behavior would be clearly visible to others.

UC and Well-Being

Also consistent with Bakan's ideas, a growing number of studies have shown that this form of imbalance does indeed relate to increased physical and psychological distress. For example, one recent series of studies found that UC was associated with a wide range of adjustment-related outcomes, including higher levels of depressive symptoms, lower levels of subjective well-being, lower levels of psychosocial adjustment, and higher levels of daily depressed mood. Importantly, the relation between UC and well-being has been found using cross-sectional and longitudinal designs and using diverse methods of assessing well-being.

Relational Implications of UC

The link between UC and psychological distress can perhaps best be understood by considering its role in relationships. People with high levels of UC appear to be more negatively emotionally affected by the problems of others. Studies have shown that persons with high levels of UC also experience more psychological distress following interpersonal conflict, interpersonal stress, and relationship dissolution. Women with high levels of UC have been found to experience more depressive symptoms when their husbands expressed dissatisfaction with the marriage. These findings are consistent with what is known about the relational underpinnings of UC. People with high levels of UC lack a healthy sense of self, have more anxious attachment styles, and tend to formulate their opinion of themselves largely based on the perceived reactions of others. This dependence on

positive feedback from others gives tremendous power to relationship partners so that when conflicts or difficulties arise, people with high levels of UC are affected more strongly. Thus, people with high levels of UC may be especially likely to experience distress in the context of relationship stress or loss.

Interestingly, although people with high levels of UC may be motivated by the desire to develop and maintain harmonious relationships in order to bolster self-esteem, the interpersonal styles associated with UC may in fact make it harder for them to do so. A number of studies have identified problematic interaction patterns associated with UC. People with high levels of UC tend to have unbalanced relationships so that they provide social support to their partner but feel uncomfortable receiving support or disclosing their thoughts and feelings. UC has been associated with interpersonal problems such as intrusiveness, exploitability, and difficulty with assertiveness and with more negative interactions with family and friends. Recent work has further shown that UC may be associated with anger and hostility in interpersonal contexts. A daily diary study found that UC was associated with the experience of less meaningful and less positive interpersonal interactions, and this accounted for the relation between UC and depressed mood.

It may seem counterintuitive that a personality orientation described as a focus on the needs of others to the extent of self-neglect is associated with these negative interaction patterns. However, it is important to keep in mind that overinvolvement and self-neglect likely represent an attempt to appease others and create unbalanced relationships in which the other person needs them and values them. The self-sacrifice this pattern entails may result in a lack of authentic sharing of self, increased

anger, and ambivalence about relationships. Although little is known about how partners respond to such behavior, one recent study of dating couples found that partners of persons with high levels of UC reported that their own needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness were less well met within their relationship. In fact, women with high levels of UC were more likely to experience relationship dissolution over the 5 months of the study, and breakup status was mediated by partner need satisfaction.

Thus, researchers find a dysfunctional cycle wherein people with high levels of UC may be motivated by a desire for positive relational experiences in order to bolster their self-esteem, yet in fact, they appear more likely to experience relational difficulties and are in turn more distressed by these difficulties than people low on UC. This research highlights the importance of considering unmitigated communion in clinical populations of individuals and couples.

Jennifer Aube

See also Dependency Paradox; Gender Roles in Relationships; Security in Relationships; Self-Esteem, Effects on Relationships; Sex-Role Orientation

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V

VALIDATION IN RELATIONSHIPS

People's existence depends on validation. Humans survived the past 2 million years because of an ability to forge connections with others, and these connections depend on validation of people's physical and psychological selves. This entry documents key theory and findings pertaining to the forms of validation relevant to interpersonal relationships.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines validation as the act of rendering something valid. In its general use, the term *valid* means effective, effectual, and sound. From a methodological point of view, the validation of an instrument involves demonstrating its effectiveness and ability to perform the function for which it was intended.

The importance of validation in relationships was first popularized by Harry Stack Sullivan, who noted that intimacy results when people acknowledge and support key elements of their partner's self-worth, self-definition, and worldviews. From Sullivan's early writings, and from more recent relevant work on the topic, one can glean that when it comes to the topic of relationships, two forms of validation get implicated. The first consists of validation of one's personhood. This type of validation involves acts that convey the message that one's whole being is sound and thus worthy of respect. The second form of validation consists of validation of one's beliefs, which attests to their validity or soundness. As will be noted, this type of validation can predict

relationship satisfaction just as strongly as can the validation of one's personhood.

Validation of One's Personhood

Validation of one's personhood starts with the recognition of one's existence. Research suggests that those lacking this most rudimentary form of validation for their personhood—homeless individuals or children raised in grossly abusive contexts, for example—will struggle to forge satisfying relationships with others. This is not surprising when one considers that William James likened the denial of a person's existence to the most heinous forms of punishment. Indeed, after being ignored for just short periods of time in computerized interactions, people lash out aggressively at others, suggesting that even momentary failures to validate a person's existence can foster psychological distress.

Luckily, the typical person receives daily validation for his or her physical existence. Receiving validation for one's personhood extends beyond acknowledging one's existence, however, to acts that indicate a person's soundness and worthiness of respect. From the cradle to the grave, such validation plays a pivotal role in relationships.

Consider the writings of John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth and the work on attachment more generally. This work spotlights the importance of validation in the infant-caregiver attachment bond. The extent to which primary caregivers exhibit sensitivity (i.e., noticing and responding) to the

cues put forth by the infant determines the working models of self and other. Infants raised by attentive caregivers who respond to their cues (and in so doing validate their soundness and worthiness of respect) grow up to display positive views of self and positive views of others. Infants raised by inattentive caregivers—caregivers who imply that the infant somehow is not worthy of attention—have the misfortune of developing more negative models of self and other. These internal working models developed in infancy, in turn, shape the interpersonal territory that people navigate as they emerge into adulthood and beyond. In short, early in life—perhaps even from the beginning—the degree of validation for one's person that one receives from a primary caregiver can have important ramifications for present and future relationships.

Of course, having an attentive and responsive caregiver does not just matter in the early years. Harry Reis and colleagues note that perceived partner responsiveness, the degree to which people sense that their current partner attends to them and supports them, represents a central process in relationships across the life span. In a similar vein, marriage researchers have noted higher levels of relationship satisfaction among people who perceive that their partner attends to, acknowledges, and, in so doing, validates their verbal and nonverbal cues.

In addition to receiving validation from attentive and supportive partners, people receive validation for their personhood from partners who think highly of them. Decades of research attest to the importance of establishing one's self-worth, and this seems particularly true in the context of relationships. Perhaps for this reason, people like those who reciprocate this liking. Research also shows that people dating people who hold them in high regard, relative to people dating people who see them negatively, report the highest levels of relationship satisfaction. People in romantic relationships also exhibit high levels of satisfaction to the extent that their partners see the same promise they see in themselves. In short, relationships satisfy to the extent that they involve a certain amount of validation of one's personhood.

Validation of One's Beliefs

Another form of validation that takes on a pivotal role in relationships consists of the validation of

one's beliefs. The socially constructed nature of reality makes it so that people rely on others for the confirmation of their interpretations of reality. Indeed, Curtis Hardin and Tory Higgins go so far as to say that people's experience of reality does not become real unless it gets shared with others.

If people rely on those around them to validate their conceptions of reality, one might expect signs of this dependence to emerge in the development and maintenance of relationships, as well as in the satisfaction people report in their relationships. Consistent with this line of thinking, research shows that people feel especially drawn to those who validate their beliefs and that they shy away from people who do not.

Validating Self-Conceptions

Most research in this area concentrates on what happens when people do or do not receive validation (i.e., evidence for the soundness and validity) of their self-conceptions. This type of validation can differ dramatically for validation of one's personhood, insofar as it can involve validation of a self-conception that is quite negative and thus implies that one does not deserve respect. Despite this, research makes it quite clear that people in relationships also require validation for their self-conceptions, even the negative ones.

According to William B. Swann, Jr., people want their self-conceptions validated because they rely on these self-conceptions to meet specific needs. Our self-concepts—our self-perceived strengths and weaknesses, how we react to stimuli (among other things)—can help us meet our needs for prediction and control. We thus want to be certain that we know ourselves and so we do what it takes to assure ourselves of the veracity of our own self-knowledge. Interpersonally, we surround ourselves with people who validate our self-conceptions, and we avoid people who do not. This is true for a wide range of relationships, including those with roommates, friends, romantic partners, coworkers, and even therapists. Moreover, researchers see this interpersonal dynamic in the context of laboratory experiments as well as in the real world. In many laboratory investigations, people with negative self-views even prefer to interact with someone who sees them negatively than with someone who sees them positively. In

the field, married couples exhibit more satisfaction with partners who validate their self-conceptions than with partners who do not, even if those self-views that get validated happen to be negative.

People's desire for validation for their self-conceptions might, under certain conditions, seem at odds with their desire for validation of their personhood. Someone who sees himself negatively on a specific dimension (e.g., athleticism), to the extent that he prefers a partner who also sees him negatively on this dimension, might run the risk of finding a partner who does not validate his personhood. Relevant research on this topic suggests that people *can* have their cake and eat it too: the key rests in drawing a distinction between specific and global evaluations. People in satisfying relationships tend to have partners who validate their specific self-conceptions while simultaneously validating their global sense of self-worth.

Implicit Belief Validation Via Validation of the Subjective Self

Recent work on I-sharing reveals another way in which the validation of beliefs enters relationships. Here, a more implicit form of belief validation takes hold, one that requires an appreciation for James's distinction between two general aspects of the self: the objective self (or, the *me*) and the subjective self (or, the *I*). The objective self consists of everything that one would list in response to the question: "Who are you?" It would include (among other things) one's autobiography, demographics associated with the self, a description of how one spends one's days, a review of the people associated with the self, self-perceived strengths and weaknesses, one's hobbies and interests, descriptions of one's personality, and feelings about the self. The subjective self, in contrast, refers to the moment-to-moment experiencer of reality. The *I* sees, feels, thinks, laughs, breathes, runs, talks, does, reflects upon the *Me*; in short, the *I experiences* and *reacts*.

Drawing on the distinction between the *Me* and the *I*, Elizabeth Pinel and her colleagues emphasize the importance of I-sharing in relationships. *I-sharing* refers to those moments when two or more people believe that they have had the same subjective experience, when they believe their subjective selves have overlapped. People can use

many cues to infer I-sharing. The most foolproof indicators of I-sharing occur when people respond simultaneously and identically to the same stimulus, such as when people see the same shape in an inkblot, utter the same word spontaneously, or laugh at the same joke. Research on I-sharing indicates that people feel particularly drawn to I-sharers and that this is particularly true when they have a high need for belief validation. Apparently, I-sharing validates people's beliefs implicitly, and this accounts for some of the allure of I-sharing. Once again, the importance of belief validation in the relationship process is highlighted.

Elizabeth C. Pinel

See also Attachment Theory; Belonging, Need for; Respect; Responsiveness; Self-Concept and Relationships; Self-Verification; Similarity Principle of Attraction; Understanding

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VALUES AND RELATIONSHIPS

Human relationships are certainly what human beings value the most in their lives. Therefore, human relationships are central to many personal and cultural value systems, which in turn influence virtually all aspects of everyday existence. Personal values define the desired behaviors or principles for an individual, whereas cultural values define the desired behaviors or principles for a group, society, or culture (i.e., others). This entry examines personal and cultural values and to what extent human relationships are central to these values.

Values and Value Systems at the Individual and Cultural Levels

Values have been studied by psychologists, anthropologists, political scientists, and sociologists, which has led to various definitions and classification of values. The general tendency is to define values as (a) guiding principles in individuals' and groups' lives, and (b) trans-situational goals that serve the interest of individuals or groups. A parallel to these two general definitions can be seen in the distinction that Milton Rokeach made between instrumental values (i.e., modes of conduct; e.g., broad-minded) and terminal values (i.e., goals; e.g., self-esteem). Some social scientists such as Kurt Lewin claimed that values-as-principles is a more appropriate definition than values-as-goals because individuals do not try to "reach" a value; rather a value "guides" behaviors, judgment, and goals. However, contemporary researchers do not make such distinctions and tend to use both definitions of values, which can lead to some confusion between the concepts of values and goals.

For several decades, social scientists focused on individual and cultural differences in value priorities. Guided by the assumption that a finite number of value types exist, philosophers and social scientists have proposed various organizations and

classifications for the relative importance that people and cultures place on various values. Perhaps the most influential framework for conceptualizing personal values is Shalom Schwartz's Circumplex Model, in which 10 universally relevant value types are organized along two motivational dimensions. A first dimension contrasts the valuation of self-determination and change to the importance of stability and conservation. In other words, one may orient one's life toward independence of thought and action (Self-Direction) and seeking pleasure and sensuous gratification for oneself (Hedonism), excitement, novelty, and challenge in life (Stimulation) and exploring. Alternatively, one may choose the certainty that is provided by respect and commitment to traditional customs and ideas (Tradition), the endeavor for safety and stability of relationships and society (Security), and the avoidance of intentions and actions that could upset or harm others and violate social norms (Conformity). A second dimension contrasts self-enhancement and self-transcendence motivations. On one side (self-enhancement), life is guided by concern for the individual's outcomes and how to maximize them. This concern may be translated into the enhancement of social status and the control of people and resources (Power), or the endeavor for personal success and demonstration of competence (Achievement). On the other side (self-transcendence), life is guided by concern for social outcomes, which means understanding, protection, and enhancement of the well-being of significant and less significant others (Benevolence), as well as the welfare of all people and nature (Universalism).

Schwartz's two-dimensional value system is not unique, and one can find echoes in the literature on cultural values. For example, Harry Triandis and Geert Hofstede studied peoples and cultures according to orientations toward individualistic and collectivistic values. At the individual level, the terms *idiocentrism* and *allocentrism* have been proposed to define the tendency to see the self as distinct from others or as interconnected with others, respectively. Values can then be organized along the idiocentrism/individualism versus allocentrism/collectivism dimension. Because of the focus on independence and individual outcomes, value types such as Self-Direction, Stimulation, Hedonism, Power, and Achievement are considered as idiocentric/individualistic. In contrast, Benevolence, Universalism, Tradition, Security,

and Conformity are more characteristic of allocentric/collectivistic value types because of the focus on interdependence and others' outcome. Although the individualism–collectivism dimension has been extensively and successfully applied to the study of individual and cultural cognitions, affects and behaviors, value systems are sufficiently complex that a second dimension is needed. Consequently another value dimension, previously neglected by researchers, has recently received more attention. Hofstede named this dimension Power Distance (low versus high) whereas Triandis conceptualized it as orthogonal to the individualism–collectivism dimension, making a distinction between vertical and horizontal individualism (or idiocentrism), and between vertical and horizontal collectivism (or allocentrism). Vertical-ism (or high power distance) is characterized by an emphasis on hierarchy and the dominance of certain people or group on others. Value types such as Power and Achievement fit within this orientation, making them typical of vertical individualism. Because Tradition, Security, and Conformity are generally associated with the protection and conservation of established hierarchical ideologies, these value types can be labeled *Vertical*, and more specifically *Vertical Collectivistic*. In contrast, Horizontal-ism (or low power distance) is characterized by valuing equality across individuals and groups. That can be reflected by individuals' equal chance to make personal decisions and experience the world by themselves (i.e., Self-Direction, Stimulation, and Hedonism—or Horizontal Individualism), or equality in the concern about welfare for all people and for nature (i.e., Benevolence and Universalism—or Horizontal Collectivism).

In sum, both personal and cultural values are organized in a two-dimensional space, but the labels of the two orthogonal dimensions differ. The values that fall into each resulting quadrant are still consistent: Self-Direction, Hedonism, and Stimulation characterize horizontal (or nonhierarchical) individualism; Power and Achievement characterize vertical (or hierarchical) individualism; Benevolence and Universalism characterize horizontal (or nonhierarchical) collectivism; and Tradition, Security, and Conformity characterize vertical (or hierarchical) collectivism.

A similar two-dimensional structure has recently been proposed by Frederick Grouzet and Tim Kasser to represent personal goals. In their

Circumplex Model of goal content, a distinction is made between intrinsic (self-acceptance, authentic relationship, helping) and extrinsic goals (e.g., materialism, fame, image) that parallels the vertical-horizontal value dimension. As well, their second proposed goal dimension (representing a continuum from physical self, to individual self, to collective self, to Self-Transcendence) serves the same role as individualism–collectivism in distinguishing self-oriented intrinsic/extrinsic goals (e.g., intrinsic: self-acceptance; extrinsic: material wealth) and other-oriented intrinsic/extrinsic goals (e.g., intrinsic: helping; extrinsic: conformity). Although values and goals are distinct psychological constructs, both can be represented in a two-dimensional space (or Circumplex Model) where the axes refer to the same underlying psychological dimensions.

Values Guiding Human Relationships

The organization of values into two dimensions and four quadrants is especially important for understanding and explaining how values are related to relationships. By definition values guide perceptions and behaviors, therefore human relationships. More specifically, values influence the nature of relationships, coordinating social interactions and facilitating interpersonal and group functioning. This section explores the value types and value orientations that are related to the development and maintenance of egalitarian versus hierarchical relationships, where the main issue concerns the distinction between the individual's own outcomes and those of relationship partners.

Values and Hierarchical Relationships With a Focus on Individual's Outcomes

When societies and people value personal and social success (Achievement), striving for higher position in a hierarchy and gaining and controlling material and human resources (Power), and appearance and material wealth (Extrinsic Goals), relationships tend to be more hierarchical, differentiating individuals who succeed and those who don't, individuals who possess power and those who don't, and those who are dominant and those who are subordinate. These relationships are thus

guided by competitive principles that emphasize both maximizing one's own outcomes and minimizing the other's outcomes. Power and Achievement value types are often associated with authoritative leadership and interpersonal conflict. The main concern is to impress others, using self-presentation and self-serving strategies, and adopting a public identity that tends to be incongruent with the true self. One consequence is the development and maintenance of nonauthentic relationships, where others are often approached in an objectifying and strategic way.

*Values and Egalitarian Relationships
With a Focus on Individual's Outcomes*

People who prioritize their own pleasure, excitement, and autonomy tend to have less conflictual relationships. Although the goal is to maximize one's own outcomes, this is not realized in a way that is detrimental to others. For example, several individuals can experience sensual pleasure, discover new things, and seek challenges in life, all without competition. As well, the development of independent thought, actions, and autonomy is not necessarily associated with the others' loss of independence and autonomy. The distinction between horizontal and vertical values is thus important to represent the critical difference between Self-Direction and Power/Achievement. Finally, value types such as Self-Direction, Stimulation, and Hedonism are associated with nonhierarchical or egalitarian relationships. Although the welfare of others is not necessary to these values, valuing Self-Direction may be associated with authenticity and thus authentic and harmonious relationships.

*Values and Egalitarian Relationships
With a Focus on Other's Outcomes*

People who live according to principles such as Benevolence and Universalism tend to focus on the welfare of others. They stress maintenance and enhancement of the well-being of others, that is, people with whom one has frequent personal contacts (Benevolence) or all people and nature (Universalism). The principle of equality is important in Benevolence and Universalism values, leading to nonhierarchical or egalitarian relationships.

Therefore, Benevolence and Universalism are associated with cooperation, altruism, communal living, sharing, trust, mutual respect, and feelings of equality. People with these values are also willing to have contact with other groups, despite any history of conflict. Although others' outcomes are the target of attention, individuals benefit because they are part of the group and are considered equal in status with others.

*Values and Hierarchical Relationships
With a Focus on Others' Outcomes*

Values that are oriented toward the stability and continuity of groups and societies require subordination of individual interests to the priorities of their group and its leaders, in a well-structured hierarchy of power. In contrast to Benevolence and Universalism, Tradition and Conformity values are translated into avoidance of movement or growth and promotion of stability. This perspective on others' welfare thereby can be detrimental to individuals' own aspirations. Therefore, value types such as Tradition, Conformity, and Security tend to be associated with loyalty and willingness to sacrifice in interpersonal relationships (as well as marriage), and associated with obedience and compliance in groups. These values are often associated with authoritarian personality, political conservatism, rejection of diversity, "hierarchy-enhancing legitimizing myths" such as racism and sexism, and intergroup conflicts.

In sum, values guide relationships in a way that their nature is transposed on the nature of relationships. This values-relationships link is bidirectional. Indeed relationships guide values and more specifically the socialization processes by which individuals learn the values of their groups and culture. People's lives are not only guided by their own value system but also by the perceptions of others' value systems (e.g., those of parents, role models, religious congregations, organizations, societies, and cultures). Future research is needed to examine this bidirectional association and how the two psychological dimensions (i.e., Hierarchical vs. Egalitarian; Allocentrism vs. Idiocentrism) can be used in studying and understanding human relationships.

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See also Collectivism, Effects on Relationships; Communal Relationships; Cooperation and Competition; Culture and Relationships; Egalitarian Relationships; Goal Pursuit, Relationship Influences; Socialization; Willingness to Sacrifice

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VENGEANCE

Vengeance, synonymous with revenge, is an act of (or motivation for) retribution in response to a perceived transgression. This definition implies that a transgressor has incurred a social debt, and although the greatest satisfaction might come from forcing the actual transgressor to pay that debt, sometimes a “payment by proxy” will do. Thus, it is possible for the target of vengeance to be someone merely *associated* with the transgressor rather than the actual transgressor. Although vengeance is typically a behavior or motivation to act, speech acts and even inactions (e.g., failing to show up for a meeting) can function as types of vengeance. This entry describes the nature of vengeance as a function of characteristics of the individual, relationships, and the broader social context.

To Blame or Not to Blame

Research on aggression has much to offer our understanding of vengeance. For instance, aggression studies point to the critical element of attributing blame to specific individuals as instigators of

harm or provocation. If a victim does not attribute blame to a particular person, that person tends to be safe from aggressive retaliation. However, researchers have also found evidence for “triggered displaced aggression,” which occurs when hostility has been aroused in one provoking incident and a relatively minor event later triggers the expression of that hostility, even against persons who were unrelated to the initial incident. Thus, not being seen as the direct cause of a victim’s frustration, hostility, or hurt feelings does not always protect innocent parties from retaliation. When vengeance turns especially violent (e.g., school shootings, suicide bombings), innocent bystanders can also become accidental victims.

Sometimes the attribution of blame goes awry, as when a person is hypervigilant and overly suspicious, looking everywhere for evidence to support a predetermined judgment of another’s blameworthiness. When this occurs, it can produce a hostile attribution bias, in which the suspicious individual makes unwarranted inferences, misconstruing ambiguous acts and intentions in the most negative ways possible. Evolutionary psychologists have noted that such biases may occur when a person feels threatened by potential rivals, which can lead the threatened partner to engage in aggressive tactics designed to defend his or her social territory. Sometimes these tactics can turn violent, especially when one partner suspects the other of infidelity. Indeed, infidelity and suspicion of infidelity are among the leading causes of homicide across cultures, putting vengeance at the heart of one of society’s greatest ills.

Culture, Personality, and Saving Face

Cultures differ in the degree to which they accept vengeance as a response to perceived transgressions. Research on “cultures of honor,” found in the southern United States, Latin America, the Middle East, and elsewhere, reveals that some cultures tolerate vengeance as a means of restoring a threatened sense of honor, especially for threats to one’s family, reputation, or property. When infidelity occurs in a culture of honor, severe retribution by the wronged party (particularly by males) is often accepted by society, and sometimes *expected*. Vengeance norms also operate at more

local levels, such as within organizations or families, and to the extent that victims within such defined groups believe that their grievances will be handled fairly by those in power, they are less likely to seek personal vengeance. Likewise, research with romantic couples has shown that more constructive responses to conflict are associated with preconflict levels of commitment and intimacy, as well as with the perception by each party that the quality of alternative partners is relatively low—thus, they perceive it to be worthwhile to work through their conflicts constructively rather than escalating to the level of vengeance and the possible dissolution of the relationship. Similarly, recent research on forgiveness in close relationships has shown that revenge and avoidance (precursors to relationship dissolution) are two key indicators that a victim has failed to forgive his or her offender. Within close relationships, avoidance of intimacy (giving one's partner the "cold shoulder") might even serve as a non-violent and subtle form of vengeance.

Contemporary aggression theories also note the importance of hostile thoughts and feelings in producing aggressive behaviors, factors that likewise figure prominently in acts of vengeance. Among the personality factors predictive of such hostile thoughts and feelings are high levels of Neuroticism (defined either as negative affectivity or emotional instability) and low levels of Agreeableness. Neuroticism especially may facilitate *hostile rumination* following offense experiences, and rumination is a key predictor of vengefulness. Narcissism is another individual difference associated with vengeance, both because it heightens sensitivity to interpersonal offenses, and because it emboldens victims to seek revenge. Narcissists believe they are special and powerful, so when they feel mistreated, they may react with unwarranted degrees of retaliation to reaffirm their power and worth and to restore their social face.

Victims of transgressions need not be narcissists, though, to feel the sting of mistreatment as a loss of social face. People who are uncertain of their social status or who desire to achieve a higher level of status may be particularly likely to seek vengeance for perceived transgressions. Such people may feel they have less to lose by acting vengefully than by allowing others to see them as weak and vulnerable. A similar dynamic can also operate at

a group level. When group members are wronged, fellow group members may rise up in vicarious retribution, escalating conflicts to incorporate a wider audience. Such escalation can be seen in incidences of "blood feuds" and intergenerational hostilities between and within countries, in which wrongs suffered by a few are responded to by the collective, leading to a cycle of violence that can last for decades or centuries. At both the individual and group levels, those engaging in acts of vengeance frequently proclaim their motives as just—the equitable redress of a social wrong—and although the desire for justice might play a role in motivating vengeance, such value-based factors can also function as principled rationalizations for more powerful emotional concerns tied to the self-concept and the desire to save face.

Ryan P. Brown

See also Facework; Forgiveness; Hostility; Revenge

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VIRGINITY AND VIRGINITY LOSS

In William Faulkner's 1929 novel *The Sound and the Fury*, Quentin Compson is shocked to hear his father declare that men "invented" virginity and that it matters more to men than women. In fact, scholarly research in the Western context indicates that virginity is socially created and deeply gendered. This entry defines virginity and virginity

loss, provides a historical perspective to this topic, and presents data on average age at virginity loss in different groups.

Broadly speaking, *virginity* refers to the state of having never had sex and *virginity loss* refers to a person's first sexual encounter. (Some object to the term *loss* as pejorative.) Distinguishing between virgins and nonvirgins is an ancient practice. Early Greeks, Romans, and Jews valued virginity in unmarried women and believed virgins of both genders to possess special powers. Early Christians were urged to reject sin by embracing virginity, preferably as a permanent state, but minimally until marriage. Although lifelong virginity lost prestige after the Protestant Reformation, premarital virginity remained the widespread ideal, especially for women. Alternate perspectives also existed, however, coming to the fore in the United States during the sexual "revolution" of the late 1960s. Competing understandings of premarital virginity as desirable and undesirable have subsequently coexisted, often uncomfortably.

What sorts of sexual encounters, between what sorts of people, result in virginity loss is disputed. Before the Enlightenment and during the Victorian era, *virginity* was defined primarily in terms of spiritual or moral purity. Since about 1900, *virginity* has been defined primarily in terms of specific physical acts. The traditional—and most common—definition posits that virginity is lost the first time a person engages in vaginal sex. Some people believe, however, that engaging in anal or oral sex can also result in virginity loss. Others see these practices as foreplay and thus consistent with maintaining "technical" virginity—whereby an individual engages in "everything but" the activities thought to result in virginity loss (common since the 1920s at least).

Historically understood as exclusively heterosexual, virginity loss between same-sex partners is increasingly deemed possible, largely because of the growing visibility and acceptability of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and queer (GLBQ) people from the late 20th century on. According to one common formulation (favored especially by heterosexuals), GLBQ individuals can lose their virginity via oral or anal sex, whereas heterosexual virginity loss requires vaginal sex.

Tensions between moral/emotional and physiological definitions of virginity persist. Historically,

coerced sex was thought to compromise virginity. Yet, feminist analyses framing rape as violence, not sex, have led to new claims, common especially among women, that forced sex cannot result in virginity loss. Whether a sexually experienced person can resume her or his virginity is also debated. Most contend that virginity can only be lost once (a source of its significance). Others propose that, by being deliberately abstinent for a designated period of time (often until marriage), a sexually experienced person can become a secondary (or born-again) virgin. This view was popularized in the United States in the late 1980s by an increasingly influential conservative Christian movement.

In the United States, average ages at virginity loss (defined as "first vaginal sex") declined steadily from about 18 for men and 19 for women in the early 1970s to between 16 and 17 for both genders in 1995, then rose slightly in the early 2000s, especially among men. Historic differences in virginity-related beliefs and behaviors by race/ethnicity, social class, religion, and region diminished considerably during the late 20th century. However, virginity loss occurs on average earliest for African Americans, followed by Whites, then Latinos and Asian Americans; later for conservative Protestants than for other religious groups; later for well-off than poor youth; and later in Southern, Midwestern, and Mountain states than in other regions. Most youth who pledge to remain virgins until marriage engage in sex while single, practicing safer sex at significantly lower rates than do nonpledgers.

The meanings attributed to virginity and virginity loss are likewise diverse. In the United States, most individuals interpret virginity through one of three metaphors, comparing it to a gift, a stigma, or a step in the process of growing up. A fourth metaphor, framing virginity as a way of honoring one's commitment to God, may be (re)gaining popularity, because of the expansion of conservative Christianity and abstinence-focused sex education. These metaphorical perspectives influence people's decisions about when, where, and with whom to engage in sexual activity; their safer sex and contraceptive practices; and their satisfaction with virginity-loss encounters.

Historically, women have been encouraged to view virginity as a gift whereas men have seen theirs as a stigma. Women's sexuality has long

been guarded more closely than men's, partly because of women's biological capacity for pregnancy, which societies almost universally strive to restrict to certain kin relationships. Gender differences in the interpretation of virginity diminished in the late 20th century, however, thanks to second-wave feminism, effective birth control, and the sexual revolution—which encouraged women to adopt the same (permissive) sexual standards as men—and the HIV/AIDS epidemic, which made sex more consequential for males. A study by Susan Sprecher and Pamela Regan found that college women were more likely to remain virgins for relationship-related reasons and to avoid pregnancy, whereas men more often remained virgins because of concerns about sexual adequacy. Women expressed more pride and happiness about virginity, whereas men reported more guilt and embarrassment; however, male virgins in more recent cohorts felt more pride and happiness than did their earlier-born counterparts.

According to research by Laura Carpenter, men and women who share an interpretation of virginity tend to make similar sexual decisions and report similar experiences before, during, and after virginity loss. Interpreting virginity as a step in a process is especially common among lesbian and gay youth, for whom virginity loss is often closely intertwined with the process of coming out.

Empirical studies consistently find no evidence that losing virginity outside of marriage causes lasting psychological or physical harm. Nor do relationship solidity and sexual satisfaction appear to be affected by early or late virginity loss. People whose virginity-loss experiences diverge dramatically from their metaphor-based expectations may suffer considerable dissatisfaction, however, and individuals who lose their virginity earlier are at higher risk of unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections. Conversely, people, especially men, who remain virgins at significantly older ages than average report more problems with arousal and orgasm (the causal direction is unclear). Unlike previous eras, many adults today prefer sexually experienced partners—making it more difficult for people who remain virgins relatively “late” to become sexually active.

Laura M. Carpenter

See also Sexual Intercourse, First Experience of; Sexuality; Sexuality in Adolescent Relationships

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VULNERABILITY-STRESS-ADAPTATION MODEL

The *Vulnerability-Stress-Adaptation Model* (also called the *Trait-Context-Process Model*) is a framework for understanding how satisfaction in intimate relationships may change or remain stable over time. Building on cognitive-behavioral approaches, the model describes partners' evaluations of their relationships as a direct reaction to their interactions with each other. The model then expands this idea by suggesting that a couple's interactions are themselves determined by (a) the abilities, personalities, and personal histories of each partner; and (b) the demanding or supportive circumstances that confront the couple. This entry explains the elements of the model in greater detail, describes how the model assembles these elements to explain the course of relationship satisfaction over time, and reviews the implications of this model for research and practice.

Elements of the Model: Three Broad Themes

At the start of an intimate relationship, most couples evaluate each other and the relationship exceedingly positively, and express hope that their positive feelings will last. Despite these promising beginnings, many couples are unable to maintain their initial feelings of satisfaction over time, and substantial research on relationships has explored

why this should be so. This research has identified hundreds of specific variables associated with change and stability in relationship satisfaction. A premise of the Vulnerability-Stress-Adaptation Model is that almost all the variables that have been studied can be summarized by three broad themes. Within each theme, different specific variables may exert their influence on relationships in more or less the same way.

Enduring Vulnerabilities

Each partner brings to their relationships a unique set of qualities, dispositions, and experiences, including attachment styles, personality traits, levels of psychopathology, and family history. What links all these disparate variables is that they are presumed to be relatively stable by the time a specific relationship begins. Each of these enduring traits may then contribute to or detract from an individual's ability to function effectively within the relationship. All else being equal, individuals with enduring sources of vulnerability (e.g., parental divorce, substance abuse, personality problems, a history of depression or trauma) have greater difficulty maintaining satisfying and enduring intimate relationships than do individuals with fewer sources of vulnerability.

External Stress

Every relationship takes place within a physical, social, cultural, and historical context. Elements within this context may support or interfere with a couple's efforts to maintain the quality of their relationship. For example, financial strain, demanding friends or relatives, and health problems all present couples with difficult issues to resolve, taking up time that might otherwise be spent promoting and maintaining intimacy. In contrast, supportive family and friends, financial assets, and good health serve as sources of resilience, buffering couples from the effects of other stressful circumstances and freeing time for enriching the relationship.

Adaptive Processes

Adaptive processes include all the ways that couples interact, understand, support, and react to each other. These processes include overt

behaviors that take place within the dyad, such as showing affection and resolving conflict, as well as cognitive and emotional reactions that take place within each partner, such as how they explain behavior and evaluate an interaction. Processes are adaptive to the extent that they minimize negativity and capitalize on positive aspects of the relationship. Satisfied couples, for example, are able to discuss differences of opinion without involving negative emotions, and are able to acknowledge specific problems without threatening their generally positive views of their relationships. Processes are maladaptive to the extent that they exacerbate negativity. Distressed couples, for example, tend to reciprocate each other's negative behaviors, leading to destructive cycles of escalating conflict.

Assembling the Elements

The Vulnerability-Stress-Adaptation Model assembles these three broad classes of variables within a single framework to account for change and stability in initially satisfying relationships. The engine of change in the model is the reciprocal association between adaptive processes and relationship satisfaction. Drawing from cognitive-behavioral perspectives, the model suggests that effective adaptive processes (e.g., positive interactions, charitable interpretations of partner behaviors) sustain and reinforce positive feelings about the relationship, which in turn make effective adaptive processes more likely in the future. In contrast, each experience of maladaptive processes (e.g., hostile interactions, blame, negative emotions) chips away at positive evaluations of the relationship. As negative experiences accumulate, evaluations of the relationship suffer, making further negative interactions more likely in the future.

Yet, by themselves, cognitive-behavioral approaches do not examine how more or less effective adaptive processes arise in initially satisfying relationships. Nor do these approaches speak to the question of how initially effective adaptive processes may deteriorate over time, or maladaptive processes may improve. The Vulnerability-Stress-Adaptation Model addresses these questions directly by placing adaptive processes within a broader framework that acknowledges the enduring

qualities of each partner and the supportive or stressful circumstances to which the couple must adapt.

In the resulting model, the quality of a couple's adaptive processes is viewed as the direct product of the personal characteristics of each partner and the ecological niche that the couple inhabits. Each partner's strengths and vulnerabilities affect relationship outcomes only indirectly, through their direct effects on the quality of the couple's adaptive processes. Partners with few vulnerabilities and many strengths should be able to interact well, manage negativity, and provide each other support, and these processes function to maintain satisfying relationships over the long term. Partners with many vulnerabilities and few strengths should have trouble managing negativity and differences of opinion, and these troubles detract from relationship satisfaction over time.

External stresses and challenges similarly affect relationship quality through direct effects on adaptive processes. Couples facing serious demands outside the relationship have more issues to resolve within their relationships and less capacity to resolve them in a positive and loving way. Couples in supportive involvements have more time to devote to relationship maintenance, and a greater capacity to use that time effectively. The model thus describes adaptive processes not as causes of relationship change, but as the mechanism through which aspects of individuals and their environments may interact to affect the development of satisfaction in an intimate relationship.

Explaining Stability and Change in Relationship Satisfaction

By acknowledging the interactions between the enduring traits of each partner and the varying demands of the couple's environment, the Vulnerability-Stress-Adaptation Model addresses how initially satisfying relationships may change over time and makes specific predictions about when changes are likely to occur. In general, the model suggests that relationship satisfaction declines when couples face challenges that rise beyond their ability to adapt effectively. This straightforward principle suggests several different paths through which relationships may decline or remain stable over time. For example, vulnerable

couples may endure stably while they are surrounded by support and have access to resources, but may decline when challenges arise that inhibit effective interaction. The most resilient couples may be able to maintain their relationships effectively even when facing great hardships, but even highly resilient couples may be prone to declines should they face catastrophe (e.g., chronic illness, the death of a loved one, bankruptcy, etc.). Among couples confronting a common stressor (e.g., unemployment, natural disaster), the most vulnerable couples are likely to experience the steepest declines in their satisfaction. Among couples whose satisfaction has already declined, those who experience improved fortunes outside the relationship (e.g., obtaining a coveted new job, receiving a bonus or raise, giving birth to a healthy child) are most likely to experience improvements within the relationship. Thus, in the interplay between partners, their contexts, and their interactions, the Vulnerability-Stress-Adaptation Model accounts for differences in relationship satisfaction between couples as well as changes within couples over time.

Implications for Research and Treatment

The Vulnerability-Stress-Adaptation Model has specific implications for research on how relationships change and the treatment of relationship distress and dysfunction. With respect to research, assembling three broad domains of variables into a single model draws attention away from main effects (that is, effects of one variable that do not involve other variables) and toward interactions. For example, although stress is associated with poorer relationship satisfaction for most couples (a main effect), couples with few vulnerabilities and effective adaptive processes may endure stress without declines in their satisfaction, and may even emerge from stressful periods with renewed confidence in the relationship (an interaction). Because the effects of variables in one domain on the course of a specific relationship will be imperfectly understood without data on variables in the other two domains, the model calls for research that adopts a wide focus. Research guided by this model has therefore tended to assess multiple domains of predictors at once.

As a model specifically designed to explain change over time, the Vulnerability-Stress-Adaptation Model also calls for a more refined perspective on the dependent variables in research on relationships. Rather than accounting for the state of a relationship at any one time, the model highlights the trajectory of the relationship across time. As a consequence, research guided by this model has tended to collect multiple waves of longitudinal data and has generally used sophisticated data analytic techniques, such as growth curve modeling, that allow a multifaceted view of those data.

With respect to treating distressed relationships and strengthening happy ones, the Vulnerability-Stress-Adaptation Model suggests that different strategies are likely to be most effective for different types of couples. Conventional skills-based approaches may be effective for couples with few enduring vulnerabilities and living in supportive environments that offer them space and time in which to interact with each other. However, highly vulnerable couples, or couples facing difficult life circumstances, may find it hard to interact effectively regardless of their skills. During a financial or health crisis, for example, the quality of couples' interactions tends to suffer, even if their interactions are generally effective when stress is light. For these couples, promoting specific behaviors and communication skills may prove difficult, and may offer fewer benefits than would interventions that address couple's problems and vulnerabilities directly (e.g., mental health service, financial support). Indeed, government policies that are most consistent with the Vulnerability-Stress-Adaptation Model emphasize assessing couples' needs in detail before they are assigned to a particular program. The more general implication of this approach is that interventions that target relationships directly are not always the best way to support relationships. Rather, programs that promote couples' well-being overall have the potential to benefit relationships indirectly. Consistent with the model,

when couples' personal and material circumstances improve, their adaptive processes have been shown to improve even in the absence of direct intervention.

Benjamin R. Karney

See also Change in Romantic Relationships Over Time; Deteriorating Relationships; Dissolution of Relationships, Causes; Longitudinal Studies of Marital Satisfaction and Dissolution; Maintaining Relationships; Marital Satisfaction and Quality; Marital Stability, Prediction of; Predicting Success or Failure of Marital Relationships

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W

WAIST-TO-HIP RATIO AND ATTRACTION

This entry deals with important biological information conveyed by physical attractiveness. Physical attractiveness, despite exhortations that it is subjective and only skin deep, significantly influences the selection of romantic partners in practically all cultures. According to evolutionary thinking, the power of attractiveness results from its conveying of biologically significant information. It is postulated that natural selection shaped mental mechanisms to solve problems encountered by the human ancestral environment. One such problem that our male ancestors regularly faced was to assess a female mate's value or the degree to which she would enhance his reproductive success.

Potential mates necessarily varied in their mate value, just as potential foods varied in their nutritional value. Female mate value was determined by numerous variables such as hormone profile, reproductive age, fecundity, and resistance to diseases, none of which could be directly observed. However, some of these variables are reliably conveyed by specific characteristics of female bodies, and natural selection produced psychological mechanisms to attend to bodily features in assessing a female's mate value. Furthermore, as females vary in their mate value, the intensity of male sexual attraction was designed to vary directly to perceived cues of female mate value. Although people may not be consciously aware of the link

between health and fertility and beauty, herein lies the power of physical attractiveness.

Basis for Attractiveness of Waist-to-Hip Ratio

A straightforward test of this evolutionary explanation would be to identify a feature of the body known to be linked with health and reproductive capability and to demonstrate that systematic variation in that feature produces systematic changes in judgment of female attractiveness. Body fat distribution as measured by waist-to-hip ratio (WHR) may be an ideal feature. First, WHR, unlike overall body weight, is an unambiguous indicator of age in men and women. Before puberty, both boys and girls have WHR in the range of .95 to .98 because body fat distribution is essentially similar in both sexes. However, during puberty, both men and women experience reduction in the size of their WHR. Increases in women's sex hormones induce an increase in pelvic width and regulate the anatomical location of body fat deposits. Simply stated, estrogen selectively inhibits fat deposits in abdominal and waist regions and facilitates fat deposits in the buttocks and thigh regions in women. Testosterone, on the other hand, inhibits fat deposits in buttocks and thighs, and facilitates fat deposition on the waist and upper body in men. After puberty, healthy women have a WHR between 0.67 and 0.79, whereas healthy men have a WHR between 0.8 and 0.95. As women age and their production of estrogen decreases, their WHR moves into the male range. Thus, WHR reliably signals the

reproductive age of the female unlike any other observable body feature.

Second, WHR is a reliable indicator of reproductive capability of women. Compared with women with high WHR, women with low WHR have fewer irregular menstrual cycles, optimal sex-hormone profile, and ovulate more frequently. Low WHR is also an independent predictor of pregnancy in women participating in artificial insemination. Third, women with low WHR have lower risks for diseases that manifest in later adulthood, such as heart diseases, stroke, breast, endometrial, and ovarian cancers. Women less susceptible to health problems would likely have more energy to attend to their family and children and, as many health problems are inheritable, their offspring would receive the genetic gift of good health.

To establish that selection process designed the mental mechanism for assessing attractiveness, one needs to demonstrate that (a) systematic changes in the size of WHR alone will produce systematic changes in the judgment of attractiveness, (b) that the judgment of attractiveness based on WHR should have cross-cultural consensus, and (c) that cross-cultural consensus is evident across longer time periods or has cross-generational consensus.

In the initial study, 12 line drawings of female figures representing three body weight categories (underweight, normal, overweight) and two levels of feminine (0.7, 0.8) and two levels of masculine (0.9, 1.0) WHR within each body category were created. Participants rated figures with lower WHR as more attractive than figures with higher WHR in each weight category. Figures with extremely low WHR are not judged as very attractive. The lower limit of WHR size is constrained by internal organs and the spinal cord. Therefore, a figure with extremely low WHR looks deformed. Body weight also affected the attractiveness judgment: the normal weight figure with 0.7 WHR was judged to be most attractive, followed by the underweight figure whereas the overweight figure, despite low WHR, was not judged to be attractive. It seems that, to be attractive, a woman must have a low WHR and deviate little from normal weight. These findings have been replicated with African Americans, British, Germans, Australians, Indonesians, Azores Islanders, and subjects from Guinea Bissau and the Shiwiar tribe of Ecuador.

Studies of temporal stability or cross-generational consensus are restricted to archival data. The first source was 286 ancient sculptures from India, Egypt, Greece (Greco-Roman), and some African tribes. Results indicated that the mean female WHR was significantly lower (0.7) than was the mean male WHR (0.9) despite some cultural variability. Another way to infer the temporally stable appeal of WHR is to look at ancient references to beauty: consider inscriptions on the tomb of the favored wife of Ramses II, Nefertari (dating from the second millennium BCE), which described her full buttocks and narrow waist or a description of beauty from the 1st- to the 3rd-century CE Indian epic *Mahabharata* that details the form of a beautiful woman as having full hips and breasts with a slender waist. Taken together, it is difficult to conclude that this aspect of beauty is in the eye of the beholder or dynamic over time. The persistent appeal of a certain WHR across cultures and time suggests that this aspect of beauty is ingrained in the human mind.

One implication of this research should be stressed—though it is a common practice to equate thinness with beauty and to argue that females are dissatisfied with their body image because of weight, perhaps this is not altogether correct. It could be that some women of normal weight but high WHR are dissatisfied with their body shapes and trying to lose weight to achieve that shape. The Victorian custom of corsets and later use of wide belts to make oneself have a narrow waist did not reduce overall body weight but still has tremendous appeal.

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See also Attraction, Sexual; Biological Systems for Courtship, Mating, Reproduction, and Parenting; Evolutionary Perspectives in Women's Romantic Interests; Mate Preferences; Mate Selection; Physical Attractiveness, Defining Characteristics; Physical Attractiveness Stereotype

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WARMTH, INTERPERSONAL

Interpersonal warmth is a dimension of individual differences in personality. People high on this dimension are described as warm and affectionate, whereas people low on the dimension are described as cold and indifferent. Languages around the world reflect this distinction, presumably because it is an important thing to know about people when interacting with them. This entry discusses interpersonal warmth as a dimension of personality, as a component of parent-child relationships, and as an aspect of close relationships, including romantic relationships and friendship. This entry also discusses the research on the neuropsychology of warmth, and it presents current thinking on the evolutionary functions of warmth.

Interpersonal Warmth as a Personality Dimension

Research on personality shows that people describe themselves as ranging from loving, nurturing, friendly, affectionate, agreeable, and trusting on the high end of the warmth dimension to antagonistic, cold, cruel, and suspicious on the low end. These results can be obtained by giving subjects lists of these adjectives and having them state how closely the adjective describes them; similar results are obtained if people are rated by others who know them well. People high on warmth have closer, more intimate friendships and are more likely to be trusting, cooperative, and helpful.

There is a strong sex difference in warmth, with females being higher on this dimension than are males. Girls are more prone to be involved in intimate, confiding relationships than are boys throughout development. Women also generally tend to place greater emphasis on love and personal intimacy in sexual relationships. Women are more empathic, and both sexes perceive friendships with

women as closer, richer, more intimate, and more empathic. Developmentally, sex differences related to intimacy peak during the reproductive years, a finding that is compatible with the theory that a basic function of warmth is to facilitate close family relationships and nurturing children. This is consistent with the finding that later in life there is more convergence between the sexes, with men becoming more nurturing and more attracted to intimate relationships and women becoming more independent and autonomous. Nevertheless, the average sex difference in favor of women remains throughout life.

Neuropsychology of Interpersonal Warmth

Interpersonal warmth therefore is a characteristic of a wide variety of close relationships, including friendships, heterosexual or homosexual pair bonds, and relationships between parents and children. Recent work in neuropsychology shows that close relationships activate specific reward areas in the brain and the neurotransmitters oxytocin and vasopressin. People high on the warmth dimension are relatively sensitive to the reward value of close relationships. They find intimate, affectionate relationships to be highly rewarding and eagerly seek out relationships, including peer relationships of friendship, in which this stimulation is available. Because the other person in such a relationship also finds this stimulation rewarding, the relationship is characterized by reciprocal positive affective exchanges. Friends are intimate associates, and their relationships are characterized by reciprocity, commitment, cooperation, and engaging in reciprocated prosocial support, intimacy, and affection. Because of the motivating role of affection for nurturance, people high on the warmth dimension tend to be relatively empathic and altruistic, especially within friendships where these feelings and actions are reciprocated.

Nevertheless, despite these general features of warm relationships, there are different types of warm relationships; this is reflected in neuropsychological differences unique to particular types of relationship. For example, long-term pair bonds and maternal love share a common neuropsychology of positive social reward and inhibiting negative emotions such as fear. Sexual relationships add

an erotic component beyond interpersonal warmth; it is generally thought that in long-term relationships, sexuality contributes to warmth and vice versa.

Warmth as a Component of Parent–Child Relationships

Warmth has also been identified as one of two major dimensions of parent–child relationships, the other being parental control (i.e., discipline and monitoring of children's behavior). Parents who are high on the warmth dimension are accepting, affectionate, and child-centered, and parents at the opposite end of the dimension are cold, rejecting, and self-centered. Warm parent–child relationships are correlated with the development of conscience and an internalized moral orientation (that is, acting morally because of internal standards of proper behavior rather than fear of punishment). Lack of warmth, on the other hand, is associated with delinquency and aggression rather than relationships based on reciprocated positive interaction. Studies have shown that this effect is found in many different cultures.

Warm parenting is also correlated with accepting and internalizing parental values. Given that warmth is a reward system, warm parent–child relationships can be seen as involving reciprocated positive exchanges of affection. Parental warmth therefore plays a motivating role in children's internalization of parental values. Children in warm parent–child relationships are positively motivated to seek the approval of their parents and to identify with their parents. Warm parents are more effective role models because children are motivated to maintain the warm relationship with their parents. For a child who has developed a strong relationship with the parent based on warmth and affection, behavior in opposition to the parent's standards may produce guilt and anxiety. Children in warm parent–child relationships are therefore less likely to be involved with peer groups, especially delinquent peer groups, disapproved by parents.

Parental warmth is not all powerful in motivating behavior. It must compete with other motivational systems, such as children's desire to fit into peer groups and normal attractions to sexual and

other forms of excitement that parents might disapprove. Nevertheless, parental warmth tends to push children to be more attentive to adult values.

Individual differences in interpersonal warmth are heritable, with about half of the variation because of environmental differences and half the variation because of genetic differences. Moreover, environmental differences are unshared within families, meaning that different children in the same family often experience different environments related to warmth. For example, research suggests that parents respond to genetically driven differences in their children. Thus, a child who is high on warmth may elicit more parental affection and nurturance than would a child who is not as high on the warmth system. These are termed *genotype-environment correlations*: Some children seek affection from their social environment more than others do (called an active genotype-environment correlation); some children evoke more affection from their social environment (called an evocative genotype-environment correlation). There are also passive genotype-environment correlations between children and their social environments. These result from parents transmitting genes that make their children more likely to be warm and affectionate but also treating their children with affection.

Finally, the finding that there are reward centers in the brain for interpersonal warmth and for several different types of close relationships (i.e., friendship, romantic love, parent–child affection) is highly compatible with an evolutionary perspective. As is often the case, evolution results in mechanisms that make adaptive behavior pleasurable and rewarding. Similarly, evolutionary theories propose that warmth originally evolved as a motivational component of maternal nurturance of offspring. Mothers high on warmth took pleasure in nurturing their children and keeping them safe. Because of the care of their mothers, the offspring survived better, so the genes for interpersonal warmth spread.

The preexisting system of maternal warmth then became elaborated as natural selection resulted in a biological basis for paternal investment in children and other types of close relationships. Humans are one of the few primates and relatively few mammals among whom fathers typically invest in their children. The primitive mammalian

pattern is for the males to simply mate with the female and then leave the rearing of offspring to the female. However, if investment by the father results in benefits for the children, there will be natural selection for paternal investment.

There is good reason to believe that this happened. As a thought experiment, imagine a woman having to support herself and her family in inhospitable environments without help from others while in the late stages of pregnancy or caring for young children. Cross-cultural research shows that children with fathers who invest in their welfare have lower mortality and greater cultural success. Although men are lower than women in interpersonal warmth, most men are attracted to close relationships and nurturing children. As noted, recent research in neuroscience shows that men as well as women have reward centers in their brains that promote pair bonding and nurturing children. Indeed, men living with pregnant women have increased levels of more characteristically female hormones such as prolactin and, to some extent, estradiol. Warmth, then, is part of the psychological basis of pair bonds and male investment in children: Males high on the warmth system find close relationships with family members rewarding and are motivated to be nurturant and affectionate toward children.

The evolutionary perspective also proposes that the primitive warmth system was also elaborated to motivate close relationships of friendship with nonfamily members. Evolutionary perspectives conceptualize friends as allies—people with whom one cooperates in pursuit of goals. During the early stages of friendship formation, future friends closely monitor their partners' behavior to make sure that they can trust them and that the relationship will be mutually beneficial. As friendship develops, the social reward areas of the brain are activated as the friendship begins to have positive emotional overtones. This emotional component of trust is a feeling of warmth toward the friend—a feeling that taps into the brain's reward centers for social relationships.

Kevin MacDonald

See also Affection and Affectionate Behavior; Agreeableness; Closeness; Emotion in Relationships; Intimacy; Love, Typologies; Parent–Child Relationships; Sex and Love

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WEAK TIES

Weak ties are best defined in contrast to *strong ties*. Strong ties involve relationships with intimate social partners. Researchers have devoted considerable attention to close relationships and have linked these ties to lower morbidity and mortality throughout life. Yet, people also retain an array of nonintimate social ties. These ties have received less attention in the research literature. Scholars who study nonintimate ties refer to them as *weak ties* or *peripheral ties*. In everyday parlance, people call them “acquaintances.” The key features of these ties involve the social partners’ mutual recognition and repeated interactions but an absence of intimacy or commitment. In early scholarship, frequency of contact distinguished these ties from strangers in the public realm known as “nodding relationships” or “familiar strangers”; weak ties involved more frequent contact than with people who were truly strangers. With technological

advances such as text messaging, listservs, blogs, and social networking sites, these distinctions are blurred. Even individuals who are little more than strangers establish repeated interactions and weak ties. This entry discusses the places where individuals encounter weak ties, historical changes in weak ties, and the functions of weak ties.

Weak ties arise in a wide array of settings. The development of relationships often involves a stage as weak ties; acquaintanceship often precedes friendship. Likewise, the disbarring of intimate relationships can engender weak ties, particularly when relationships move from active to passive. Friends who have drifted apart may rest on the periphery of the social network. Other ties may remain perpetually weak, particularly in the business world. Coworkers who do not progress to friendship, clients who frequent a business where they recognize the staff, and professionals such as haircutters, lawyers, or doctors with repeat customers establish such loose relationships. Some weak ties are steeped in a shared environment (neighbors), affiliation (clubs or churches), or Internet sites of various sorts. Close social networks also may engender weak ties; friends-of-friends or distant relatives are tenuously linked. Finally, individuals also may actively seek weak ties to people who have resources they need at different points in their lives.

Scholars interested in social networks sometimes refer to weak ties as *peripheral relationships* and closer ties as *core relationships*. Core relationships may vary from very intimate to less intimate, and peripheral ties are a subset of weak ties that individuals might list as members of their network, but not among their close ties. Research on social networks reveals that peripheral ties are more fluid than core ties are. Intimate ties are fairly stable over time, but weak ties tend to vary. At one point in time, an individual's cadre of peripheral ties may be distinct from the cadre of peripheral ties at a subsequent point in time. Peripheral ties by definition require less investment than do core ties and thus, are more expendable. Core intimate relationships often are steeped in longer-term family ties or commitments and are harder to form or disband.

The pervasiveness of weak ties in daily life is a fairly modern occurrence. Three shifts in human history account for increases in contact with

peripheral social ties: (1) the shift to intensified agriculture, (2) industrialization and urbanization, and (3) recent technologies facilitating contact with distant social contacts. Starting with horticultural societies, individuals began to interact with non-intimate social partners on a periodic basis to facilitate trade. More recently, industrial economies have required a surge in connection to people outside the family. Individuals employed for pay may spend more time with coworkers than with their intimates. Finally, beginning with the pony express, people have been able to communicate with social partners outside the intimates in their immediate environment. Technological advances proliferated in the 20th century with telephone, fax machines, and computers facilitating communication. In the 21st century, social networking Web sites encourage individuals to connect to a range of weak ties via friends-of-friends, common interests, and shared affiliations, and technological advances facilitate the maintenance and management of a large array of weak ties.

Weak ties may complement intimate ties and serve distinct functions. In one of the most widely cited studies in the field of sociology, *The Strength of Weak Ties*, Mark Granovetter documented the benefits of weak ties. He examined the mechanisms through which people obtained new jobs and found that people gathered information via weak ties. Studies have replicated these findings during the past 35 years. By contrast, intimate social partners are not as facile at providing new information because they come from similar backgrounds, have access to the same resources, and are often part of a "dense" network (e.g., everyone knows everyone else). Weak ties may encompass a broader array of social connections. Your dentist is unlikely to know your next-door neighbor. Thus, each weak tie may be a repository for diverse knowledge.

The primacy of weak versus intimate ties appears to vary throughout life, with the desire to establish weak ties greatest in adolescence and early adulthood. Socioemotional Selectivity Theory suggests that when individuals view their future as limited (as in old age), they focus on their emotionally rewarding close relationships. By contrast, when the future is open (as in young adulthood), individuals are motivated to seek new information and, thus, desire contact with

peripheral social partners. In Western cultures, many adolescents and young adults have considerable leisure time and few responsibilities. Young people also may seek weak social ties for entertainment and diversion.

Research suggests an array of other functions that weak ties serve as well. Community psychologists in the 1980s determined that haircutters, bartenders, and divorce lawyers sometimes served emotionally supportive functions equivalent to psychotherapists. Sociologists have been interested in role complexity and have suggested that peripheral social partners can enhance a multifaceted sense of identity. Individuals may behave and define themselves in distinct ways with family, boss, a yoga instructor, people who post on a Web site, community activists, their children's friends, and former neighbors. Social psychologists also suggest that individuals use social comparisons with weak ties when they are uncertain of their abilities. Comparison with similar others is needed for people to situate themselves within broader social hierarchies. Finally, recent research suggests that social networks containing diverse types of social ties (i.e., an array of weak ties as well as intimate ties) may enhance mental and physical functioning, but the mechanisms accounting for these associations remain unclear.

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See also Acquaintance Process; Developing Relationships; Social Capital; Social Networks, Role in Relationship Initiation; Socioemotional Selectivity Theory

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WEDDINGS

Weddings are one of the most important cultural rituals, reinforcing conventional cultural values and the social structure. Weddings recognize a legal relationship marked by a ceremonial rite of passage. Leslie Baxter and Dawn O. Braithwaite explain that weddings are rituals because they are voluntary, patterned communication events guided by cultural norms that pay homage to something considered sacred, and that produce and reproduce identity of the couple and family. Weddings are patterned in the sense that most ceremonies follow models or a broad script. Weddings are guided by cultural norms, meaning culture influences expectations for the ritual and the couple's marriage to follow. That weddings pay homage to something sacred means that weddings honor something, for example, the relationship, family, religion, or marriage as a social institution. Weddings involve identity of the individuals and the newly married couple. Weddings are not something a couple can do alone—they are inherently social. Most often weddings occur in the context of social interaction within the web of relationships (e.g., family, friends, church, community) surrounding a couple. However, even if a couple has a wedding in which the couple's social network members do not participate, others, for example, a justice of the peace and witnesses, still need to be involved. This entry discusses weddings past and present, functions of weddings, and the topics of weddings and consumerism, gender, culture, heteronormativity, and remarriage.

Although U.S. weddings take various forms, some specific practices are present in nearly every wedding: an engagement period, setting a date to be married, a ceremony including the exchange of vows, a member of the clergy or legal system officiating, and a reception celebrating the couple following the ceremony. Whether small and informal or large and formal, U.S. weddings are laden with cultural artifacts including special clothing for the bride, groom, and members of the wedding party; flowers; photography; and a ring for one or both partners. Weddings involve at least two witnesses who are required to sign a legal document, but often involve several hundred family, friends, and community members. Although there

are considerable differences in weddings, they share a common core—what scholars call canonical stories. *Canonical stories* are narratives familiar to members of a culture that prescribe behaviors and the boundaries of acceptable practices. Thus, although weddings take many different forms, most of us could step into a stranger's wedding ritual and recognize a wedding is taking place. The consistency of the wedding ritual speaks to the social construction of weddings.

Weddings Past and Present

Before the 18th century, U.S. weddings were small and informal and involved active participation of friends and members of the community, usually involving the church. However, as Jaclyn Geller explains, by the 18th century, the focus of wedding ceremonies shifted from the community to the bride, changing the ceremony to a personal one. Still, middle-class weddings were simple affairs, usually conducted in the home or a church, without elaborate costumes, and often with a brief engagement period. Although witnesses were present, usually these were small gatherings of close family and friends. During the mid- to late 19th century, the formal “white wedding” hosted by the bride's family became the standard in the United States.

At present, weddings may be classified on a continuum from eloping, small home wedding, informal chapel wedding, small wedding in church, home/garden/club wedding, formal church wedding, to a large cathedral or hotel wedding. Most U.S. weddings today are held in a church with a member of the clergy officiating. Even couples not highly committed to religious practices in everyday life often include religion in the wedding ceremony.

The median age of marriage has risen in the United States; for example, the age of brides has risen from 21.7 years in 1970 to 25.1 years of age in 2000; ages for grooms have also increased from 23.3 years to 26.7 years in the same period. Although weddings are a happy time for couples, they are a source of stress as well. Couples worry about whether they are making the right decision, managing finances, becoming a part of a new family and getting along with in-laws, as well as the

ceremony itself. Although many couples anticipate that marriage will be easy and similar to what they experienced in the premarital period, many are surprised at the stress weddings and the newlywed period bring.

Functions of Weddings

Weddings are rituals laden with symbols. They regulate and organize marriage and family and confirm heterosexuality as an acceptable social practice. For most families, weddings are centrally important social rituals that create a new family of the marital couple. As weddings unite marital couples, they also bring families together, display family solidarity, and knit together the couple's social networks of family, friends, and community members. Members of the couple's social networks come together to demonstrate their loyalty and support of the couple and the institution of marriage. Social network members also serve as witnesses to the couple's vows, as couples make a public commitment.

Traditionally, weddings symbolized the change of status and identity from individual to couple and began the cohabitation of the marital couple. Today, many couples cohabit before marriage and the identity shift into a spousal role is not as clear-cut as in the past. Interestingly, although many couples cohabit before marriage as a period of testing or rehearsal for marriage, researchers have found that cohabitation does not lessen chance of divorce. Because of the onset of sexual relations before marriage and premarital cohabitation of many couples, weddings may function less as a rite of passage, and more as a symbolic and legal legitimization of the couple's relationship.

Weddings and Consumerism

For many families today, planning and holding “the perfect wedding” is important. Weddings are an industry in the United States, and their cost continues to rise. Spending on weddings in the United States is estimated to be about \$50 billion annually, and in 2006, the average cost of a wedding was \$30,000 in U.S. dollars. Weddings give families the opportunity to demonstrate their

wealth or the illusion of wealth, as many families move temporarily out of their socioeconomic class in spending and activities for the wedding. Traditionally, parents of the bride were expected to cover the cost of the wedding, but today it is common practice for both families (and sometimes the bride and groom themselves) to share the expenses.

The influence of the media and of the growth of the wedding industry has created the norms for proper weddings. The wedding industry has transformed how couples marry, introduced new traditions, and produced new meaning for weddings. Bridal magazines, Web sites, and businesses reinforce the perfect wedding. Television shows about weddings are tremendously popular among young women and give illusions of the perfect wedding. The bridal industry reinforces the normalcy and desirability of heterosexual, Christian marriages and reaffirms the tradition of the white wedding captured in wedding photos.

A tension exists between two U.S. cultural ideologies of the romanticism of tradition and the “must haves” for perfect wedding, and individualism, where the couple may exert their own identity in the wedding ceremony. Through the couple’s symbolic choices as they plan the event, weddings become a reflection of unique couple identity manifested in the tradition of the ritual. In this way, weddings communicate individual identity as well as the ability to conform and adapt to the larger social norms.

Weddings and Gender

Traditional, romance-based weddings are an aspiration for many women, especially for first weddings. Although men are presently more involved in wedding planning than in previous generations, women are prepared by tradition, the media, cultural institutions, and the wedding industry to take the lead role in wedding planning. The wedding industry offers women many options to help prepare for weddings, and many women devour magazines, books, Web sites, or television shows dedicated to wedding planning, or hire wedding consultants. Not surprisingly, studies reveal that brides experience more stress while preparing for weddings than do grooms.

The gendered nature of wedding ceremonies has altered little during the last century despite changes in the role of women in U.S. culture. There seems to be surprisingly little resistance among young women to the white wedding, and traditionally gendered practices associated with weddings, for example, being escorted down the aisle by fathers or other males, wearing a veil or other head-covering, or adopting the husband’s surname upon marriage. Some feminist scholars point out that traditional white weddings mirror the gendered role of wives in U.S. culture. Despite greater participation of men in the home and caregiving for children and family, most of this labor still falls to women. Feminist scholars point to the irony that many women (and men for that matter) who label themselves *feminists* choose traditional white weddings.

Weddings and Culture

The U.S. white wedding has been exported and translated to other cultures. It is not unusual to see brides and grooms dressed in traditional U.S. bridal gowns and tuxedos. For example, in Japan, it is not uncommon for couples to adopt Christian symbolism and U.S. wedding artifacts.

Wendy Leeds-Hurwitz explains that interracial and intercultural couples may face additional challenges with their weddings. Weddings that unite persons from different cultures, ethnicities, or social classes are inherently more complex because these couples must co-construct a relational identity from among cultural expectations that may differ. Some interracial or intercultural couples may encounter anything from misunderstanding to intense family or community opposition to their decision to marry. Negotiating different cultural expectations in the course of planning and holding the wedding may be challenging, as couples must find ways to negotiate cultural conflicts. In the best of circumstances, couples are able to address and often combine their individual cultures in ways that are acceptable to their families and relevant others. If they can do this successfully, the wedding may provide an opportunity for the couple to establish and model for their families and communities (and themselves) how they will address and negotiate their cultural differences in the future.

Weddings and Heteronormativity

Weddings also function to reify heterosexual love and relationships in the United States and to institutionalize heterosexuality. Despite the denial of rights and recognition to same-sex couples, many gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender (GLBT) couples are holding weddings, often called commitment ceremonies, to affirm the permanency of their relationship. These ceremonies range from being virtually indistinguishable from heterosexual weddings to those that are different. Depending on the level of acceptance of their homosexuality by family members, family may or may not play a prominent role in these ceremonies. Some GLBT couples turn to friends and voluntary (fictive) kin to support their relationship and wedding.

In addition to the challenges experienced by GLBT couples concerning their own weddings, Ramona Oswald and Elizabeth Suter explain that tensions are created when heterosexual weddings exclude GLBT family members or friends, or when they are placed in awkward positions of enacting heterosexual practices. For example, the ritual of the bride throwing the bouquet to the single female guests may be awkward for a wedding guest who is lesbian and pairing a GLBT member of the wedding party with a member of the opposite sex in the walk down the aisle may be discomforting. For GLBT guests, the wedding ceremony may seem to be replete with explicit anti-GLBT messages, especially in those weddings that highlight conservative religious values. Heterosexual family members may struggle over whether or how to invite partners of GLBT family members to the wedding. When they are invited, GLBT individuals may perceive they are expected to remain silent about their identity.

Weddings and Remarriage

To date, there has been little research about weddings in couples marrying for the second time (or more). Where one or both partners have been married before, some couples hold understated, simple wedding rituals and others engage in traditional white weddings. For some couples, this decision may be influenced by whether this is a first marriage for one of the partners, especially if

this is the case for the bride. The presence of children also affects the wedding for remarriage couples. Researchers have found that weddings are often empty rituals for children. Stepchildren who perceived that the parents are celebrating the creation of a new family, rather than an exclusive focus on the couple, are more likely to find the wedding meaningful.

*Dawn O. Braithwaite, Diana Breshears,
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See also Family Routines and Rituals; Marriage, Historical and Cross-Cultural Trends; Marriage, Transition to; Materialism and Relationships; Media Influences on Relationships

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WILLINGNESS TO SACRIFICE

“No relationship would survive if partners were not willing to sacrifice.” Although this may sound like a strong statement, it is likely to be true.

Indeed, one could go so far as to claim that relationships exist by virtue of mutual sacrifices—because mutual sacrifices add extra value to the relationship. If partners “give and take” in their choices for food, they will every now and then have their own favorite food while being able to enjoy one another’s company. If they do not, they will probably end up eating alone, and living alone. *Willingness to sacrifice* is defined in terms of the readiness to forgo immediate self-interest to promote the well-being of a partner or a relationship—for example, to do something for your partner that you would otherwise not do. Sacrifice can take a variety of forms—it can consist of giving up desirable behaviors (*passive sacrifice*) or enacting undesirable behaviors (*active sacrifice*), it can consist of minor requests that occur every day in a relationship (e.g., going out with your partner’s friends whom you find terribly boring) or more substantial ones (e.g., moving to another city for your partner’s career). This entry discusses what promotes willingness to sacrifice and what sacrifice promotes close relationships.

What Promotes Willingness to Sacrifice?

One key variable in promoting willingness to sacrifice is one’s commitment to the relationship, which is defined in terms of the degree to which an individual experiences a long-term orientation toward a relationship, including the intent to persist, feelings of psychological attachment, and implicit recognition that one “needs” the relationship. Empirical evidence strongly indicates that commitment promotes willingness to sacrifice. The various components of commitment—satisfaction, investments, and quality of alternatives—predict willingness to sacrifice. That is, willingness to sacrifice is greater for people who are happier in their relationships (satisfaction), for people who have made greater investments to the relationships (material investments such as shared mortgage, furniture, and the like, or subjective investments, such as mutual friends, exchange of secrets, and so on), and for people who fear that they have not much to fall back on because they would not like to be single, or because their alternatives do not look good (perceived quality of alternatives). Commitment summarizes and explains the links

between satisfaction, investment size, and perceived quality of alternatives on the one hand, and willingness to sacrifice on the other hand. So, what then might explain why commitment is such a powerful predictor of willingness to sacrifice?

First, committed individuals are dependent on their partner and literally need their relationships. The more they have to lose, the more they will be willing to give up to hold on to what they have. This explanation is consistent with the negative association between perceived quality of alternatives and willingness to sacrifice. Evidence does suggest that people who believe that they would “lose everything” if the relationship were to end are more likely to be helpful to the partner, often at significant cost to themselves.

Second, committed individuals are likely to adopt a communal orientation to respond to the partner’s needs in a rather unconditional manner without counting what they receive in return. Such communal orientation has often been linked with commitment. This makes sense: In a strongly committed relationship, it would be unusual if partners need to think carefully whether or not to do the partner a favor, and to bring to mind a record of exchanges. Such an exchange orientation might even be taxing because “counting” and “book-keeping” may be disruptive for smooth and easy interactions.

Third, commitment involves psychological attachment. The committed person feels linked to his or her partner emotionally and, as a consequence, departures from self-interest to benefit the partner may not be experienced (or at least, less so) as departures from self-interest. This occurs when committed individuals sacrifice to make their partner feel good and, at the same time, knowing that they have benefited their partner makes them feel good. For example, parents often help their children automatically, presumably because of their attachment and resulting desire to benefit them. In this regard, during airplane flights, it is often announced that in case of an emergency, parents should first help themselves, and then their children. Evidence indicates that several physiological responses are activated in mothers when their young children start to cry, preparing mothers to provide immediate help even after losing many hours of sleep (e.g., providing milk when a baby signals hunger). Thus, mothers seem to be

genetically predisposed to sacrifice for their offspring, even at considerable risk to their own welfare. When they sacrifice for their children, they do not experience it as a departure from self-interest but as the natural thing to do (“What makes the children feel good, makes me feel good”).

Fourth, commitment involves adopting a long-term orientation. In a short-term interaction, individuals may achieve good outcomes by pursuing their immediate self-interest. On the contrary, in long-term relationships, it is beneficial to develop patterns of reciprocal prorelationship behaviors, and acts of sacrifice may represent a conscious or unconscious means to encourage reciprocity and maximize long-term self-interest. This interpretation is supported in research showing that although people whose personal values predispose them to be generally “prosocial” (i.e., helpful, cooperative and friendly) exhibit large sacrifices whether or not they are strongly committed to their relationships; self-centered people are likely to exhibit high levels of willingness to sacrifice only if they are committed. Presumably, they do so in their pursuit of long-term self-interest.

What Does Sacrifice Promote?

Sacrifices are one of the most important and effective ways to build trust. If Hal does something nice for Dorothy, and Dorothy realizes that Hal did this at some major cost to himself, then Dorothy’s feelings of trust will be bolstered. In other words, sacrifices make one feel that a partner is considerate of, and responsive to, one’s basic needs, which is essential to the future of the relationship, especially given the many uncertainties likely to arise. Sacrifice also helps the recipient to feel validated, as the partner is supporting one’s feelings of self-esteem and self-worth. Altogether, it might be argued that partners in close relationships seek to symbolically confirm and express their mutual commitment to help one another under most kinds of circumstances. Indeed, the marriage vow is an expression not only of one’s commitment to stay together, but also to help each other through rough times (a key demonstration of the willingness to sacrifice). With this in mind, what are the main outcomes shown in research to result from sacrifice?

One relatively straightforward outcome of sacrifice is *direct reciprocity*. That is, sacrifices often inspire the partner to make sacrifices in return. For example, in ongoing relationships, there is a significant association between each partner’s willingness to sacrifice. Also, studies have shown that over time, one person’s sacrifice increases the partner’s trust, which in turn enhances the first person’s willingness to sacrifice. Such evidence is consistent with the large literature on reciprocity in cooperation. For example, past research using the prisoner’s dilemma game has revealed that even strangers are likely to respond cooperatively to another’s cooperative behavior. Although such tendencies may be mediated by trust, they sometimes occur in a relatively automatic manner, without much calculation or thought, and perhaps even beyond our awareness. Also, although there is reciprocity in sacrifice, there is also reciprocity in the failure to sacrifice, and these may even have stronger effects on relationships.

Second, in the context of groups, willingness to sacrifice may also be inspired by the desire to maintain or improve one’s reputation. For example, group members want other group members to trust them. If other group members have a reason to distrust a person, then a variety of sanctions can be imposed, such as being marginalized (e.g., not being invited to contribute to important group decisions) or even excluded from the group. Studies have shown that members of a group have a strong tendency to monitor and evaluate one another’s input to the group. Evidence indicates that people sometimes tend to do too much for the group (“wasteful altruism”), perhaps in an effort to ensure that no one doubts their willingness to sacrifice for the group. As such, members may sometimes compete for a self-sacrificing (or altruistic) reputation, or, at a minimum, to avoid any possibility of being seen as one of the lesser contributors. Finally, self-sacrificial acts in a group may also lead to indirect reciprocity, whereby people reciprocate favors and sacrifices to third persons, rather than to the original helper.

Third, sacrifice, and acts of generosity more generally, serve an important function in helping to increase trust, which may be essential in coping with unintended errors. For example, a single unintended error by an untrusted other (e.g.,

saying the wrong thing, arriving too late for a date) can create a cycle of noncooperative exchanges. Sufficient levels of trust thus may be helpful in coping with the uncertainty and unintended errors of social life. Research has revealed that acting a bit more cooperatively than one's partner is an important means by which to build such trust. Such findings also suggest that acts of sacrifice are functional, not only because of the support received, but also because of the "surplus value"—the communication of trust and love. In the contexts of groups, acts of sacrifice help solve a problem, and contribute to a positive, trusting group atmosphere that is essential for future interactions.

Conclusion

Sacrifice is central to the functioning of human relationships. One of the most central determinants of trust that helps people to reciprocate acts of sacrifice is helping people give one another the benefit of the doubt in coping with unintended errors and misunderstandings. The motivations underlying sacrifice can range from selfish to altruistic. Sometimes people sacrifice because they believe that sacrifices ensure good outcomes for themselves in the long-term, and sometimes people may sacrifice because they are deeply concerned about another person's well-being. However, sacrifice can be a product of systematic thought as well as a product of virtually no thought at all. Finally, some people believe in the risks of "too much sacrifice," because it can invite exploitation, and some argue that people with chronic self-esteem and dependency problems are overly likely to sacrifice, which may hinder their healthy development. Although there are many examples of both phenomena, the existent literature indicates that these are exceptions. The rule is that sacrifices are helpful to the well-being of relationships *and* individuals, including the one who sacrifices.

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See also Accommodation; Commitment, Predictors and Outcomes; Communal Relationships; Compassionate Love; Cooperation and Competition; Forgiveness; Interpersonal Dependency

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WORK-FAMILY CONFLICT

Changes in the family and the composition of the labor force are reshaping the relationship between work and family life in the United States. During the past 40 years, women have greatly increased their participation in paid employment, men have increased time spent on housework and childcare, and the proportion of households involving two earners or an unmarried parent has grown. Such shifts have sparked a large and vibrant body of research on the interface between work and family life. Much of this research considers work-family conflict, broadly defined as conflict experienced because of incompatibilities between the demands of work and family roles. Work-family conflict is associated with a variety of individual-level outcomes including reduced life satisfaction, reduced marital quality, and emotional distress and can also negatively affect employers through increased rates of absenteeism and employee turnover, reduced productivity, and lower employee satisfaction. This entry reviews the meaning and correlates of work-family conflict and suggests directions for future research on this topic.

Although a growing body of research also considers the ways in which work and family roles may enhance one another, this work is beyond the scope of the current entry.

The Meaning of Work-Family Conflict

Work-family conflict arises when the demands of work and family roles are perceived as interfering with one another. This concept originates from Robert L. Kahn and colleagues' theory of interrole conflict and William J. Goode's theory of role strain. Jeffrey Greenhaus and Nicholas Beutell identify three potential sources of work-family conflict: time-based conflict, strain-based conflict, and behavior-based conflict. *Time-based conflict* stems from the idea that resources of time and attention are finite, such that participation in one role limits the time and attention that can be devoted to another role. Work-family conflict results when these resources are insufficient to meet the demands of both work and family roles. *Strain-based conflict* arises when symptoms of stress associated with performance in one role (e.g., tension, anxiety, fatigue) interfere with performance of the other. *Behavior-based conflict* occurs when behavior(s) required in one role are incompatible with those required in another role. For example, aggressiveness and independence may be necessary for success at work whereas nurturance and warmth may be expected at home.

Although Greenhaus and Beutell emphasize the simultaneous and bidirectional incompatibilities between work and family roles, much recent research separately considers conflict arising from work sources (work-to-family conflict) and conflict arising from family sources (family-to-work conflict). The latter approach is supported by growing evidence that work-to-family conflict and family-to-work conflict tend to have different determinants and consequences. Yet, consistent with Greenhaus and Beutell's original conceptual definition, a positive association exists between levels of work-to-family conflict and family-to-work conflict. This points to a reciprocal relationship where demands associated with unfulfilled role obligations in one domain may in turn make it difficult to fulfill role obligations in the other.

Scholars also increasingly acknowledge that personality characteristics such as Neuroticism or Extraversion influence whether a given set of work and family role demands result in the perception of work-family conflict for a particular individual.

Measurement

Early research on work-family conflict tended to rely on global measures that failed to distinguish between work-to-family conflict and family-to-work conflict or on measures that assessed only the extent to which work demands interfered with family life. More recent research uses scales constructed from multiple self-reported items that separately assess work-to-family conflict and family-to-work conflict to better capture the bidirectionality of the relationship between work and family. Many of these measures are based on Greenhaus and Beutell's conceptualization, although commonly used scales include time and strain-based items more often than behavior-based items. Researchers use a wide variety of specific instruments to measure work-family conflict. For example, Michael Frone and colleagues' commonly used scale includes such questions as, "How often does your job or career interfere with your responsibilities at home, such as yard work, cooking, cleaning, repairs, shopping, paying the bills, or childcare?" and "How often does your home life keep you from spending the amount of time you would like to spend on job- or career-related activities?" Richard Netemeyer and colleagues' widely used scales also include strain-based dimensions of work-family conflict such as, "My job produces strain that makes it difficult to fulfill family duties." And, "Family-related strain interferes with my ability to perform job-related duties."

Work Sources of Conflict

Individuals generally report higher levels of work-to-family conflict than family-to-work conflict. A number of specific characteristics of work roles are associated with elevated perceptions of work-family conflict. For example, nonstandard or inflexible work schedules, job stress, lack of autonomy or time pressure on the job, work role

ambiguity, and job dissatisfaction are generally associated with higher levels of perceived work-family conflict. Some studies also find job insecurity, job involvement (i.e., viewing one's job as central to one's identity), and the number of hours worked per week to be positively associated with work-family conflict. Other research considers specific features of workplaces. For example, a supportive work-family culture at one's workplace (e.g., programs that support parental leave or flexibility to attend to personal or family issues) and work-family support from a supervisor (e.g., supervisor accommodates family or personal issues or the supervisor is perceived as supportive) tend to be associated with relatively lower levels of work-family conflict.

Family Sources of Conflict

Relatively less scholarly attention considers how family demands contribute to perceptions of work-family conflict. Hours spent on housework, child-care, or other family demands are often related with higher levels of work-family conflict. Marital tension or conflict is also associated with the experience of work-family conflict, although the causal direction of this relationship is unclear because work-family conflict may itself cause marital tension to increase. Employed parents tend to experience the most work-family conflict when children are young or if they have many children. High family involvement (viewing one's family as central to one's identity) is frequently associated positively with work-family conflict, but some studies find that this relationship exists only among women. Other characteristics of the marital relationship may also influence perceptions of work-family conflict. For example, individuals generally report more work-family conflict when a spouse is perceived as unsupportive or when one's spouse reports higher levels of work-family conflict.

Individual-Level Factors and Work-Family Conflict

Characteristics of individuals such as personality traits and coping strategies may also influence whether work and family demands are perceived as being incompatible with one another. Negative

affectivity (predisposition to negative feelings) and Neuroticism are associated with higher levels of work-family conflict whereas Extraversion, Conscientiousness, and Agreeableness are associated with less work-family conflict. In addition, hardiness—being strongly committed, having a high sense of control, and viewing changes as positive challenges—is negatively related to work-family conflict. Individuals who have better strategies to cope with competing demands are less likely to report work-family conflict. Goal setting and achieving is associated with lower levels of work and family stress, which subsequently is associated with less work-family conflict. Likewise, individuals who use time management strategies or prefer organization are less likely to report work-family conflict because of higher levels of perceived control.

Many studies also explore gender differences in perceptions of work-family conflict, although most find women and men report similar levels of conflict. When a gender difference is identified, women generally report higher levels of work-family conflict than men do, perhaps because women still tend to hold primary responsibility for duties at home. Yet, most studies of work-family conflict exclude individuals who have left the labor force. Women may be more likely than men to reduce their work demands in response to work-family conflict or to family-based stressors. However, other research also finds that women, and men as well, may increase time spent at work when faced with marital conflict or a stressful home environment.

Directions for Future Research on Work-Family Conflict

Despite the abundance of informative research on work-family conflict, much remains to be learned. Most prior studies of work-family conflict rely on cross-sectional study designs, such that characteristics of work and family environments are measured simultaneously with perceptions of stress and well-being. Such studies are not well designed to untangle the nature and direction of causal relationships or examine change over time in work-family conflict. For example, does work-family conflict cause

increased marital tension or does marital tension lead to increased perceptions of work-family conflict? Prospective longitudinal studies may be especially helpful for understanding the nature of gender differences in work-family conflict by examining the impact of selection. For example, researchers can investigate which types of people are more likely to modify employment obligations (e.g., move from full-time to part-time work or leave the paid labor force altogether) in response to work-family conflict. Such designs can also shed light on the extent to which individuals may modify family obligations (e.g., decisions to marry, to stay married, to have a child, to use nonparental childcare) in response to existing or anticipated work-family conflict. Longitudinal designs make it possible to study both the short-term and longer-term consequences of work-family conflict.

Future research would also benefit from additional efforts to understand heterogeneity in the experience of work-family conflict. For example, continued attention should be paid to conditions under which individuals exposed to the same objective work and family role demands perceive different levels of work-family conflict. Focusing on personality factors and coping styles seems key here. Existing research also points to meaningful differentials in the experience of work-family conflict across social class groups, but in general, this topic remains understudied. Future research should use diverse samples to better understand these and other group differences.

In conclusion, as work-family conflict is associated with lower productivity and increased distress, additional efforts to ease incompatibilities between work and family roles, either at the family level or in the workplace, are clearly needed. For example, flexible work schedules and employer-supported dependent care are associated with reductions in employees' perceptions of work-family conflict. Future studies should further examine the effects of interventions designed to make work and family roles more compatible in practice.

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See also Division of Labor in Households; Dual-Earner Couples; Employment Effects on Relationships; Retirement, Effects on Relationships; Work-Family Spillover

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WORK-FAMILY SPIOLOVER

The term *work-family spillover* is often used in a general way to refer to the effects that paid employment has on family relationships. Initial research focused on maternal employment, based on the idea that a mother's work outside of the home might adversely affect her children and family. This assumption was incorrect, however, and painted a far too simplistic picture of work and family life; rather, the specific characteristics and experiences of jobs—not merely employment itself—have both positive and negative consequences for the family. This entry discusses the effects that work can have on family relationships, as well as the processes by which these effects may occur.

Effects of Job Characteristics and Work-Related Experiences on Family Relationships

Studies of job conditions and job characteristics now commonly include subjective appraisals of work to understand how individuals' experiences or views of their jobs might bring about changes in family dynamics. Job satisfaction is one of the chief features of work life that is studied. In general, parents who are more satisfied with their careers show greater warmth and responsiveness to their children and report greater marital satisfaction. Workers who experience more autonomy and complexity on the job also display more positive parenting and less harsh and restrictive parenting. Characteristics that select individuals into jobs with certain degrees of complexity and autonomy—educational level for instance—may also help shape parenting behavior. Researchers rely on longitudinal designs, with the same group of participants followed for months or years, to tease apart the impact that jobs have on parenting from the influence of factors that underlie both. The evidence from the longitudinal studies indicates that jobs can serve as an arena outside the household where workers may experience achievement and fulfillment that can carry over into the family with positive implications for those relationships.

Research also consistently indicates that chronic job stress affects family relationships through a negative impact on individual well-being. For example, the subjective experience of job stress has been associated with self-reports of personal distress, such as depression, that have then been linked to poorer marital and parent–child relations. In the absence of individual distress as an intervening link, however, there is no connection between chronic job stressors and family outcomes.

One facet of job stress is the social climate or quality of social relationships at work. Parents who experience a noncohesive or conflictive work atmosphere seem to have more negative interactions with their children (e.g., they are less affectionate, more angry), with longitudinal studies suggesting that these effects may hold up for months. Similarly, couples who report negative and unsupportive relationships at work also experience more marital tension and arguments. Social

support in the workplace has been linked with greater individual health and well-being; these links are thought to have positive implications for family life. However, because investigators have tended to focus on the impact of a negative work atmosphere, there is not as much evidence that supportive relationships at work benefit family social life.

Another aspect of job stress is time pressure and work overload, which can lead to parents feeling overwhelmed by and conflicted about their work and family roles. Similar to the association between the social atmosphere at work and family relations, studies reliably show that overloaded parents have poorer relations with their children (e.g., more conflict, less acceptance). In addition, more time pressure at work has been connected to reduced parental monitoring, meaning less knowledge about children's activities and whereabouts, and less allocation of time to parenting. For couples, time pressure and work overload are associated with greater marital tension and poorer marital adjustment. Overall, the subjective appraisal of job demands as being stressful or overwhelming seems to have a greater influence on family interactions and relationships than do the objective job conditions.

One such objective measure is the length of the workday, or the number of hours spent on the job. Initially, it was assumed that long hours at work would be associated with poorer family outcomes. However, research indicates that long work hours do not predict individual or family functioning, with most studies reporting no reliable linkages between time on the job and lower marital quality or poorer home environments for children. This likely results from the many benefits (income, access to health care, social support) that typically increase with more hours of employment. However, the distribution of parents' work hours over the day (e.g., amount of overlap with spouse's work schedule and child's school day) and the subjective appraisal of those work hours (e.g., do work hours fit one's needs) do influence family relationships. In particular, among two-parent families in which one parent works a nonstandard shift (e.g., at night), there is often a disruption of family routines. Increased rates of marital dissatisfaction have also been observed. In single-parent households, shift work can place an extreme burden on the family.

Researchers have also turned their attention to experiences that occur *in transit* between work and home. Although commuter stress is associated with negative individual health outcomes, such as high blood pressure, there does not appear to be a substantive link between commuting and family relations and functioning. Studies have implicated the length, unpredictability, and uncontrollability of commuting as characteristics that help explain commuter stress via their associations with worker's greater negative mood and decreased frustration tolerance and task motivation. However, no conclusive evidence indicates that these effects contribute to increased tension in the home.

Short-Term Processes

Because chronic job stressors can affect family relationships, researchers have been interested in understanding just *how* experiences at work come to have an impact at home. One approach to this question puts families under the microscope, focusing on a short period (days or weeks), to see if day-to-day fluctuations in stressors at work correlate with day-to-day changes in family behavior. This strategy differs from approaches that consider the effects of stable job characteristics or conditions. For example, instead of comparing an ER trauma nurse (who generally perceives high job stress) with a florist (who generally perceives little job stress), the researcher is comparing the same person, say the florist, with himself or herself on different days with different levels of job stress (Valentine's Day versus the day after). Thus, the effects of both stable job characteristics and individual characteristics on family behavior are eliminated; the focus is exclusively on the effects of short-term variations in experiences at work. Using this strategy, work-to-family effects are often observed and they seem to fall into two categories—social withdrawal and increases in anger and conflict. Interestingly, these short-term consequences of job stress are observed both in marital and in parent-child interactions and they are found in studies that use objective measures of daily job stressors.

The social withdrawal response to job stress consists of short-term decreases in the employed individual's usual level of social engagement at home. Coming home after a stressful day at work,

he or she might speak less, express less positive and less negative emotion, and be less interested and less involved in social interaction. For instance, a parent may be less likely to help with homework or to discipline a child. The second type of response is quite different. After more difficult or stressful days, the employed family member may express more anger and be more critical than usual. Researchers have found that a one-day increase in stress at work is associated with increases in marital arguments and use of disciplinary tactics with children later that day. In one investigation, air traffic controllers were both more socially withdrawn and expressed more anger when they came home from a shift at the airport characterized by higher air traffic volume or lower visibility conditions.

How does a high-stress day at work affect behavior in the family? Researchers believe that job stressors leave a cognitive, affective, and physiological residue, such that the employee's thoughts, feelings, and biology are changed, at least in the short-term, by his or her experiences at work. For example, the employed person may return home at the end of the day preoccupied with worries about an impending deadline at work, or with lingering feelings of anger and physiological arousal because of an argument with a coworker. This is the more technical and narrow meaning of the term *spillover*: the experience of a mood or a biological response in one setting that originated in a different setting. Negative mood and arousal caused by stressors experienced at work sometimes do persist when the employed person returns home, and evidence suggests that those spillover effects account for some of the increase in anger and conflict that were described previously.

There is, of course, an alternative to simply experiencing and directly expressing the residue of job stress at home; employees can attempt to change their physical and psychological state, perhaps by relaxing, or distracting themselves from thoughts about a difficult day, or engaging in any one of a number of coping tactics. The social withdrawal response to job stress may be one such coping strategy. In other words, rather than discuss job-related worries or problems at home, the employee may avoid social interaction, perhaps to reduce the chances that negative mood or irritability will lead to arguments and to facilitate a process of relaxation and unwinding.

Whether the residue of stress at work directly affects the employed family member's social behavior through spillover processes or indirectly affects his or her behavior through a coping response, partners in the social interaction feel the impact. Researchers are beginning to investigate processes of emotion transmission, whereby emotions are transferred from one member of a dyad to another through their social interactions. Likewise, some evidence indicates that stress hormone levels, such as cortisol, in couples are synchronized when spouses are at home together and are less closely linked during the workday. The field is thus beginning to see how stress at work can ultimately affect the psychological and biological functioning of other family members. However, spouses and children are active participants in the daily social life of families and contribute to the dynamics of the employed family member's reactions at home to stress at work. For example, studies have uncovered different ways that spouses and children can either encourage or disrupt an employee's attempts at social withdrawal. In the end, the impact of job stressors on family relationships and well-being depends on the reactions of all its members.

Individual and Family Differences

Although the research summarized here indicates that jobs do influence family relationships, both in the short-term and in the long-run, not every family is affected in the same way or to the same degree. For example, some individuals and families do not show any impact of job stressors on home life. A variety of individual and family characteristics—such as the socioeconomic status and life stage of the family; the gender, personality, and psychological well being of the employee; existing patterns of conflict, parenting styles, and division of labor in the home—all help to shape work–family dynamics. For example, parents who are psychologically distressed seem to be more vulnerable to the effects of job stress on interactions with their children, and family relationships that are generally satisfying and harmonious seem to protect families from the short-term repercussions of job stress.

Family-to-Work Spillover Effects

Although most investigations focus on work-to-family effects, there is also interest in bidirectional models. Studies have found evidence for both a negative (e.g., stress contagion) and a positive (e.g., useful skills and attitudes) impact of home life on work life. Of note, recent longitudinal research has suggested that marital quality has more influence on job satisfaction than vice versa, such that increases in marital satisfaction contributed to increases in job satisfaction over time, and increases in marital discord predicted declines in job satisfaction over time. Hence, evidence suggests that reciprocal effects between work and family simultaneously occur, and that these bidirectional pathways warrant further study.

In conclusion, although many employed adults say they worry that time spent at work may harm their families, on the whole, employment benefits the family environment. Jobs typically bring income, health care, social support, and a sense of accomplishment that contribute to the well-being of workers and their families. Only under certain circumstances (e.g., high job stress, mismatch of work shift with family schedule) does employment also bring negative consequences for the family.

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See also Emotional Contagion; Employment Effects on Relationships; Job Stress, Relationship Effects; Work–Family Conflict; Workplace Relationships

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WORKPLACE RELATIONSHIPS

Workplace relationships include any associations that are initiated, maintained, or dissolved at work. Workplace relationships include relationships between superiors (e.g., bosses, supervisors, leaders) and subordinates (e.g., employees, direct-reports), relationships between coworkers in the same unit, or relationships among a number of members of the workplace such as groups, within unit teams, and cross-functional teams, including telecommuting teams who seldom see each other face-to-face. This entry distinguishes between workplace relationships and other types of relationships, and expounds upon what is known about different types of workplace relationships such as those between superiors and subordinates, romantic partners, friends, and enemies. The entry also discusses the nature of workplace conflict, coping with conflict, and the future of workplace relationships.

Distinction Between Workplace Relationships and Other Relationships

Workplace relationships differ in two fundamental ways from other adult relationships. The first difference is that these relationships involve a background of structure, with role expectations about who may issue commands, what actions should follow, and how individuals are expected

to spend their days. This structure can impose limits on the development, form, and expression of relationships. No matter how much coworkers might enjoy each other's company, structural boundaries may inhibit the development of the relationship.

The second difference is that the relationships tend to be semi voluntary, at best. Workers generally do not have the opportunity to select their supervisors, their coworkers on a project team, or the occupants of the offices, cubicles, or desks adjacent to theirs. As a consequence, employees must adjust to, accommodate, and try to find redeeming value in people with whom they would not otherwise choose to associate.

Superior-Subordinate Relationships

The owner/supervisor-employee/subordinate relationship is a relatively new invention in human history and shares some features with other hierarchical relationships, such as parent-child and leader-subordinate. In the parent-child relationship, the parent is normatively expected to focus simultaneously on the well-being of the family as a whole, and on the nurturance and growth of the individual child. In the tribal leader-subordinate relationship, such as that of the regent-vassal, the leader has certain obligations, and the subordinate has certain rights, but the well-being and even life of the subordinate can be sacrificed during combat or religious rituals.

Business owners and managers differ in the extent to which they adopt a parental or regal attitude in their efforts to enhance the performance and retain the loyalty of their employees. Subordinates also differ in the extent to which they expect nurturance versus military-style commands from their supervisors.

Bosses and supervisors who are appropriately structured, supportive, fair, and clear in their communication tend to have the most effective employees, who are loyal to the organization. This effect runs throughout the organization, in that leader-leader exchanges affect leader-member exchanges. The more positive the exchanges between leaders, the better the leader-subordinate relationships are, and the more positive the subordinates are about the organization. However, when bosses and

supervisors do not behave in an ideal fashion or, worse, when they are dictatorial, incompetent, or play favorites, they can wreak havoc upon their employees.

In a study conducted by Michael Cunningham and his colleagues, with a sample of 112 employees, as many as two thirds of managers are seen by their employees as either incompetent or interpersonally unskilled and are the main source of stress for those workers. Although most people in the workforce simply accommodate to the poor behavior, or change jobs, some react to feeling overcontrolled and unjustly treated by becoming psychologically or physically aggressive toward their supervisors. This is a primary contributor to the rare, but serious, problem of workplace violence.

Coworker Relationships: Friends and Enemies

Despite the involuntary nature of employee relationships, human resource departments hope that everyone can retain a professional demeanor toward everyone else at work and neither become too close nor too acrimonious with coworkers, superiors, or subordinates. The reality is that people do form close friendships with many from the workplace and become the enemies of a few others.

Consistent with the outcomes in other spheres of life, people tend to be more friendly with and altruistic toward coworkers and employees who are similar to themselves. This is unfortunate because the workplace is becoming more demographically diverse and the need for cooperation between people who are different from one another is more important than ever.

Peer friendships at work tend to develop in three phases, from coworker or acquaintance to friend, friend to close friend, and close friend to almost-best friend, although most never develop beyond the first stage. The coworker-to-friend transition is brought about by working together in close proximity, sharing common ground, and engaging in extra-organizational socializing. Communication at this transition covers a broader range of topics, but is still relatively superficial. The friend-to-close-friend transition is associated with sharing pleasures and problems in one's personal and work experiences. Communication at

this transition is broader, more intimate, and less cautious than in the previous stage. The close-friend-to-almost-best-friend transition results from life events, work-related problems, and the passage of time. Workplace friendships and group cohesiveness, defined as occurring between members who cooperate and feel comfortable with one another, offer individuals companionship, work assistance, understanding, and emotional support, and are associated with the outcomes of well-being, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, low turnover intentions, and productivity.

Although most organizations encourage coworkers to socialize and become cohesive, competitive businesses with hierarchical, regal management norms discourage the formation of close attachments. Such organizations prefer to push their employees to the maximum and want to minimize collateral demoralization among coworkers if they cause burnout or quitting, or if they fire some employees to boost profitability. Employees who have lost good friends to downsizing may resent management, may go through a period of mourning and reduced productivity, and may be less open to forming new workplace relationships in the future. Nurturant parental managers may be so sensitive to the human costs of job cuts that they are unwilling to trim a bloated department. Regal managers are indifferent to them, or revel in the bloodletting as a display of their toughness.

Although cooperation and building team spirit is valued in many workplaces today, there is still some level of competition, because of limitations in the opportunity for promotion and the constant need for increased project budgets. This competition can lead coworkers to promote themselves and undermine their rivals to superiors. If supervisors are not careful to regulate competition, office politics can be waged frequently. This can create a tactical disadvantage, and resentment, if, because of gender, one coworker shares an extracurricular interest with the superior such as golf, and the other coworker cannot even enter the same locker room.

Envy is one of the main factors that can undermine workplace friendships and potentially create enemies. Envy has an emotional component, characterized by feelings such as rancor, hatred, and bitterness, and a social comparison component, characterized by a desire to have what the other

has and avoiding the other person having an advantage over oneself. People become envious when they are similar in profession and qualifications to another person, and when they are in close contact with a person who is doing better than they are. That situation can lead to a feeling of inequity if the greater success appears undeserved, or inferiority if it seems that the other person has greater talent.

The workplace provides an opportunity to make friends of the opposite sex. Unfortunately, employees must be concerned that their coworkers, out of envy or ignorance, will misinterpret their cross-sex friendships as romantic or sexual. Although women can learn the business from other women, the fact that most CEOs and other top executives are men means that women in particular need to form cross-sex friendships and mentoring relationships to move up the hierarchy. Informal barriers to cross-sex friendship at work can form a “glass partition,” and the potential impact of this glass partition can have an adverse effect on women’s careers.

Negative relationships can have greater power than can positive relationships to affect outcomes. The quality of relationships at work affects sustainable organizational performance and effective individual development. When relationships are positive, they can be a source of vitality and learning that helps people grow, thrive, and flourish. When relationships are negative, they can be a toxic source of pain, depletion, and dysfunction.

Conflict and Coping

Different types of work entail different levels of demand and stress and have different balance points between expectations of productivity and of civility. In jobs that involve a great deal of physical effort and stress, such as military combat and iron smelting factories, gruff orders from superiors and terse responses from subordinates are the norm. In jobs that offer lower physical demands and stress, and greater stability, such as teaching in a well-disciplined school and nursing in a small-town hospital, politeness and dialogue are the norm. The extent to which a given business follows the norms of gruffness versus civility varies depending on the training and attitudes of

the supervisor and the subordinates. Hurt feelings can develop whenever the communications or behavior that the individual receives from a supervisor or coworker suggests a less positive evaluation of the relationship and the self than the individual expects. Although workplace relationships tend to be less close and personal than romantic relationships or friendships formed elsewhere, social acceptance in the workplace is associated with material, as well as emotional, well-being. A sense of rejection in the workplace can affect an individual’s feelings of social desirability and self-confidence, and may have a tangible impact on the individual’s career prospects and likelihood of maintaining a stable income, which can ripple through many domains of life.

Many books on coping with workplace issues focus on identifying and labeling the perpetrator of distress, rather than focusing on the processes of miscommunication or misunderstanding. For example, a large-scale study of employees in various companies conducted by Cunningham and his colleagues nominated peers as the most troublesome, followed by supervisors, and then subordinates. A dozen types of annoying people were identified and given colorful names by the investigator, such as Lord of Power, Busybody, Backstabber, and Sexual Harasser.

Recently, attention has been devoted to specific forms of uncivil workplace communication behavior that causes hurt feelings and social allergies. A social allergy is an individual’s tendency to experience a disproportionately intense emotional reaction in response to small behaviors that seems unpleasant to onlookers, but may not warrant such an intense reaction. People generally do not cope well with conflictual feelings. Instead, they tend to avoid the person who is grating on their nerves or seek social support from colleagues in the office rather than finding a mutually beneficial solution to the problem. Human relations professionals emphasize more mature strategies, but the regal norm of sucking it up and soldiering on still pervades many offices.

Romance at Work

Historically, superior–subordinate romantic relationships were either forbidden or strongly

discouraged. The intensity of that sentiment grew in the 1990s with the development of the statutes concerning sexual harassment. Nonetheless, workplace romances are quite common, at all levels of organizations. In fact, a recent study by the American Management Association found that 30 percent of managers and executives admitted to having dated someone from work. Forty-four percent of them married that dating partner and 23 percent more had a long-term relationship.

With the number of hours at work growing longer and the age of marriage approaching 25 for women and 27 for men, the workplace will increasingly be the place where eligible singles meet. There is an increase of management acceptance of employee dating, although there are continuing concerns about power differentials, and the consequences to the workplace in the event of a bad breakup.

Future of Workplace Relationships

The location of work is changing to match the nature of work. Concentrating employees together in a factory is an effective strategy to enhance the speed and efficiency of material production. By contrast, the products of most offices consist of decisions and documents. Concentrating employees together in an office is effective to the extent that the production of decisions and documents requires face-to-face interaction among the work team members. With current communication and computer technology, coworkers can share information, collaborate on decisions, and jointly produce documents from remote locations. Companies that adopt flexible time schedules and telecommuting options have the opportunity to recruit and retain employees who might be unavailable because of commuting distances and childcare responsibilities. The employees appreciate the increased freedom, as well as reduced clothing and transportation

expenses. However, because telecommuting conference calls tend to be highly focused, they may miss some opportunities for cross-fertilization, socialization, and recognition that are available to those in more traditional roles.

As today's workers gain more education, they develop more independent modes of thinking, and more self-respect. Such qualities are valued in industries that emphasize creativity and innovation. These qualities lead to pressure for less hierarchical and more collaborative and informal organizational structures. Coworkers may treat each other like (kissing) cousins rather than like squabbling siblings or expendable soldiers. The mature organization of the future will likely have supervisors behaving toward subordinates like aunts and uncles rather than like parents or kings.

Anita P. Barbee and Michael R. Cunningham

See also Contextual Influences on Relationships; Enemies; Hurt Feelings; Sexual Harassment; Social Allergies

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